

TESTING STUDENTS' ACCOUNTABILITY IN COOPERATIVE LEARNING CLASSROOM: A CASE STUDY OF WRITING 2 CLASS

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ABSTRACT

A classroom implementing cooperative learning (CL) has to carefully design and organize the lesson so that each student could interact with others, and most importantly all students are motivated to increase each other's process of learning. It is because CL will benefit the students when they perform interaction structured by interdependence among the students. However, one major issues emerging under the cooperative learning classroom is to make sure that students gain the lesson objectives of the designed class, and in fact, the students really learn each other as well. The teacher needs to know best that students work cooperatively among the group, and each student contributes during the learning process. Students' accountability needs to be assessed in order to achieve the benefits of CL. Therefore, one primary way to ensure accountability is through testing.

This research report is to investigate both the individual and group accountability in the cooperative learning classroom and whether or not CL setting benefits the students. The research is conducted in Writing 2 class in which students work in-group by doing the team project writing on paragraphs. Students' individual and group accountability is assessed by the quizzes, and it is cross-checked through the class discussion.

The study shows that students' individual accountability is supported by their competence. The performance of group accountability is closely related to their competence. Their answers and responses show positive effects of working and learning each other; therefore, they do benefit from this CL setting in Writing 2 class.

Keyword: CL setting, accountability, benefits of CL setting

Introducing Cooperative Learning (CL) and its Benefits

Having students work in groups is not a new concept in the teaching learning process at schools or universities. However, what differentiates the group

activity is it is carefully structured meaning that the group work is organized so that each student interacts with others and all of them are motivated to increase each other's learning process. This main concept is what Kessler (1992:1) calls as cooperative learning (CL) or sometimes called collaborative learning. One of the objectives of organizing the group work in CL is to make sure that each student could perform their best to learn and to increase the understanding on the subject being studied. Another definition of cooperative learning proposed by Oslen & Kagan (1992:8) via Oxford (1997:444) is as group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others. Based on this definition, one important key term to take into account is the notion of accountability. In fact, accountability is one of the underlying pillars/ principles in cooperative learning.

In the discussion of cooperative learning, some scholars have mentioned some principles underlying the cooperative learning that it is much more than just small-group work. Firstly, Vasquez (1990:1) has categorized the principles into three i.e. positive interdependence, individual accountability, and social skills. In this case, Vasquez views these elements as the important and influencing ones. Next, Oxford (1997:444) has summarized the principles of cooperative learning into positive interdependence, accountability, team formation, team size, cognitive development, and social development. His notions on cooperative learning are detail that it could show more benefits for the students when they are working on subject setting in cooperative learning. Meanwhile, Froyd in www.foundationcoalition.org has notified the three pillars of cooperative learning as positive interdependence, individual accountability, and promotive interaction. Thus far, the notions of positive interdependence and accountability become the main concern of the scholars, not to mention that others are not their concerns though. Therefore, cooperative learning is viewed differently because these sequences of principles or pillars have marked the structured system of cooperative learning. Besides, by integrating these into their learning time and their lessons, teachers may find that group works composed in cooperative learning lead to higher achievement for the students, and they could also give additional benefits for the students such as the increase of self-esteem, respect, acceptance, and greater motivation to learn because of the positive interdependence and individual accountability, and for sure due to the other pillars.

The importance of accountability of the students in cooperative learning, both their individual and group accountability, has become the concern of the

writer. It is because research shows that both individual and group accountability is important for achievement in CL setting, and most scholars consider this to be a defining characteristic of CL, Kessler (1992:13). There some logical reasons to view this importance. The first reason is individual accountability is the belief by each individual that she/he will be accountable for her/his performance and learning that each student is willingly to perform and to participate in the CL setting. As a result, the students could show the positive interdependence, and the CL setting is successful when the students' accountability exists, so the positive interdependence is following. Secondly, some teachers are worried to know whether the students in CL setting could really learn each other or not. Therefore, one major issues emerging under the cooperative learning classroom is to make sure that students gain the lesson objectives of the designed class, and in fact, the students really learn each other as well. In this case, the students' accountability must be observed to make sure that the CL setting is done successfully. Last but not least, some teachers feel to need to know best that students work cooperatively among the group, and each student contributes during the learning process. Again and again, students' accountability needs to be assessed in order to achieve the benefits of CL. In conclusion, one primary way to ensure individual and group accountability is through testing; therefore, testing the students' accountability is worth investigating in a particular CL setting.

