CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter briefly explains some theories that support the research. The theories relate to the definition of writing skills, aspects of writing skills, problems in writing skills, collaborative writing, and challenges in collaborative writing.

2.1 Theoretical Framework

2.1.1 The Definition of Writing Skill

There are several definitions attached to writing as a communication tool. The Online Encyclopedia of Writing Systems and Languages states that writing is a technique for expressing language physically or visually. Writing systems use sets of symbols to represent speech sounds, and additional symbols may be used for punctuation and numerals. According to Brooks (1996, as cited in Fodil, 2021), writing goes beyond the symbolization of speech through orthography and involves the deliberate selection and arrangement of terms in accordance with the target language's rules. This skill entails the process of finding ideas in the text, not only by writing the words but also by choosing and arranging the ideas while considering several components (Amalia et al., 2021).

Writing is a productive skill, integral to effective communication. According to Ghosh & Sen (2023), writing covers content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, language use, and mechanical aspects. It requires the writer to generate and express ideas clearly and coherently, adhering to the rules and conventions of the target language. Unlike receptive skills such as reading and listening, writing involves the active creation of content, where the writer must consider various components such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, language use, and mechanical aspects. Purnamasari et al., (2021) mentioned that writing productively uses language by requiring words, phrases, and lengthy written passages to convey ideas. On the other hand, Hossain (2015) mentioned that this skill is a set of visible or touchable signs organized systematically to represent language units. Its purpose is to record messages that can be understood by those who know the language and the rules governing how its units are represented in the writing system. Writing visually represents spoken

language (Ali & Zayid, 2022). Communication through writing differs somewhat from speaking in terms of context (Hossain, 2015). There is a communicative situation between speakers conveying messages to listeners. However, in writing, the dynamic is distinct; the writer expresses messages through their emotions and ideas (Ahmed, 2019).

2.1.2 Dimensions of Writing Skill

Hossain (2015) outlines three dimensions of writing skills: 1) the micro and macro skills in writing, 2) the mechanical elements of the writing process, and 3) the cohesion and coherence of writing.

The theory of micro and macro writing skills was first proposed by Brown (2001). Micro skills in writing center on students' linguistic competence, including the use of letters, English spelling patterns, writing speed, proper word choice, and acceptable grammar. On the other hand, the broader aspect of writing goals is centered around macro skills, such as cohesive elements in written communication, rhetorical structures, connections between events, effective communication, meaning, and writing strategies (Susilowati, 2018). The writing strategies include using prewriting tools accurately, fluently crafting initial drafts, paraphrasing and synonyms, seeking feedback from peers and instructors, and editing and revising by others (Hossain, 2015). Moreover, Brown (2007, as cited in Thi Thanh Nguyen, 2016), identifies the following micro and macro skills, such as:

Micro skills: ·

1. Create English orthographic patterns and graphemes.
2. Write effectively as possible to accomplish the task at hand.
3. Develop a suitable core vocabulary and appropriate word arrangement,
4. Align to accepted patterns, rules, and grammatical systems (such as tense, agreement, and pluralization).
5. Use various grammatical structures to communicate a specific meaning.

Macro skills:

1. Use coherent strategies in written communication.
2. Make use of written discourse conventions and rhetorical forms.

3. Fulfill the communicative purposes of written texts appropriately given their form and intent.

4. Describe the connections and interactions between events and convey concepts like the main idea, a supporting idea, fresh information, previously provided information, generalization, and example.

5. When writing, distinguish between explicit and implicit meanings.

6. Accurately communicate references specific to a given culture within the written text.

7. Create and apply a toolkit of writing techniques, including precisely determining the audience's interpretation, applying prewriting techniques, writing fluently in initial drafts, employing synonyms and paraphrases, asking for and accepting feedback from peers and teachers, and using that input for editing and revision.

There are many aspects of language (macro versus micro-skills and/or sub-elements inside each macro and micro level) that interact and influence each other. Van Geert and Steenbeek (2005) claimed that it depends on the objectives and priorities of EFL learners at a given period. These aspects are mutually reinforcing such that a development in one subset might result in a development in another subset. For instance, the close and positive relationship between lexical and syntactic development in second language acquisition illustrates this connectivity. Robinson & Mervis (1998) claimed that as EFL learners expand their vocabulary, grammatical structures become more sophisticated. Additionally, there is rivalry among the elements, subsystems, or dimensions—macro versus micro-skills. The human brain cannot operate more than one task at a time; hence, multi-tasking results from this competitive relationship (Van Geert, 2003). When ESL students concentrate on the micro-elements of their writing—that is, grammatical accuracy and lexical sophistication—they may overlook macro-level problems with the coherence and cohesiveness of their writing. Therefore, this research employs Brown's theory as a framework to examine writing problems, highlighting the intricate interplay between language aspects.

