

Indonesian EFL students' verbal episodes in proficiency pairings

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ABSTRACT

The quality of collaborative writing process to some extent depends on the verbal episodes occurring during the collaboration. This study aimed to describe English as a foreign language (EFL) students' verbal episodes in proficiency pairings. A case study design was used in this study. It involved 40 EFL students of the English department in an Indonesian university. They were divided into two groups based on the types of proficiency pairings: heterogeneous (20 students) and homogenous (20 students). Therefore, this study was also intended to identify which of the two types of proficiency pairings produces more verbal episodes than the other. The verbal processes were audio recorded and then transcribed. The audio transcriptions were analyzed for common themes related to episode categorization. To ensure the reliability of the episode analysis, inter-coder, and intra-coder checks were employed. The results showed that Indonesian EFL students used three major types of verbal episodes: language-related episodes (LREs), text-related episodes (TREs), and scaffolding episodes (SEs). The study also revealed that proficiency levels determined the categories of LREs and SEs most frequently produced by the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs. Both the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs were likely to produce almost the same frequencies of categories of TREs more particularly in terms of organization and content. Further research might explore the link between the number of episodes and the learning gains.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the language skills that need to be learned by English as a foreign language (EFL) students in order to be proficient in using English. So far, as an important language skill, writing is defined differently depending on the pedagogical approaches used by researchers and practitioners. There are three main writing pedagogical approaches, namely text-oriented approach, writer-oriented approach, and reader-based approach [1], [2]. A text-oriented approach, parallel to a product-based approach [3] views "texts-as-autonomous objects" and highlights the writing product. Therefore, this approach concerns more the error-free sentence production and language forms, i.e., grammar, syntax, and mechanics [2]. This view of writing conforms to a quantitative measure utilizing T-unit and word count analysis for each of writing aspects which include complexity, accuracy, and fluency [4]. In addition, a text-oriented approach also considers "text-as-

discourse," which corresponds to a discourse-based approach [3] as well as a genre-based approach [1] which views writing ability as the ability to create coherent and cohesive discourses by following generic structures.

Unlike the text-oriented approach that concentrates on the product, the writer-oriented approach views writing as a personal expression which involves a cognitive process and a situated act. Therefore, writing ability in the view of the writer-oriented approach is linear to the process-based approach [3] and is defined as the ability to plan and develop ideas and then use specific revision and editing practices to finalize the draft in a provided context [2], [5]. Meanwhile, the reader-oriented approach views writing as social interaction and social construction as well as power and ideology. This approach emphasizes the reader's awareness; therefore, the reader-oriented approach considers a successful writer as one who can assume the readers' perception and expectation and balance those assumptions into the relevant structure and content of the discourse so that the writing activity can function communicatively [1], [2].

In the field of second or foreign language writing, the integration of language comprehension and production, particularly reading-writing, is receiving growing attention [6] because numerous real-life writings are composed in response to a text (or texts) demanding high-degree of reading skills to integrate the input materials into the written response [7], [8]. Some studies have compared the composition process and the writing quality between writing only tasks (independent writing) and reading-to-write tasks (integrated writing) [7], [9], [10] and explored and developed the assessment accordingly [11]–[13]. According to this integrated approach, writing ability is defined as the ability to gather information, develop thoughts, and then write to produce an organized response that incorporates selected information from the available sources.

One of the ways to improve EFL students' ability in writing is assigning them to do the writing tasks collaboratively in the form of pairings based on their proficiency in the process of writing. Collaborative writing is defined as a joint production or co-authoring of a text by two or more writers [14], [15]. Collaborative writing emphasizes the joint ownership because the writers engage in the whole writing process or in partial writing activities such as group planning or peer editing [14]. Compared to individual writing, collaborative writing is more effective in promoting writing ability [16], [17]. Much research has shown that collaborative writing stimulates more better ideas than individual writing [14], [18]. Additionally, previous research also reported a number of factors contributing to the quality of collaboration and the outcome of collaborative writing which include language proficiency [19], [20], patterns of interactions [20], number of participants [21], [22] the task variation [23]–[25] and member personality, collaboration experience as well as cultural values [26].

