

The Role of Autonomy on Students' Creativity in Writing Short Story: A Narrative Inquiry

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ABSTRACT: Learning autonomy offers a lot contribution to students' successful learning since it is the ability of learners to take control of their learning goal and management. One of this characteristics influences how students set their learning management based on what they are interested in. This situation builds creative atmosphere since students set their goal, management, style, and preferences. In writing a story, students need creativity to make an interesting story. Therefore, this study distinguishes a student gaining the best story in children's literature class. It is specifically aimed at investigating how autonomous the student is so that it came to her creativity in creating the story. The data are collected from documentation, student's reflective journals, and also some interviews. The method of this study is narrative inquiry while thematic analysis is used for analyzing the data. The result shows that the student becomes autonomy by having these characteristics; (1) having learning management, (2) Intrinsically motivated, (3) Knowing personal strength and weakness. Those characteristics have important role in bringing the student to be successful learner.

Keywords: *learning autonomy, narrative inquiry*

1. BACKGROUND

Autonomy has been a very fundamental issue in language learning. Defining generally as a capability to take charge of one's own learning (Holec: 1991), autonomy becomes one of the important factors of successful language learning. Since its relation to motivation, one can be called an autonomous learner for being capable to be responsible for what they do in learning. One of the previous study done by Haddad (2016) proved that autonomy as learning strategy can develop students' vocabulary.

The concept of autonomy cannot be separated from the concept of independent learning, self-direction, and self-regulation. It means that autonomous learners are capable of their independence in choosing what to learn when to learn and how to learn. In other words, autonomous learners know why they learn and what to achieve by their learning. In addition, the independence of autonomous learner gives them the space to see learning as something interesting and fun; not forcing. People tend to do fully for something that they like to do.

Experts state that there is a link between autonomy and creativity, yet having autonomy makes a learner become creative since the shows that the more autonomous person, the more creative he is. (Çekmecelioglu and Günsel, 2011). Boden in Kirkgoz (2014) defines creativity as the ability to come up with new ideas that are surprising yet intelligible, and also valuable in some way. A student with creativity has a remarkable, comprehensible, and valuable thought. While creativity from the linguistic perspective is connected with language play. There are two kinds of language play. The first at the formal level which a play is in sounds, words, and grammatical structures to create patterns. Second, at semantic level, there is a play with units of meaning, connected them in unusual ways to create imaginary words. It is often associated with originality, novelty, and divergent thinking (Cook in Ragawanti, et. al)

All of these characteristics can be found in creative writing process. With some activities such as writing poetry, digital poetry, poetry 2.0, writing a short story (digitally, paper-based or in a pop-up book) and so on as creative process, students play language both linguistically and semantically. In the last semester of children's literature class, students are required to write a fable as one of the requirements of the passing grade. Fable, as one genre of fiction often uses non-human things as characters of the story. Therefore, the students need to think creatively in order to make a good story with good characters and also a good moral message.

Based on the result, a student got the best score based on teacher assessment and peer assessment. She creatively used language play semantically. Since creativity is connected to autonomy, this study is aimed at knowing how autonomous the student is and what is the role of her autonomy in her creativity in writing the story

1.1 Class Context

1) The First Meeting

At the first meeting, the students were introduced to five different fables taken from Aesop. In a group consisting of five to six persons, they discussed the moral message of each story, and also discussed the best wise word representing that story. After a 45 minutes discussion, we did the class discussion. And came up with the final summary of the discussion.

We started to begin the individual project; writing a fable. The students firstly thought of the message they want to deliver in their story, later they decided the idea of the characters and the story. They also decided whether they wanted to present it digitally, or in paper-based. In short, the first meeting the students created their blueprint story. And the process of writing is done out of the classroom.

2) The Second Meeting

One crucial condition of creative writing is that students need readers. As Cummins (2014) stated that thing which I believe to be important with creative writing is that the students have an audience, so it is a good idea to publish or share their work in some way, whether this is displaying it on the walls, publishing it on a class blog or website, reading it to the class or just swapping it with a partner so they can read each other's work. Therefore, in the next meeting, the students presented their work to a small group of six people. Some students read the story, retold them by using puppets or pop-up book, and the rest showed their story digitally. After the sharing, they decided the most creative work for each group. The representative of the group presented in whole class. At the end of the project, students chose the best creative story by giving feedback and voting as the final decision. The results showed that (pseudo names) Aisyah gained the first place as she delivered the story by mixing the story with some songs that she wrote. She had the creative story by using flowers as her characters and sang some songs related to her story.

2. RESEARCH PROCEDURE

This study used narrative inquiry as method of the research. Clandinin and Cornelly in Clandinin and Huber (2007) define Narrative inquiry as a way of understanding and inquiring into experience through collaboration between researcher and participants, over time, in a place or series of places, and in social interaction with milieus. Therefore, the data are taken from the experience of a student taking children's literature class, she was one of the best five story writer and teller.

Source of the data is a student who got the best of writing fable in children's literature class last semester. She got the best and the most creative student in doing this project. Data collection was the result of a deep interview, document analysis from her children's literature portfolio, foot-note, some pictures posted on her social media and also some evidence related to her activity in writing project and learning English. While data analysis is done using thematic analysis.

