

## **DIALOGUE AS WAY TO ENGAGE EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (ECE) STUDENT TEACHERS WITH THEIR LEARNING: A CASE STUDY IN UNIVERSITAS TERBUKA**

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### **Abstract**

Universitas Terbuka (UT) is the only university in Indonesia that fully uses distance education (DE) system. UT has Early Childhood Education (ECE) study program and the students are kindergarten and ECE teachers. In UT, the common and the main learning process are given using online which be called online tutorials. This study investigated student teachers' engagement in their learning. The respondents were UT's ECE student teachers who participated in one ECE Writing Scientific Article course during April to June 2023. The research question of this study is how dialogue can increase students' engagement in their learning? For this study, students' engagement will be shown if the students actively participated in the online tutorial and in the WhatsApp group discussion provided by the tutor who were also one of the researchers. To help students to be more engage in their learning the researchers used dialogue. Students can be called engaged in their learning if the students involved in the discussions and did their tasks. The reason for this study was it was found that in the first 3 weeks of the online tutorial, only 5 from 15 students participated in the online discussion either in webinar tutorial or in WA group. This study used qualitative approach with observation. The data were analyzed descriptively. After the researchers used dialogue with the students, there was a rise in the number of the students who participated in the Writing Scientific Article course. The results of this study was before the course finished in June 2023, there were 12 students who were really engaged in their course which was shown by writing the scientific paper as the tasks of the ECE Writing Scientific Article course. It was shown also that using dialogue with the students can increase students' engagement in learning.

Keywords: distance education, dialogue, engagement in learning, online tutorial.

### **1 INTRODUCTION**

Distance education has become an important way for studying for many learners and institutions. During the pandemic, many schools and also universities or academic institutions have used distance education way of their teaching and learning process (<https://www.coursera.org/in/articles/distance-learning>).

In Indonesia, there is Universitas Terbuka which since its establishment in 1984, Universitas Terbuka (UT), has used distance education (DE) system as their teaching and learning management (Chandrawati, 2015, 2018, 2022). The use of distance education system is proven

to be effective to help UT students learn even though the students are separated with their lectures.

Distance education brings its own set of challenges when it comes to engagement and interaction. However, by incorporating dialogue-based approaches, student teachers can actively participate and contribute to their learning process. Through online platforms, such as discussion forums or video conferencing, student teachers can engage in meaningful conversations with their peers and instructors. These dialogues can foster a sense of community, support collaboration, and facilitate knowledge sharing.

Dialogue in distance education can indeed be a powerful tool to engage student teachers and support their learning, particularly when it comes to writing scientific articles within the field of early childhood education. In this section, we will further explore how the use of dialogue can facilitate this process.

This study investigated student teachers' engagement in their learning. The research question of this study is "how dialogue can increase students' engagement in their learning". For this study, students' engagement will be shown if the students actively participated in the online tutorial and in the WhatsApp group discussion provided by the tutor who were also one of the researchers. Further, the important result of how dialogue can be a way to engage early childhood education (ECE) student teachers with their learning in writing scientific article is when the students can do all the assignments. It means the students can develop and send their own scientific article as the final result of the course.

## **1.1 Distance Education**

Distance learning is the way of learning that does not require students to be present physically at the university or institution. Learning materials and lectures are provided online. Students are separated with the lecturer and the institution, so the students can stay at their homes while taking the course since they can learn via online. However, the students can have the opportunity to meet directly with the lecturers if they need it (Coursera, 2023).

There are two types of distance education system or distance learning: synchronous and asynchronous. 1) Synchronous distance learning is when the students and the lecturers can meet face to face, in the same time, either via online or offline. With this face to face instruction, the

students will have live communications with their lecturers. This learning model needs teleconferencing and other similar technologies. 2) Asynchronous distance learning is when the students and the lecturers cannot meet face to face in the same time. But, they can meet via online (Coursera, 2023).