In pair collaborative writing in particular, the quality depends much on the equality and mutuality [14], [27] of the interaction processes between peers which is known as verbalization process [28]. Verbalization process is also known as 'linguaging' or 'collaborative dialogue' [29]. It refers to the dialogue in which speakers are engaged in problem-solving and knowledge building [30]. In the case of second language (L2) learners' interactions, verbalization process is the dialogue in which learners work together to solve linguistic problems and/or co-construct language or knowledge about language [31]. Verbalization process mediates L2 learning since peers provide L2 learners with opportunities to engage in collaborative dialogues as they seek out and provide assistance with language-related problems [31]. In other words, verbalization process provides learners with more opportunities to interact with others; in so doing, they are expected to take the advantage of having not only personal but also interpersonal interactions in the writing process as they are working collaboratively.

Results of research have revealed that that working in pairs for collaborative writing activities could lead the students to produce more accurate writing texts compared to working individually [18], [21]. Proficiency pairing is one of the most common techniques in pairing the students in mixed proficiency classes. In this technique, the students are paired either heterogeneously (high-low/H-L) or homogeneously (high-high/H-H and low-low/L-L). H-L pairs consist of high English-proficiency students (H) and low English proficiency students (L), while H-H and L-L pairs consist of equally high English-proficiency students (H-H) or equally low English-proficiency students (L-L). Our earlier study [32] showed that the students who worked in H-H and L-L pairs have better writing ability than those who worked in H-L pairs. In the present study, we intend to examine the verbal episodes of the two types of pairings and to find out which pairing type results in more verbal episodes than the other.

In the verbalization process there are three major types of episodes, namely: language-related episodes (LREs), text-related episodes (TREs), and scaffolding episodes (SEs). Some studies [33], [34] have found that H-H pairs produced the highest number of LREs, but other studies [35], [36] have noted that high-intermediate (H-I) and L-L pairs generated most LREs. Regarding the types of LREs, Leaser [33] reported that H-H and H-L pairs produced more grammatical LREs while L-L pairs produced more lexis LREs, while Niu, Jiang, and Deng [36] found that all pairs (H-H, H-L, and L-L) generate more lexis LREs than grammatical and discourse LREs. Situated in the various results of previous studies, the present study investigates what types of verbal episodes are produced by Indonesian EFL students and which of the two

frequency pairings (H-L versus H-H and L-L) produces more LREs, TREs, and SEs. We were triggered by the fact that of the so many research studies on collaborative writing, little is known about the types of EFL students' verbal episodes in proficiency pairings while research has revealed that proficiency pairings affect students' writing achievement. It is then important to study the types of verbal episodes Indonesian EFL students produce while working collaboratively in proficiency pairings and to examine differences in frequency and category of the verbal episodes in the proficiency pairings. For this purpose, we are guided by the research questions formulated as: i) What types of verbal episodes are produced by the Indonesian EFL students who collaborated in proficiency pairings?; ii) Is there any difference in the frequency of types and categories of verbal episodes of the Indonesian EFL students who collaborated in heterogeneous pairs and those in homogenous pairs?

2. RESEARCH METHOD

A case study design was applied in this study. It involved 40 EFL students of a reputable private university in the Province of Yogyakarta, Indonesia, who were conveniently selected. Case study research can be used to enlighten situations in which the phenomena being observed do not yet have a clear set of outcomes. The case-study design has enabled us to deepen our understandings about the types of episodes occurring in the verbalization process in collaborative writing [37]–[39].

The students took a proficiency test, a TOEFL-like test, and the results were used to group them accordingly, heterogeneous pairs (H-L) or homogenous pairs (H-H and L-L). More specifically, there were 20 students in H-L pairs and 20 students in H-H and L-L pairs. When the study was conducted, the students attended a reading-writing course; therefore, the tasks given to the students combined the reading and writing activities. The reading-for-writing tasks refer to integrated tasks that the students should complete collaboratively in pairs.

In the collaborative writing tasks, the students were asked to compose a short paper with the subject "By what means can one be a noble parent?" Prewriting activities required the students to brainstorm on being parents. Reading texts on strict and relaxed parents were given as stimulus. The students were then asked to write an essay on the topic given. Audio recorders in the students' mobile phones were used to record the verbalization process during their collaborative writing. The audio-recordings of the students' verbal episodes in the collaborative pairs were then transcribed. The transcripts were written by trained research assistants using the modified transcription convention as the guidance. The transcription of the verbalization process during collaborative writing was categorized based on the episodes (LREs, TREs, and SEs) as informed from the reviewed literature. The analysis aimed at describing the types of verbal episodes which include LREs, TREs, and SEs in the collaborative writing process and to see whether there is any difference in the frequency and the category of the verbal episodes in the two types of proficiency pairings.