In order to answer the curiosity of conducting CL setting and to observe its students' accountability, this paper aims to report its investigation on both the individual and group accountability of the students conducted in the writing class. Besides, it aims to reveal and to access how students benefit the CL setting. In other words, this research report is going to contribute to other scholars' finding on CL setting that is to ensure they are really doing a successful cooperative learning when the students have really performed their students' accountability.

Cooperative Learning: the Working Concept

Cooperative learning is a pedagogical approach that promotes students to interact and to work in small groups to maximize their learning and to reach the shared goals. Another definition of cooperative learning which seems to be true and happening in some (inappropriate) CL settings is proposed by Johnson (2005) via Wichadee (2007) that cooperative learning is not assigning a job to a group of students where one student does all the work and the others put their names on the paper; it is not having the students sit side by side at the same table to talk with each other as they do their individual assignment as well; it is not having the students do

a task individually with instruction that one who finish first are to help the slower students. What it is meant as it is happening is that when teachers do not carefully pay attention and concern with the students' activity what Johnson has defined above could be possibly done oppositely. On the contrary, some students will only contribute by writing down their names whereas one student does all of the jobs, or the students sit side by side working on their assignment individually, and finally some smart students will finish faster ignoring the slower students. It shows that cooperative setting fails to be implemented in that particular classroom.

In fact, cooperative learning is a teaching strategy in which small teams with different levels of ability have the same goal that is to improve their understanding of a subject. Moreover, each member of the team is responsible not only for learning but also for helping their teammates learn and create the atmosphere of achievement. This leads to the purpose of cooperative learning which at the same time falls into one of the principles of cooperative learning i.e. accountability. Accountability will make the students stronger by the process of CL setting because they are to force themselves to be able to perform, to be counted, and to be responsible to answer the subject under the study. Therefore, probing the students' accountability is also important to make sure that the CL setting runs smoothly and achieves its goals based on its principles.

Accountability in Cooperative Learning

As it is included in the pillars of cooperative learning, accountability is seen as the important characteristic in CL setting because the success of CL setting is more or less measured based on the accountability performed by the students. It means that how the students are able to learn from each other, and how they are able to answer and cooperate. Furthermore, Froyd has noted from Johnson (1991:7) that:

“Two levels of accountability must be structured into cooperative lessons. The group must be accountable for achieving its goals and each member must be accountable for contributing his or her share of the work. Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual is assessed and the results are given back to the group and the individual in order to ascertain who needs more assistance, support, and encouragement in learning. The purpose of cooperative learning groups is to make each member a stronger individual in his or her right. Students learn together so that they subsequently can gain greater individual competency [7].”

Based on the quotation above, accountability in cooperative setting is differentiated into individual and group accountability. Individual accountability exists when the performance of each individual student is assessed, and the results are given back to the group's performance. It means each student is able to contribute to the project, able to help those who need helps, and stronger and more competence students are expected to exist resulted by the CL setting eventually. Meanwhile, group accountability is also considered important. It is in group accountability where the individual accountability is performed.

A question possibly to emerge is how to assess and to grade the success of CL setting, and how to know both individual and group accountability have achieved the best performance during the CL setting. It is because individual accountability is promoted by providing opportunities for the performance of individuals to be observed and evaluated by others. In response to this question, Kessler (1992:13) has tried to response by mentioning that methods which use only a group grade or a group product without making each member accountable do not consistently produce achievement gains. It shows how it is also important to consider the individual accountability. Furthermore, he also considers that students may be made individually accountable by assigning each student a grade on his or her own portion of the team project or by the rule that the group may not go on to the next activity until all team members finish the task. By proposing this, he finally means to propose that a primary way to ensure accountability is through testing. Meanwhile, Johnson and Johnson (1991) have suggested that there are some ways to assess or to test each team member in CL setting. For instances, those are individual quizzes or examinations to promote individual accountability, random checking by posing a question or a problem and randomly calling on specific individuals to give an explanation after talking about the question or problem in a group, and some other methods such as individual contribution to team report, skill demonstration, and individual explanation. Another possible method to test the group accountability is by having more in-depth study. It is when individual accountability is encouraged in various cooperative learning structures that may also encourage ideas about how a student might incorporate individual accountability into one class, Slavin (1995).