Furthermore, in supporting Brown's theory of micro and macro skills, Harmer (2004, as cited in Hossain, 2015) states that writing involves mechanical elements like handwriting, spelling, punctuation, and constructing well-crafted sentences, paragraphs, and texts. These elements are the basic building blocks of writing expertise. In addition, the cohesion and coherence of writing. The discussions of cohesion and coherence are essential because these two kinds of writing aspects cannot be separated. (Hossain (2015) argued that cohesion deals with the linguistic and grammatical connections that link sentences and paragraphs, contributing to the overall clarity and understanding of a piece of writing. Harmer (2004) classified cohesion into two dimensions: lexical, which involves the repetition of words, and grammatical, which involves using pronons, possessive references, and article references. On the other hand, coherence focuses on the overall clarity and logical flow of ideas in the content. Achieving coherence in writing requires the writer to pay attention to the flow of sentences. The transition from one sentence to the next should be logical and smooth, ensuring a seamless and coherent narrative. In simpler terms, the sentences need to flow smoothly.

2.1.3 EFL Students' Problems in Writing

Students have their own special and unique qualities when learning to write. In this process, they may face various and different problems in producing good writing. Some studies found that students face several major problems in writing, such as grammar (Astrini et al., 2020; Nurlatifah, 2022; Tambunan et al., 2022), vocabulary(Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017; Astrini et al., 2020), writing strategies (Susilowati, 2018) and motivation (Isnaini, 2022). Moreover, Seyabi and Tuzlukova (2014) identify five areas of problems in writing: how to initiate a written piece, sentence structure, coherence, vocabulary, and the content and development of ideas.

Setyono (2015) identifies several problems in writing that are linked to the following factors: 1) the limited understanding of writing strategies; insufficient proficiency among lecturers in managing and organizing the teaching and learning process for writing; 2) grammatical structure; many students have

restricted knowledge of grammatical structures, 3) limited understanding of writing; students lack sufficient knowledge of writing, 4) low interest in writing; most students find writing challenging as it requires simultaneous knowledge of writing concepts and metalinguistic competencies, and 5) insufficient time for writing practice; students tend to practice writing only during writing classes and rarely engage in writing during their free time. These challenges collectively hinder students from achieving better performance in writing, considering that producing written texts necessitates a combination of components to ensure fluency for readers.

2.1.4 Collaborative Writing

Theoretical perspectives support the use of pair and group work in language teaching and learning. From a Sociocultural Theory (SCT) perspective, learning is by nature a socially located activity, and the use of language in social contacts mediates language (Vgotsky, 1978 as cited in Pardede, 2024). Vygotsky's theories emphasize the importance of social interaction in cognitive development. He defined the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) as "the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential." This suggests that learners can achieve higher levels of understanding and skill through collaboration with more knowledgeable peers. This process depends much on language skills, including listening, paraphrasing, questioning, elaborating, and explaining, since they are useful tools for concept development and higher degrees of language competency. Furthermore, crucial are chances for meaningful peer collaboration since students will use language to interact with each other in their own unique ways, which is applied in teacher interactions (Mennim, 2017). Students improve the range and quality of their communication skills in this way. Nevertheless, socioculturalists have warned time and again that simple pair/group interaction does not by itself ensure learning opportunities (Mozaffari, 2023). Clark (2008) emphasizes this when they contend that "the kind of behaviors and relationships exhibited by the participants when working together to complete the task determines the quality of the learning process."

Building on the above-mentioned theory, several scholars have provided various definitions of collaborative writing. Collaborative writing is the process of multiple learners working together to create a single written piece (Azkarai, 2023). Through this process, they interact and make decisions until they agree on what they should write about, considering the best words to convey their goals and support their decisions (Storch, 2019). Lowry et al. (2004 in Svenlin and Sørhaug, 2023), Also define collaborative writing as an iterative and social process involving a team focused on a common objective that negotiates, coordinates, and communicates during creating a common document.