To confirm the reliability of the episode analysis (coding), inter-coder and intra-coder checks were employed. The inter-coder check involved two trained coders who independently coded the transcripts from all pairs. Inter-coder reliability between coder one and coder two was statistically analyzed using interclass correlation coefficient. The result was 93% agreement between the coding result from coder one and coder two. Both coders discussed all disagreements and finally reached 100% agreement. For the intra-coder checks, six weeks later after the first coding, the first coder conducted double-checks by recoding all the transcripts. The intra-coder reliabilities were received by comparing the result of the first coding and second coding. The result from the first coding and the result from the second coding were statistically analyzed using interclass correlation coefficient. The result was 99% agreement between the result from the first coding and the result from second coding. All disagreements were rechecked and finally reached 100% agreement.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. Types of verbal episodes produced by the Indonesian EFL students

The students who were set in pairs for the collaborative writing were engaged in the production of verbal episodes. The verbal episodes produced by Indonesian EFL students in both heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs can be classified into three types: LREs, TREs, and SEs. Moreover, the Indonesian students from the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs produced three categories of LREs (form-focused, lexis-focused, and mechanics-focused).

Samples of LREs with three categories of episodes are shown in Excerpts 1-3. Three types of LREs were identified in this study, i.e., form-focused LRE, lexis-focused LRE, and mechanics-focused LRE. Because the students occasionally used their first language (L1) in the verbal episodes, the excerpts containing L1 were translated in English with italics. The sources of the excerpts were indicated with pseudonyms of the students.

Excerpt 1

Type : LREs

Category : Form-focused

Source : Heterogeneous pair 8 (A=Sheila and B=Lila)

B: So, we can conclude that parent, parent is the more important in our life. The more or the most?

A: The most, *most*B: So, we can conclude that parent, parent is the more important in our life of children. *Oh, no; it sounds weird.*Final text: So, we can conclude that parent is the more important in our life of children.

Excerpt 2

Type : LREs

Category : Lexis-focused

Source : Homogeneous pair 7 (A=Puput and B=Kinan)

A: greatly affect the growth of children.

B: Very influent, is it?

A: extremely influential... *don't use very, extremely influential.*Final Text: It is extremely influential for the growth of children.

Excerpt 3

Type : LREs

Category : Mechanics-focused

Source : Homogeneous pair 7 (A=Fatma and B=Lucy)

B: *so*, the most meritorious person.A: *how is the writing?*

B: M-e-r-i-t-o-r-i-o-u-s person in our...

A: Person. Person!

Final Text: Parents is the most meritorious person in our life.

Excerpts 1-3 are examples of three categories of LREs. Excerpt 1 is a form-focused LREs. In Excerpt 1, Sheila and Lila were discussing how to express ideas in a superlative sentence. They were trying to determine the best sentence form, using comparative 'more' or superlative 'most'. They firstly would say '...parents was the most important in life...', but they felt the word 'most' was strange, and finally they used the word 'more' in their text (...parent is the more important in our life ...). Excerpt 2 is a lexis-focused LREs. In Excerpt 2, Puput and Kinan discussed the use of intensifiers. They were negotiating the best sentence form, using intensifier 'very' or 'extremely'. First, Kinan said 'very influent...', but Puput said that it is not appropriate to use 'very'. It should be 'extremely influential'. In the end they agreed to use 'extremely influential' for the final sentence. Excerpt 3 is an example of mechanics-focused LREs. It was the talk between Fatma and Lucy. Fatma did not know how to spell the word meritorious person, and then Lucy spelled for her 'm-e-r-i-t-o-r-i-o-u-s person in our life...'. Samples of TREs with two categories of episodes are shown in Excerpts 4-5. There are two types of TREs identified from the data analysis, i.e., organization-focused and content-focused.

Excerpt 4

Type : TREs

Category : Organization-focused

Source : Homogeneous pair 5 (A=Susi and B=Inna)

A: Okay, *so*, how to be a good parent. *Later we make intro, body, with the conclusion, right?*

B: Yes

A: *how about making the body first?*B: *yes we can. How much are we going to talk?*

A: Body?

B: *Yes, I mean the body. How much? How about the topic?*

A: Okay just three. Three three three.