The Study Objectives

This paper writing is a research report based on a case study happening in Writing 2 class of English Study Program Diploma 3 in Universitas Islam Indonesia. The Writing 2 class is a very small class consisting of 8 to 10 students.

The Writing 2 class was chosen as the CL setting due to the special cases found in the class that the different level of ability the students have, the different level of diligence the students participate, and it happens to be the second semester the writer has with them meaning that the previous Writing 1 class was taught by the writer.

The students were arranged into very small groups from 2 up to 3 students only. Each of the CL setting activity was preceded by the quiz 1 to assess the basic competence that the students had about the subject under the study. They were then given the opportunity to discuss with their partners i.e. to do cooperative learning activity by discussing and doing the assignment. Finishing their assignment, students were also given the posttest to check their performance that is by asking the cooperation they had with their partners while the researcher was assessing their writing production in which the posttest was done in written manner. Feedback is also considered important for the students. Therefore, after several meetings to study and to learn a particular topic, the class will have a discussion session to discuss their works. In fact, the writer utilized this occasion for crosschecking the activities and comment that the students have written down in their quizzes.

In this research, the research questions are formulated in the following questions: How is the individual and group accountability of the students in Writing 2 performed during the CL setting and How does CL setting in Writing 2 benefit the students' understanding? Furthermore, this research is a qualitative-descriptive analysis in which the data is taken from the writing of the students of Writing 2 class. It consists of two types e.g. their writing assignment and their quizzes answers submitted before and after the CL setting. The data is collected, chosen, and analyzed in order to answer the research questions so that the research objectives could be achieved. The triangulation is done by selecting the theory employed, the research questions, and the data collected both written and spoken during the class discussion. For some students, there were some crosschecking sessions during the class discussion when their answers in written forms are considered unclear.

Findings and Discussion

A. On the Students' Accountability: Individual and Group Accountability in Writing 2 Class

As it is proposed that checking the students' accountability is done by having the test e.g. quiz, the data shown below is based on the result of the students'

test in form of class quizzes. They were to answer several questions that the writer proposed to probe their competence that will exist as their individual

The assessment of quiz 1 for	Student Name	Student's Assessment	Student's accountability
Time order paragraph: Group One	Ferry	He could answer for 60% correct—that is the basic understanding of time-order paragraph, and the explanation was short but rather clear. However, he couldn't complete it with an example of the studied paragraph.	It is assumed that has enough competence to finish the project, so his student's accountability is considered minimum.
	Fuad	He failed to understand the time-order paragraph. Apparently, he has limited competence on time-order paragraph.	It is assumed that he has limited individual accountability in the group doing time order paragraph.
	Rabi'atul	She answered for 100% correct, and the explanation was clear with good example. She fully understood the subject that was about to study or the subject under the study.	Apparently, she has excellent competence on time-order paragraph; therefore, it is assumed that she could perform the best individual accountability in the group doing time order paragraph.
The assessment of quiz 1 for Time order paragraph: Group Two	Sri Lestari	She failed to understand what time order paragraph was.	Apparently, she has limited competence on time-order paragraph; therefore, it is assumed that she has limited individual accountability in the group doing time order paragraph.
	Siska Marga Rene	She could explain time-order paragraph with 70% correct and was able to quite understand what time order paragraph was.	Apparently, she has fair competence on time-order paragraph; therefore, it is assumed that she could perform better individual accountability in the group doing time order paragraph.
	Syahrudin	He failed to understand what time order paragraph was.	Apparently, he has limited competence on time-order paragraph; therefore, it is assumed that he has limited individual accountability in the group doing time order paragraph.
The assessment of quiz 1 for Space order paragraph: Group Three	Rohmi	She didn't take the pretest for space order paragraph. It could not be predicted on her competence and her personal accountability because there is no information about her pretest.	
	Aulia	He could explain space-order paragraph with 70% correct and was able to quite understand what space order paragraph was.	Apparently, he has fair competence on space-order paragraph; therefore, it is assumed that he could perform better individual accountability in the group doing time order paragraph.

The assessment of quiz 1 for Space order paragraph: Group Four	Eka Purnama	She could explain space-order paragraph with 80% correct and was able to quite understand what space order paragraph was.	Apparently, she has fair competence on space-order paragraph; therefore, it is assumed that she could perform better individual accountability in the group doing space order paragraph.
	Sri Lestari	She could explain space-order paragraph with 70% correct and was able to quite understand what space order paragraph was.	Apparently, she has fair competence on space-order paragraph; therefore, it is assumed that she could perform better individual accountability in the group doing space order paragraph.