3. RESEARCH RESULT

1.1 Participant's Story

Aisyah (pseudo name) is 20 years old student from English Department one of the Universities in Indonesia. She was well-known as a good storyteller for her outstanding performance in some agendas in the campus. With her ukulele, she told an inspiring story and sang some songs related to the story. This great performance was not gained in a very short time. She said that she could reach this steps because of some efforts done during learning English.

When she was in elementary school, she got confused what her passion and talent was. Looking at her friends, she found that everybody had talents except her. She hated English at that time since the teacher used to scold the students when they couldn't learn well. When she was in junior high school, she still got this confusion. She thought a lot of it while listening to the radio. Poor, she found nothing's good to listen to. She searches for the other radio station until her ears caught on a lovely song. She asked herself "what was that?" until finally, she found that the song was one of the Beatles songs. She never thought that listening to English song would be this fun. Started from that time, her favorite activity was listening to the radio and English old songs.

One day, her homeroom teacher told her that she was good in English. It was a very meaningful word to her since it gave lots of energy and motivation to learn English. Started from that day, she finally found what she liked, it was English. Aisyah often learned English by herself. She listened to the music a lot. She found some lyric interesting and tried to find the meaning of it in a dictionary and every song that she found interesting will be sung. She also managed her learning time to balance between her favorite subject-English and the other subjects.

There were some ways done in learning English. Firstly, songs were always a part of her daily life. Coming back from school, she started to listen to the music while looked at the lyrics. Whenever she found difficult words, she went back to the dictionary to know the meaning. That was how she gained the vocabulary. Secondly, she also did any kinds of game that was created by herself in her free time. And lastly, she also watched the video in English or in English subtitle. That was the way she got her good pronunciation and speaking skill.

Her achievement was rising after she followed children's literature class. Some activity done was writing stories, it means that students produced several stories in a semester. In her portfolio reflective journal, she stated that she enjoyed writing story for children and inspiring them. In the final project, where the students wrote a fable, she made the story entitled "Unchanging Grace". All characters in the story were names of the flowers. *"My Inspiration was the song that I listened to last night"* (source: Reflective Journal)

In addition, she also added some song lyrics in it, one of them is the song tomorrow. Therefore, her performance got lots of good comments and voted as the best. One of the peers wrote a comment

"It was creative that she put the flowers in the story, and the performance of her storytelling was so amazing" (source: peer comments)

Fortunately, this project gave her lots of courage to do more. She was invited to perform in soma campus agenda, she also continued writing the other story. During the final interview, she stated her opinion about English, she said, "I love it. I will never leave something that I like. Therefore I will continue to learn it"

4. DISCUSSION

To answer the first question, how autonomous she is, the explanations are as follows;

1.1 Learning Management

Learning management can be defined as an ability to take control of learning time, purpose, and way. As Cirocki (2016) stated that one of the important levels of being autonomous is learning management.

“I always listen to English song wherever I can. Mostly, after I come home from campus, and of course, any other assignment will be done before listening activity” (translated excerpt from 2nd interview via Instagram Messenger)

This shows that participant can manage the time for learning. She sets the priority by doing what she has to do first such as assignment from the lecturer, and after that, she can do the listening activity as the learning style she prefers in learning foreign language.

1.2 Intrinsically Motivated

Learners who are interested in learning tasks and outcomes for their own sake (intrinsic) rather than for rewards are likely to become more effective learners. (Decy and Ryan in Dickinson) The student who is intrinsically motivated tends to see learning as a process of long life learning meaning that they do learning as a continuing process whatever obstacle might happen. And they will not stop even the success already happened.

“English is important to me, it is a part of my life. So, I will learn it forever” (Translated excerpt from 1st interview recorded)

The excerpt above indicates that the participant is intrinsically motivated because she sees language learning as a part of her life in the past or even future. Having a long life learning means that the participant has her autonomy. (Cirocki: 2016)

1.3 Estimating Personal Strengths and Weaknesses

Autonomous learners tend to know what suits her best for learning. They have their own preference for learning since they know what they are good and bad at. Based on the second interview it is known;

“I prefer listening more, I don’t read a lot. So, I do a lot of listening” (Translated excerpt from 2nd interview via Instagram Messenger)

It is in line with Dickinson: 1995 stating that autonomous learners are those who have the capacity for being active and independent in the learning process; they can identify goals, formulate their own goals, and can change goals to suit their own learning needs and interests; they are able to use learning strategies, and to monitor their own learning. Therefore when the participants does listening more, it means that she knows what she is interested in and what she is good at. Another word, she knows her strength and her weaknesses in learning.

5. CONCLUSION

Learning autonomy gives lots of contribution on successful learning. It happens on a student gaining the best story in children’s literature class. The story told how she began and grew and stood in grounded level of her learning. Having good learning management, being intrinsically motivated, and being able to estimate personal strength and weakness were the characteristics that stood her to be in this current level. It also gave any impact on her creativity to write the short story achieved the best story in children’s literature class.

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