Excerpt 5

Type : TREs

Category : Content-focused

Source : Heterogeneous pair 1 (A=Zarin and B=Icha)

- A: *how to* combine the love and discipline. It is through the way for example by giving reward. Giving reward is a must.
- B: It must be a gift? No right? A praise can be used too.
- A: once in a while you have to give the gift
- B: ok but don't overdo it. They will be spoiled
- A: but besides... ooh what if the rewards being like this, what's that
- B: Yes, I mean the body. How much? How about the topic?
- A: Okay just three. Three, three, three.
- B: but besides... oh what if the rewards being like this, what's that what's the name, like something have to do later in the end the'll given reward. It means the conclusion done, the outline done, and now the essay. Just write the essay.

Excerpts 4 and 5 are examples of organization-focused and content focused TREs, respectively. In Excerpt 4, Susi and Inna talked about making introduction, body and conclusion of a paragraph. They were deciding to make the body first. After that, they were discussing the topic and the number of paragraphs they should make. In Excerpt 5, Zarin and Icha talked about the topic. They were discussing if parents should give their children awards or not. They finally made a decision and then began to write the essay. There are three categories of SEs that were found in both heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs, namely: repetition, justification, and elicitation. Excerpts 6, 7, and 8 are examples of the three categories of SEs.

Excerpt 6

- Type : SEs
 Category : Repetition
 Source : Homogeneous pair 1 (A=Nada and B=Hedi)
 A: *how about (in your opinion) which is better, strict parents or relaxed parents,*
 B: Which,
 A: Whether,
 B: Whether? *eh wait wait* which is better whether the strict or...
 A: Relaxed parents.
 B: Between *right?*
 A: Is it between?
 B: Is it whether or between *yeah between.*

Excerpt 7

- Type : SEs
 Category : Elicitation
 Source : Heterogeneous pair 3 (A=Della and B=Nisa)
 A: The reason?
 B: Give them the reason why they are *Just like that. What else <5>*
 A: The good parent should help. *The earlier one*
 B: *which on*
 A: To help their children to solve their bad behavior so without yelling at them or punishment. (Punishment is kind of make traumatic) Without making a traumatic. Impact or feeling for them

Excerpt 8

- Type : SEs
 Category : Justification
 Source : Heterogeneous pair 8 (A=Sheila and B=Lila)
 B: *first is introduction right?*
 A: yes
 B: Parents is the most thing in our life, *like that?*
 A: *is it right important the writing? What if me make the framework first? How many paragraphs will we make? It means at least 5 paragraphs. Introduction, the content 3, then closing*
 B: *alright*

Excerpt 6 is an example of repetition category of SEs. Nada and Hedi kept repeating the same words. They mentioned 'which', 'whether', and 'between' for several times. Excerpt 7 illustrates the elicitation category of SEs. Della and Nisa were developing the paragraphs. They were making a sentence step by step by eliciting a response with question each other. Meanwhile, Excerpt 8 is an example of justification category of SEs. Sheila and Lila were talking about the paragraph writing. Lisa proposed the

outline consisting of five paragraphs (one-paragraph introduction, three-paragraph body, and one-paragraph closing), and Sheila agreed and confirmed the ideas from Lisa.

Briefly stated, the result of the study indicates that Indonesian EFL learners from the two types of proficiency pairs used three types of verbal episodes, namely LREs, TREs, and SEs. More specifically, the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs used three categories of LREs (i.e., form-focused, lexis-focused and mechanics-focused), two categories of TREs (i.e., organization-focused and content-focused), and three categories of SEs (i.e., repetition, elicitation, and justification).

3.2. The frequency of types and categories of verbal episodes of the Indonesian EFL students

The results of data analysis also showed the frequency of the types of verbal episodes produced by Indonesian EFL learners in the process of collaborative writing, as shown in Table 1. The table shows that homogeneous pairs produced more episodes (251) compared to heterogeneous pairs (186). From the 251 episodes produced by the homogeneous pairs, more than half were SEs (57.4%), around one third were LREs (30.3%), and the least part was TREs (12.4%). From the 186 episodes in the heterogeneous pairs, the most frequent episodes were SEs (44.6%), followed by LREs (34.9%), and the least was TREs (20.4%). The two proficiency pairings indicate the same trends that the most frequently produced types of verbal episodes were SEs, and the least frequently produced were TREs.