## 1.2 Dialogue

The interaction in teaching and learning is really important since this is the way for the students and also to the tutors or the lecturers to have a communication between each other. The interaction for teaching and learning can be done by using dialogue (Chandrawati, 2018). Moreover, dialogue in this paper is inspired by Freire and Vella thought about dialogue. Freire and Vella believed that by dialoging, the students can learn deeper about some learning materials and therefore, the students can engage in their learning process. Freire (2000) stated that dialogue is way for people to meet, to share ideas, to learn in order to name the world. For this paper, the meaning of the dialogical approach is by dialoging the students are stimulated to think about the meaning of the topic and to act for their own purpose. When the early students do dialoging they learn to listen, to think and to name or to express what they understand about the topic. Dialogue, according to Freire (2000, in Chandrawati, 2015), can also serve as a means for gaining multiple perspectives from the learners, as well as from the teachers.

Dialogue in online learning can be a way when the tutors ask and give some comments for the the students to improve the students' assignments. Nowadays, online tutorials in UT also provide some online meeting or it usually be called webinar tutorials or tuweb. When online tutorials are asynchronous instruction, this tuweb is synchronous instruction. By using tuweb the dialogue between the students and the tutors can be more effective. The dialogue also can help students to engage in their learning.

According to Eveleth and Baker-Eveleth (2003) dialogue can be shown if:

1. the students ask question to gather information or clarify to previous statements
2. the students can write through paraphrasing or restating
3. the students contribute to the conversation
4. the students can express statements of respect, honouring, personal connection
5. the students can share their understanding or agreement toward the topic being learned.

### **1.3 Engagement in learning**

In education, student engagement refers to the degree of attention, curiosity, interest, optimism, and passion that students show when they are learning or being taught, which extends to the level of motivation they have to learn and progress in their education (<http://edglossary.org/student-engagement/>). Engagement in this paper is shown when the students can learn actively which are shown by their attending in the online tutorials, by attending the synchronous online tutorials or tutorial webinar or tuweb, by giving questions, by sending their scientific articles and by revising their articles using their tutors suggestions. Students can be called engaged in their learning if the students involved in the discussions and did their tasks.

The online tutorials in UT now are used to teach UT students to write scientific articles.

### **1.4 Online tutorial**

There are some learning services such as online registration, face to face or telephone services and also some tutorials provided by UT. At UT the teaching and learning system generally uses online learning or is usually called online tutorial. However, there are some modes of tutorial provided by UT such as face to face tutorial, radio and television tutorial, tutorial via newspaper and also online tutorial.

In line with rapid technological advances, UT learning services are also provided online. Online learning tutorials are added to help UT students learn at a distance. In this distance education system, the provision of online tutorials can help the students to be active learners and also help the students to understand the learning content (Chandrawati, 2018, Aisyah, Chandrawati, Novita, 2019). Even, online tutorials have been proven to help students to keep learning when the Covid pandemic attacked all over the world, especially, in Indonesia (Chandrawati, Andriyani, Puspitasari, 2022). How can the online tutorials helped the students to keep learning? Because the online tutorials can still make the students to interact with the tutors and with their peers (Chandrawati 2015, 2018, 2019, 2022).

### **1.5 Scientific writing course**

All college students must write scientific articles. The ability to write scientific articles is a complex ability, which is supported by continuous knowledge and practice. To help UT students, especially early childhood students, students are required to take part in learning or

mentoring for the PAUD4560 Scientific Writing course. This course uses teaching materials with the code MKWI4560. It is hoped that student participation in this course will provide a learning experience including input from supervisors so that the scientific articles produced are free of plagiarism and worthy of publication. This course is given online for 14 weeks with 4 times of Synchronous online tutorial or webinar tutorial or tuweb.