Based on the table above, the students' individual accountability can be seen and reviewed from their answers. Their individual accountability is traced by the class quiz to probe their very basic competence on types of paragraph e.g. time-order and space-order paragraphs. Their basic competence is assumed to be the individual accountability that they will perform during the group work. By displaying this result, the writer is trying to show that each student's competence could show how far their individual accountability will be performed in the group work so that each student is accountable as it functions as the defining characteristic in CL setting. Therefore, the table above has also provided the assumption and prediction on their individual accountability based on the competence shown through their quizzes' answers.

Meanwhile, the group accountability which is believed as the actualization or the feedback of the students' individual accountability is tested, reviewed, and investigated by giving testing to the students through some quizzes as well. In this research, the group accountability of the students can be seen in the following table:

The assessment of quiz 1 for Time order paragraph: Group One	Student Name	Student's Participation	Students' group accountability
	Ferry	He gave the idea about how to make facebook account using time order paragraph.	It can be said that his feedback (group accountability) was well-performed in term of it is in line with the basic competence he has on time-order paragraph.
	Fuad	He didn't take the quiz, but the interesting data shows that his partner, Rabi'atul, could recap his activity done in group work that can be remarked as his group accountability. He arranged the steps in making the time order paragraph.	It shows that the group discussion worked well because each member could re-mention what each member did. It shows that the discussion is alive and it ran successfully. He must have learnt many from his partners because he has limited basic competence.
	Rabi'atul	She mentioned each of the students' job in a very detail explanation. Ferry gave ideas about making account in FB, Fuad arranged the steps.	As it is predicted previously, she has both good individual and group accountability. It can be seen from the in-line and consistent answers from the 1 st and 2 nd quizzes.
The assessment of quiz 1 for Time order paragraph: Group Two	Sri Lestari	She wrote answers showing that she did not really help much since she did not really know much about time-order paragraph. However, she could recap in detail what the group member had done Encis told what we did; I'm a writer, and Didin correct my written work.	As it is predicted previously, she has rather limited individual accountability, and it is shown in her group accountability. It can be seen from the in-line and consistent answers from the 1 st and 2 nd quizzes that she did not really know much, so she could not really much participate.
	Siska Marga Rene (Encis)	She was able to reflect herself and mentioned each of the students' jobs in a very detail explanation. She recounted each member's job e.g. Udin gave a lot of ideas and corrected the task, and she even recounted her individual accountability.	Her ability to describe in details each member's jobs has showed that her individual accountability has contributed much to the group accountability. As it is seen previously, she has adequate individual accountability, and it is shown in her group accountability. It can be seen from the in-line and consistent answers from the 1 st and 2 nd quizzes that she knew more, so she could much participate.
	Syahrudin	His explanation has showed details explanation of the shared jobs and it is connected with Encis' answer. He admitted that he evaluated and corrected the final work.	As it is known that he has limited competence on time-order paragraph; therefore, he performed limited individual accountability in the group work to discuss the specific topic i.e. time order paragraph, but he did very well on the correction part that is to correct the grammar and sentence construction.

The assessment of quiz 1 for Space order paragraph: Group Three

Rohmi

She wrote that she learnt from her partner. She gave the details discussion that she had with her partner such as the steps of writing outline from brainstorming up to transition words. She also acknowledged that she did not work maximally due to the fact that her partner is a male. They felt so awkward.

Her individual accountability is difficult to identify because she did not take the 1st quiz. However, it can be seen that she performed very well to participate in the group work. Therefore, her group accountability is considered adequate.

Aulia

He acknowledged that he learnt many things from his partner. In details, he learnt about steps of making paragraph, transition and brainstorm. His description is in line with his partner's description. Furthermore, as it was written by his partner, he also described the initial barrier to cope together in the group work. Eventually, he admitted that they could work on together.

The group accountability can be seen by cross checking the explanation of Aulia and Rohmi. Both of them realized that they learnt each other. It shows that Aulia's individual accountability was totally actualized and it was well-performed in the group work, so did Rohmi.

Sri Lestari

She wrote that she learnt many things from her partner how to make a space-order paragraph from topic sentence until the full paragraph, and she acknowledged that they shared ideas and jobs.