Table 1. Frequencies of types of episodes produced by heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs

Types of episodes	HOM pairs (n=10); Counts and percentage			
	HET pairs (n=10) Counts and percentage	H-HOM pairs (n=5)	L-HOM pairs (n=5)	Total HOM
LREs	65 (34.9%)	31 (12.4%)	45 (17.9%)	76 (30.3%)
TREs	38 (20.4%)	15 (6%)	16 (6.4%)	31 (12.4%)
SEs	83 (44.6%)	67 (26.7%)	77 (30.7%)	144 (57.4%)
Sub total		113 (45%)	138 (55%)	
Total	186 (100%)		251 (100%)	

The analysis also showed the frequency of the categories of verbal episodes produced by Indonesian EFL students in the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs. The frequency of categories of LREs produced during the recorded collaborative writing task is shown in Table 2. As displayed in the table, in the heterogeneous pairs, the most frequently produced category of episodes was lexis-focused (50.8%), followed by form-focused (43.1%), and the least frequent LREs was the mechanics-focused category. In the homogeneous pairs, the most frequently generated category of episodes during the collaborative writing process were lexis-focused (43.4%), continued by mechanics-focused category (28.9%), and the least frequently produced were form-focused category (27.6%). Both pairs consistently paid the most attention to lexical matters rather than grammar or mechanics. Further than lexical matters, students in the heterogeneous pairs paid more attention to grammar rather than mechanics. On the other way round, students in homogeneous pairs paid more mechanics rather than grammars.

Table 2. Frequency of categories of LREs in the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs

Category of LRE	HOM pairs (n=10); Counts and percentage			
	HET pairs (n=10) Counts and percentage	H-HOM pairs (n=5)	L-HOM pairs (n=5)	Total HOM
Form-focused	28 (43.1%)	8 (10.5%)	13 (17.1%)	21 (27.6%)
Lexis-focused	33 (50.8%)	16 (21.1%)	17 (22.4%)	33 (43.4%)
Mechanics-focused	4 (6.2%)	7 (9.2%)	15 (19.7%)	22 (28.9%)
Sub total		31 (40.8%)	45 (59.2%)	
Total LREs	65 (100%)		76 (100%)	

The frequency of the two categories of TREs produced by the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs in collaborative writing tasks is shown in Table 3. The table shows that the students in the heterogeneous pairs and homogeneous pairs paid attention almost equally to the organization and content matters. This can be seen from the percentage of frequencies of the categories of TREs that in the heterogeneous pairs, 52.6% were for organization and 47.4% were for the content, and the percentage of the frequency of the categories of TREs in the homogeneous pairs was 48.4% for organization matters and 51.6% for content matters. Even though the percentage was different, the trends were almost similar, close to balanced attention between organization and content matters. The frequency of the categories of SEs produced by the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs is shown in Table 4.

Table 4 shows similar trends in both heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs. The most frequently produced categories of SEs were repetition, followed by justification and elicitation. It can be seen that the most frequently used category of SEs in the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs were repetition which are 81.9% and 93.8%, respectively. Moreover, the justification category in the heterogeneous pairs was 9.6% and the homogeneous pairs was 3.5%, while the elicitation category in the heterogeneous pairs was 8.4% and in the homogeneous pairs was 2.8%.

Table 3. Frequency of the categories of TREs in the heterogeneous and homogeneous

Category of TRE	HET pairs (n=10)	HOM pairs (n=10); Counts and percentage		
	Counts and percentage	H-HOM pairs (n=5)	L-HOM pairs (n=5)	Total HOM
Organization	20 (52.6%)	8 (25.8%)	7 (22.6%)	15 (48.4%)
Content	18 (47.4%)	10 (32.3%)	6 (19.4%)	16 (51.6%)
Sub total		18 (58.1%)	13 (41.9)	31 (100%)
Total TRE	38 (100%)		31 (100%)	

Table 4. Frequency of categories of SEs in the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs

Category of SEs	HET Pairs (n=10)	HOM pairs (n=10); Counts and percentage		
	Counts and percentage	H-HOM pairs (n=5)	L-HOM pairs (n=5)	Total HOM
Repetition	68 (81.9%)	60 (41.7%)	75 (52.1%)	135 (93.8%)
Elicitation	7 (8.4%)	3 (2.1%)	1 (0.7%)	4 (2.8%)
Justification	8 (9.6%)	4 (2.8%)	1 (0.7%)	5 (3.5%)
Sub total		67 (46.5%)	77 (53.5%)	
Total SE	83 (100%)		144 (100%)	

The results of the study revealed that Indonesian EFL students assigned to work collaboratively in pairs produced three major types of verbal episodes. The use of various types of verbal episodes indicates that the students were intensively engaged in the process of reading and writing tasks assigned in the course. Review of the literature indicates that a number of studies have confirmed that verbal episodes such as LREs could be as sources of language learning [20], [29], [40]. Moreover, the data in this study have shown that homogeneous pairs produced higher frequencies of LREs. The findings in this study should be perceived cautiously because the data in this study were limited only to the verbalized language. Non-verbal language such as signs, mimes, expressions that might have happened during pair interactions was not captured.