Course Learning Outcomes :

After studying this Scientific Writing Course, students are expected to be able to write scientific articles that are free of plagiarism and are following the rules for writing scientific papers. Specifically, learning outcomes include the ability to:

1. formulate problems according to their field of knowledge well;
2. write the title of the scientific article correctly;
3. process reading results or references to support the development or writing of scientific articles well;
4. Prepare an outline for writing scientific articles well
5. write a complete scientific article based on the framework of the essay created;
6. improve or finalize scientific articles to make them better so they are worthy of publication.

Learning Materials and Resources in Scientific Writing Course:

1. Scientific Writing Course Guide (MKWI4560), which UT has provided and prepared for the students;
2. Example of 1 (one) scientific article from Google Scholar or other sources to be analyzed and identified the features or characteristics that make the article called a scientific article.

A general description of learning activities in the online tutorial for Scientific Work Courses is:

a. Self-study and Assignments:

- Study learning scenarios in Course Orientation
- Study the Scientific Work Guide which contains provisions regarding learning and rules for writing scientific papers
- Do a preliminary assignment by selecting and studying a scientific article that you obtained from Google Scholar or other sources.

b. Tasks that must be done by the students independently:

I. Task 1:

- ✓ Formulate problems and topics, and create scientific article titles,
- ✓ search for, read, and organize reading (minimum 10 references: 5 articles and books) supporting scientific article writing, as well as

- ✓ create an essay framework for writing scientific articles.
- II. Task 2:
- ✓ Revise improvements to Assignment 1 based on comments and input for improvements from supervisors, as well
  - ✓ develop/write scientific articles based on the revised essay framework
- III. Task 3:
- ✓ Upload the completed draft of the scientific article to the tutorial page
- IV. Task 4:
- ✓ Improve the draft article that has been uploaded by paying attention to comments/improvement input from the tutor/supervisor
  - ✓ Upload revised scientific articles to obtain final assessment/scoring from supervisors
  - ✓ Actively participate in tutorials or guidance, by reading the online tutorial materials, attending the webinar tutorial and actively discuss the tasks and the article with the tutor and with their peers

Online Tutorial (Tuton) is carried out asynchronously for 14 weeks included Webinar Tutorials or tuweb which are carried out synchronously or face to face online in four sessions, with a duration of 2 hours or 120 minutes per session.

## **2 METHODOLOGY**

This study used qualitative approach with observation and interviews. The data were analyzed descriptively. This paper will investigate how the Early Childhood Education (ECE) student teachers in UT who are kindergarten and ECE teachers learn to write scientific articles via inline tutorials.

The respondents were 15 UT's ECE student teachers who participated in one ECE Writing Scientific Article course during April to June 2023.

After the researchers used dialogue with the students, there was a rise in the number of the students who participated in the Writing Scientific Article course. The reason for this study was it was found that in the first 3 weeks of the online tutorial, only 5 from 15 students participated in the online discussion either in webinar tutorial or in WA group.

The qualitative research method employed in this case study allowed the researchers to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences and perspectives of student teachers. Through interviews the researchers were able to explore their thoughts, emotions, and motivations related to the process of writing scientific articles. This methodological approach complemented the use of dialogue as it enhanced the richness of data collected and provided valuable insights into how dialogue impacted their writing experiences.

The researchers used the Dialogue Criteria from Chandrawati (2015) to observe how dialogue can be a way to engage early childhood education (ECE) student teachers with their learning in writing scientific article. It means if the indicators d Dialogue components appears so it showed that dialogue can engage the students in their learning. Thus, the students can do all the assignments. To be clearly, it means the students can develop and send their own scientific article as the final result of the course as the results of the students' engagement.