In this research, CW encompasses several activities: brainstorming, gathering information, organizing outlines, drafting, editing, and rewriting the text. Students are expected to participate and be responsible for it (Storch, 2019). In the same harmony, Berndt (2011) claimed that collaborative writing has seven specific activities in the process of writing, such as:

a. Brainstorming: This activity involves the writing team generating a list of possible ideas for the paper. Through discussion and text, they explore how to effectively present the findings, what insights they can offer about those findings concerning the research question, and what storylines would create an engaging discussion.

b. Developing concept: This involves talking and sharing thoughts to define and clarify the main ideas that will be discussed in the written work. Team members contribute their perspectives and insights to build a shared understanding of the concepts to be incorporated into the writing. The goal is to ensure a cohesive and well-developed foundation for the collaborative writing project.

c. Outlining: This involves mapping out the activity of how the paper will progress across the sections of the research manuscript genre. The group decides on the order and structure of the content, providing a clear guide for everyone involved.

d. Drafting: In the drafting phase, the outlined sections are expanded into complete sentences, paragraphs, and arguments. The team considers

whether the literature review follows a chronological order or should be organized based on different points of view within the current scholarly conversation. How much theoretical framing is appropriate for inclusion in the introduction? To what extent should the methods be detailed, and what is the right balance between providing a description and justifying the chosen approach.

e. Reviewing, revising, and editing: Typically, these activities go through repetitive cycles (Berndt, 2011). Team members collectively review the written work, offering feedback and suggestions. The group then revises the content based on the input received, adjusting improve clarity and coherence. After revisions, the team proceeds to the editing phase, focusing on refining language, grammar, and overall polish. This iterative cycle continues until the collaborative writing project reaches its final, polished form, with each round of review, revision, and editing contributing to the overall improvement of the work.

Collaborative writing involves knowledge sharing, problem-solving, and decision-making, requiring effort and ideas from all participants (Veramuthu & Shah, 2020). This approach teaches students to take responsibility for completing tasks with their peers, fostering interaction and participation, thereby improving their English abilities and writing skills (Trinh & Nguyen, 2021). CW activities for the chosen course in this research are done online using technology such as Google Docs and shared documents in Microsoft Word. Therefore, collaborative writing here allows students to work together online, enhancing the writing process and outcomes (Kumalasari, 2023).

Furthermore, in CW, students' learning and writing preferences vary. In second-language writing, the learner-centered approach focuses on how learners feel about and perceive writing practices (Abahussain, 2020). Some students prefer visual aids, while others prefer audio; some write systematically, while others are more spontaneous (Glover & Hirst, 1996). Despite these variations, some believe a positive attitude toward a particular writing approach can lead to its successful use (Chen & Yu, 2019). It is crucial to understand students' feelings

about language learning and their preferences for individual or group work (He, 2021). In the collaborative writing process, teachers as facilitators must provide how they guide and give a review to each group member, discussing and negotiating strategies about the concern of writing (Anggraini et al., 2020). Team members collaboratively decide on the content and approach (Lingard, 2021).

The chosen course employed the CW method in this research to harness these benefits. By implementing group activities and facilitating open communication, the course aims to cater to diverse learning styles and personality traits, fostering a positive attitude toward writing among students. As stated by Storch (2019), CW assignments are helpful for EFL students since they force them to consider language issues or grammar accuracy while deciding how they will develop ideas. CW includes regular feedback and collaborative decision-making activities with the teacher in this research.

2.1.5   Challenges in Collaborative Writing

Problems will arise in collaborative tasks. Some problems found in classroom learning that may hinder the positive effect of collaborative writing, such as students' behavior, proficiency in English, and time management (Alkhalaf, 2020). On the other hand, Chisholm (1990) categorized problems in collaborative writing into four aspects: resistance, inexperience, friction, and fairness.

Resistance to the problem. Many students are resistant to collaborative projects. They do not prioritize collaborative projects and may be unwilling to invest time and effort. Some do not want to participate in group work for reasons such as reluctance, shyness, disdain, or laziness. This lack of commitment to full participation can lead to various challenges in the collaborative writing process.

Inexperienced in problems by being inexperienced, students are not used to the close connections needed for collaborative work. Before getting to know their group members, they do not want to share personal thoughts and feelings. Even sharing their ideas makes them feel vulnerable, and until they trust each other, they hesitate to participate. When holding back information becomes more powerful than being open, we must help them share more. Dealing with the

challenges of low writing skills, understanding writing, and talking about writing is even tougher.

Friction is a problem. In human interactions, it is natural to encounter some friction. Everyday disagreements can occasionally become conflicts, especially when people collaborate on something significant. Conflicts are inevitable in such situations. Managing the tension that leads to negative emotions is likely the most challenging problem they need to handle.