Further analysis shows that there was different attention between the students in the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs. Heterogeneous pairs produced more form-focused LREs than mechanics-focused LREs, while the homogeneous pairs produced more mechanics-focused LREs than form-focused LREs. This trend is partly similar to the previous study [36] that homogeneous pairs, especially L-L pairs, produced more mechanics-focused LREs than heterogeneous pairs. While the homogeneous pairs in the previous study [36] put the form-focused LREs on their second priority after lexis-focused LRE, the homogeneous pairs in the current study put form-focused LREs as the last priority after the lexis-focused LREs and form-focused LREs.

In terms of the frequency categories of TREs, a similar trend could be observed between the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs. TREs were the least episodes produced after SEs and LREs. The previous studies have reported that the TREs produced by the students depend on the writing topic and the nature of the writing task [36], [41]. In the current study, all pairs were given the same topic when they experienced collaborative writing. The number of TREs was less than the other types of episodes since, in this study, the task was reading-for-writing. About the content of the writing, the students were much helped by the reading texts they had to read before they started writing.

The analysis of the SEs revealed that the heterogeneous pairs produced less SEs episodes than the homogeneous pairs. In second language learning, especially in collaborative tasks, scaffolding could be provided by teachers and peers. In the current study, the teacher gave her general feedback to students at the end of the lesson. However, during pair collaborative dialogues, the students scaffolded each other by producing scaffolding episodes. In addition to the effectiveness of teacher scaffolding [42], peer scaffolding facilitates L2 learning [20], [43]. Scaffolding could motivate the students' motivation as they get immediate and relevant feedback from their peers [26], [44].

A similar trend between the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs could be observed in the frequency of SEs. In the two pairings, the most frequent SEs were repetition, followed by justification and elicitation. This finding is in line with the previous study that repetition was the most frequent episode that appeared during pair collaborative writing [28], [45]. Many times, the students in this study repeated their peer words or phrases. Repetition could be used as a cognitive strategy to acquire new words and to memorize unfamiliar terms [46]. Justification and elicitation were types of SEs that were less produced by

both heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs. Yet, the appearance of justification episodes and elicitation episodes could show that the pairs were engaged and complemented each other [22], [47]. Such engagement could support the intensiveness of peer feedback. Previous studies have reported that peer feedback is effective for EFL writing learning [48], [49].

4. CONCLUSION

The findings of this study indicated that Indonesian EFL students were engaged in producing the verbal episodes when they were assigned to work in collaborative writing, regardless of the types of the proficiency pairings. The students produced three major types of episodes: LREs, TREs, and SEs. The findings dealing with verbal episodes in the collaborative writing suggest that the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs produce the same trends in verbalization episodes in the prewriting stage, more particularly in TREs. However, the degree of percentage of episodes' production, the types and categories of verbal episodes varied in both heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs.

The homogeneous pairs produced far more episodes compared to the heterogeneous pairs. For LREs, the homogeneous pairs produced more LREs compared to the heterogeneous pairs. Students in both pairings paid the most attention to lexis-focused LREs. Both the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs could successfully resolve the LREs. For the TREs and SEs in the context of a reading-for-writing task, students in the heterogeneous and homogeneous pairs paid relatively equal attention to the organization-focused and content-focused TREs. The heterogeneous pairs produced far less SEs than the homogeneous pairs. In both proficiency pairings, the most frequently produced category of SEs was repetition, followed by justification and elicitation.

In reference to the findings, it is recommended that the EFL teachers apply proficiency pairings in their collaborative writing practices. It is essential that teachers manage the pairing; when they make heterogeneous pairs, the proficiency space should not be too distant. For future researchers, it will be insightful to conduct further studies to justify the link between the number of episodes and the learning gains. The sense of being equal in terms of proficiency level among students may enable the students to be more open and to feel comfortable to become more mutual in interacting with their pairs.

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