Table 1. The Dialogue Criteria Table

Dialogue component	indicators
1.Show respect	1a Greet others Greet students and create opportunities for students to greet each other 1b Use polite language and/or other student's names Use polite language and/or student's names 1c Acknowledge other students' ideas
2.Create and maintain a safe environment for self and students	2a.Provide encouraging comments to one another 2b.Validate other students' comments and/or provide a supportive critical response
3.Assess needs and context	Express their needs and contexts and acknowledge those of others
4 Collaborate with peers	Demonstrate collaboration to explore or develop ideas
5 Demonstrate empathy	Express understanding of and appreciation toward other's ideas, perspectives, or situations
6 Exchange teacher student roles	Teach their peers and tutor
7 Engage in the learning process	7a.Demonstrate critically thinking about the content 7b.Ask questions for consideration by others 7c.Summarize, synthesize, and/or offer conclusions at the end of discussions—>can develop an article draft 7d.Openness to new ideas and new ways of thinking and to being changed an the result is can have a revised article

To observe the students engagement in more detailed, the researchers investigated the improvement of the students competencies in writing scientific article for 14 weeks of online tutorial.

To give more help to the students in getting the competencies in writing, the researchers made a WhatsApp group with the students in this class. Via the WhatssApp group the researchers as the tutor tried to interact with the students either by texting and also by video conferencing in the WhatsApp. Here the researchers tried to have dialogue with the students

The following is the table to show the occurrence of dialogue that can make students involved in learning activities in the online tutorial for this Scientific Writing Course.

Table 2. The Descriptive Dialogue Process Table concerning students articles

TASKS THAT MUST BE DONE BY THE STUDENTS INDEPENDENTLY:	THE TUTOR'S DIALOGUE			
	ONLINE TUTORIAL / ASYNCHRONOUS	WEBINAR TUTORIAL (TUWEB) / /SYNCHRONOUS	WHATSA PP TEXTING	WHATSAPP VIDEO CONFERENCI NG
<p>1.Task 1:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Formulate problems and topics, and create scientific article titles,</li> <li>search for, read, and organize reading (minimum 10 references: 5 articles and books) supporting scientific article writing, as well as</li> <li>create an essay framework for writing scientific articles.</li> </ul>	Only some students who are participative students did not do the task	Some participative students attended the tuweb 1 and tried to do the task 1 and the tutor was giving feedback to revise the task 1	The tutor was giving feedback to revise the task 1, and the some students gave more questions about the task 1 to the tutor	After meeting with the tutor via WA video Some students seemed motivated to revise their Task 1 and they also gave questions and tried to answer their peers' questions about the task 1
<p>2.Task 2:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revise improvements to Assignment 1 based on comments and</li> </ul>	Some students did the task 2 but their answers wre not good	Some participative students attended the tuweb and asked for some	Some participativ e students asked for some feedback	Some participative students asked for some feedback from the tutor



<p>input for improvements from supervisors, as well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>develop/write scientific articles based on the revised essay framework</li> </ul>		<p>feedback from the tutor related to the task 2</p>	<p>from the tutor related to the task 2</p>	<p>related to the task 2 and tried to revise their answers for Task 2 and they asked for the tutor's feedback</p>
<p>1. Task 3:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Upload the completed draft of the scientific article to the tutorial page</li> </ul>	<p>The tutor gave messages to students who were not active in the course. But, some participative students did the task 3 but their article have some mistakes that need to be revised. But dialogue in the online tutorial seemed not reached all of the students</p>	<p>The tutor gave messages to students who were not active in the course. But, some participative students did the task 3. In the tuweb the tutor gave the feedback to revise the articles. It seemed that dialogue in the tuweb seemed can give more understanding about how to write a scientific article</p>	<p>It seemed that dialogue in the tuweb seemed can give more understanding about how to write a scientific article, and to give more help to the students who had given the Task 3,, the tutor keep contact and reminded all students to do all the Task or to write the article</p>	<p>The tutor asked certain students to revise the article and the students reminded their peers to do all the Task. Some participative students asked for some feedback from the tutor related to the task 3 and tried to revise their answers for Task 3 and they asked actively for the tutor's feedback</p>
<p>2. Task 4:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improve the draft article that has been uploaded by paying attention to comments/improvement input from the tutor/supervisor</li> </ul>	<p>The tutor gave messages to students who were not active in the course to do all the Tasks. Fortunately, all students can do</p>	<p>Then, the tutor tried to do few tuweb to help the less active students to revise the articles which were above</p>	<p>Via the WA the tutor keep contact and reminded all students to do the Task 4 and</p>	<p>The tutor asked certain students to revise the article and the students can remind their peers to revise the Task 4. It</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Upload revised scientific articles to obtain final assessment/scoring from supervisors</li> </ul>	<p>the Task 4, but, they got many feedback to revise Task 4 that are the revision of Task 3. The tutor then, asked the students to attend the tuweb 5 dan 6 to revise their article before they did the Turn it in. The results were the the participative students can get under 30% for plagiarism, while the less active student got above 30%. Then, the tutor tried to do few tuweb to help the students to revise the articles which were above 30%</p>	<p>30%. The results were the less active students finally can get under 30% for plagiarism,</p>	<p>to inform that there was few tuweb to help the less active students to revise the articles which were above 30%. The results were the less active students finally can get under 30% for plagiarism. It seemed that dialogue in the tuweb and in the WA seemed can give more understanding about how to write a scientific</p>	<p>seemed that dialogue in the tuweb and in the WA seemed can give more understanding about how to write a scientific article</p>
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To explore the students perception about the dialogue process provided by the tutor in the Scientific writing article course. There was only 1 question given by the tutor about the students' feeling of the online course and the dialogue provision.