Fairness is a problem. In groups, one person puts in effort while another does not. Society highly values the principle of "Equal Pay for Equal Work," since grades are seen as rewards, it is challenging to reward everyone equally. The issue of fairness is particularly pronounced when older or more motivated students collaborate with immature students. The less motivated students may be fine with letting the eager one do the work, but the older student quickly starts to feel resentful about shouldering the load.

Moreover, Glover & Hirst (1996), in their study about the stylistic inconsistency of collaborative writing, explained that writing together sometimes already includes conflicts about content and technique, which can be time-consuming and stressful to resolve, and allowing each collaborator to write in his or her own writing style avoids an extra source of possible conflict among the group members. In any case, people find it challenging to define style; thus, even if the imposition of a particular style is allowed, it is not always possible for the writers to sufficiently provide one another with the information needed to write in the mutually agreed-on style. People are generally poor at consciously noticing inconsistent style. Thus, combining several writing styles after a collaborative document is finished or if the collaboration involves assembly and editing of earlier written pieces is also challenging. They may not know why, but they could be unsatisfied with the paper. And even when people understand the document lacks a single style, they sometimes find it challenging to explain the particular stylistic discrepancies they have observed. Though many people grow to have unique styles, they usually adopt individual ones within the group norms. Even then, it is not always successful; when authors collaborate, trying

to combine their styles can cause time-consuming revision, frustration, and interpersonal conflict.

Therefore, these problems mentioned serve as the supporting theory in investigating writing problems during collaborative writing. Understanding these problems is crucial as they significantly impact the collaborative writing process.

2.2 Study of Relevant Research

Researchers have widely and frequently explored research on problems in writing. Toba et al. (2019) examined the problems related to the writing skills of Indonesian EFL students, specifically focusing on their abilities and the problems they face when writing a comparison and contrast essay. In this research, a mixed method is used, involving 52 EFL students at IAIN Samarinda who were taking a course on academic essay writing. Three tools, an essay writing test, an open-ended questionnaire, and interviews, were utilized to collect data. They confirmed that the writing ability of Indonesian EFL students was generally good. However, some encountered difficulties in various aspects of writing, such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The reasons for these challenges included limited knowledge of writing aspects and the comparison and contrast essay itself. Personal factors like a lack of writing practice, writing dislike, writing anxiety, negative writing perception, low writing motivation, insufficient time during writing tests, and inadequate teaching of the writing process by their lecturers contributed to their difficulties.

Fitria (2022)conducted a study investigating EFL students' problems and challenges in writing and completing their theses. This research used a descriptive qualitative approach and a questionnaire to identify internal and external factors influencing these difficulties. Internal factors include challenges in selecting an English title, doubt in abilities, fears, health issues, difficulty understanding structure, reliance on online translation tools, and struggles with English grammar, vocabulary, spelling, and punctuation. The internal writing problems align with this study, although it focuses on thesis writing.

Looking further into the research conducted and ensuring its relevance even in different countries. Research carried out by Seyabi & Tuzlukova (2014) included 1114 randomly chosen school students and 317 university students from Oman's Muscat, Batinah South, and Dhakeleya regions. The results show that both sets of students recognize challenges when writing in English. The information about writing issues suggests that most of the school and university students encounter difficulties primarily concerning the vocabulary and content aspects of writing. However, university students express more assertive perceptions regarding the types of problems they encounter and the strategies to address them. In dealing with writing challenges in English, university students employ various conventional writing strategies, with brainstorming being the most common, while school students primarily focus on revising grammar and structures.

A study investigation by Fareed et al. (2016), examined challenges Pakistani undergraduate ESL learners face in their writing skills, exploring factors that impede their proficiency. The study also sought suggestions for enhancing Pakistan's ESL learners' writing skills. Focus groups, including Pakistani English language teachers and undergraduate ESL learners, were conducted for this purpose. Additionally, writing samples from 30 ESL undergraduate learners were gathered to identify critical issues in their writing. Thematic content analysis was applied to analyze interviews and essays. The results indicate significant challenges in Pakistani undergraduate ESL learners' writing, including inadequate linguistic proficiency (covering grammar, syntax, and vocabulary), writing anxiety, a dearth of ideas, reliance on the first language (L1), and weak organizational structure. These difficulties are influenced by teachers lacking proper training, teaching methods that are not effective, examination systems that fall short, insufficient reading and writing opportunities, classrooms that are too large, low motivation, and a shortage of ideas.