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She was identified to have adequate basic competence on the space order paragraph. Based on her explanation, it can be seen clearly that her individual accountability was well-actualized. It is because there are both acknowledgments that she and her partner learnt each other. It means both have adequate information about space order paragraph to share. Besides, she explained very good group accountability through her answers. Therefore, from her answers, it shows that the group accountability is good, and the cooperative learning works successfully.

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As it is displayed in the table, the curiosity to investigate the participation of the individual accountability in CL setting can be seen clearly. Each student's performance could show that their limited or adequate individual accountability does matter for the smooth running of the group work in term of group accountability. As it is defined that group accountability is the feedback of individual accountability, each student along with their individual accountability participate in the group work to support the success of the group that is the strong group accountability.

Another interesting characteristic recorded from this Writing 2 Class by studying the individual and group accountability is on the notion that each student remembers very well their learning process. It means that students did remember what subjects or ideas that they have learnt from others in Writing 2 class especially about time-order and space-order paragraphs. Surprisingly, this can be traced by cross-checking the answers from the quizzes and also from the class discussion among the students. Hence, the testing, in term of quizzes, can be implemented and proven as a possible means to assess and to investigate the individual accountability and the group accountability performed by the students in CL setting.

B. The Benefit of CL Setting in Writing 2 Class

The success of CL setting is determined by the fact that students could interact with others, and they are motivated to learn each other's learning process. Indeed, it could be seen in the performance of the CL setting in the Writing 2 class conducted by the writer. The success of the CL setting is also supported by the data shown that the students have benefited much after they have done the CL setting for the Writing 2 class. The students involved in this research express their answers that they could benefit from the CL setting in Writing 2 class. Therefore, this part is going to review and to discuss how CL setting could benefit their understanding in Writing 2 class that discussed some types of paragraphs e.g. time-order and space-order paragraphs.

Surprisingly, almost all of the students admitted that they took benefits from the CL setting in Writing 2 class. Their reasons are various from having the opportunity to share with other, to exchange their opinion including to argue each other, to ease the burden of finishing the project, and the most importantly is to take benefit of understanding the topic easier due to the small discussion among students. The latter means that students could easily clarify the unclear topics or types of paragraph when they have not understood yet. Thus, it cannot be argued

that CL setting in this Writing 2 class has benefited the students to work cooperatively to finish the project, and eventually to understand the topics being studied.

However, there is another point to take account when the benefit of CL setting is discussed. It deals with the interpersonal relation that the students could build up through the CL setting. In this case, two students' data have shown something interesting and worth discussing. It is when one group confessed that they had a difficult time to cooperate in the beginning of group work. The group members consisting of the opposite sex complained each other that their partner was difficult to argue and to discuss with. Their argumentation shows that the opposite sex has become the barrier to discuss and to finish the group work. The opposite sex is another matter for grouping although eventually they could still work on together. Therefore, among the students' involvement, statement from Aulia and Rohmi is the most interesting point to take to consider in this CL setting. The fact that initial engagement among the students need the ice-breaking and self-introduction must be understood for the smooth running of CL setting so that each student could really benefit the CL setting. Indeed, the CL setting in this Writing 2 class can be proven that it could benefit all the students though two of them needed to adapt for some time.

Conclusions

From the data shown and the analysis followed in the paper, there are some points to conclude dealing with the students' individual and group accountability as well as the benefits of CL setting in the Writing 2 class taken as the setting of this research. The points to conclude are:

1. There is positive correlation between the basic competence and the individual accountability that the students have when they are doing the CL setting class. In Writing 2 class mentioned here, each student's basic competence is assessed, and their competence shows their individual accountability. Furthermore, their individual accountability is actualized maximally when they were doing the group work or it is marked as their group accountability. Consequently, students with limited individual accountability have reflected the limited participation and feedback as the group accountability since they have limited basic competence to participate in the group work and vice versa. However, still there is good news and positive atmosphere that can be built up

in CL setting as it is shown in Writing 2 class setting. Students having various individual accountabilities can still work together without having problems of gaps and barrier of different level of ability. It is because they are blended, discussed, and negotiated. Their limited competence or individual accountability is not a burden because still they learn each other.

2. The data and the analysis also mention that CL setting in Writing 2 class has benefited the students. They took the benefits of this CL setting for various reasons. Their answers and responses show positive effects of working and learning each other. Therefore, it is accepted that when CL setting is beneficial, at the same time, it is a proof also that the students have performed interaction structured by interdependence among the students themselves.

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