### 3 FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From Table 2 above it was shown that there was an active and continuous dialogue appear in the process of helping students to write a scientific article which was done by the tutor by providing some tuweb and via WA. This findings in line with Kristiana et al (2023) reports that

the online learning model needs an effective formula for increasing student engagement. This dialogue process seemed can give more understanding to students who firstly did not know about how to write a scientific article. The guidance and patient in guiding the students resulted that the 15 students finally can send their article to fulfill the Task 4. the students felt that they are thankful and satisfied with the dialogue process that they had during the ECE Writing Scientific Article course. This finding is related with what Anjarwati ad Sa'adah finding of their research that lecturers who teach Writing courses are expected to increase student engagement in various aspects of behavior, emotions, and cognitive in the lecture process to achieve learning objectives and increase student competence.

The results of this study was also shown that dialogue can engage the students in their learning process which was shown by the students can demonstrate their critical thinking about the content in order to write their article. Students also demonstrated their engagement in their learning by asking questions, summarizing, synthesizing, and/or offer conclusions at the end of discussions. Students also seemed open to new ideas and new ways of thinking and to being changed and the result is they can do the Task 4 which was shown by sending their revised article as their Task 4. The result in line with Wahab and Aisyah (2022) wrote their paper that Students' engagement is a supporting factor that has an important position in the online learning process to achieve a better and more effective quality of learning.

The result of the interview that the researchers received from student teachers was overwhelmingly positive. Many reported feeling more connected to their peers and their coursework. They also reported that the dialogues helped them to better understand the content of the course and apply it in their teaching practice. Furthermore, they felt that the dialogues provided them with a sense of community, facilitating a greater sense of belonging to the university.

#### **4 CONCLUSION**

Scientific writing requires a unique set of skills, particularly in the early childhood education field where research is constantly evolving. Dialogue which were provided in the online tutorials and in the synchronous online tutorials can provide student teachers with opportunities to brainstorm, discuss ideas, and receive feedback on their writing. By engaging in dialogue,

they can refine their research questions, critically analyze and interpret data, and articulate their findings more effectively

It was shown also that using dialogue with the students can increase students' engagement in learning. The case study highlights the benefits of using dialogue as a way to engage early childhood education student teachers with their learning. The researchers observed that dialogue can provide student teachers with a platform to express their thoughts, share their experiences, and learn from their peers. This can lead to deeper understanding of the course material in a more meaningful way, and facilitate the application of knowledge in the real world. The researchers recommend dialogue-based teaching strategies for universities to consider in their early childhood education programs.

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