FOSTERING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL THROUGH PEER FEEDBACK ACTIVITY:
A Case Study at UIN SMH Banten

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Abstract: *Students typically want their texts to be read, and in the classroom feedback from other student provides opportunities for them to see how others respond to their work and to learn from these responses. Since feedback is an important element in the process of writing, teacher must facilitate this kind of feedback to foster students' writing skill. The present study concerned with the practice of peer feedback in the writing instruction, especially in writing an essay. More specifically this study investigated how peer feedback implemented in the classroom and how it influenced the students' writing skill. The data were collected using two instruments, they were writing test and observation (using peer feedback format). From the result, it was found that students had gained more knowledge on the aspects of writing an essay and had made improvement on their writing skills especially in making the essay.*

Keywords: *peer feedback, essay, writing, perception*

INTRODUCTION

Many students especially university students assume that writing is one of the most difficult skill in English. The skills involved in writing activity are highly complex. Most foreign language students have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and many more. The difficulty also lies on the proces of writing itself, since the process of writing is a very complex process. The process of writing includes the planning, writing, revising, proofreading, and editing final draf (Leonhard, 2002). So, by looking at this process, writing is not only generating and organizing the ideas, but also translating these ideas into

readable text. The difficulty will get worse if students' language proficiency is weak.

Practically, students must be able to practice the process of writing in order to be able to write accurately. However, although students are better at invention, organization, and revision in the writing process, there are still many grammatical and lexical inaccuracies in the students' products. In longer piece of academic writing work such as an essay, students are still having difficulties not only in the structure of organization of an essay itself but also in the grammatical structures. A number of studies claim that a lack of grammatical accuracy in ESL students writing may impede students' progress in the university level at large (Janopolous, 1992; Santos, 1988; Vann, Lorenz, & Meyer, 1991). Too many sentence and discourse level errors may distract and frustrate teacher and other readers when it comes to the evaluation stage of the students' writing.

One of the key aspects of the success in writing, especially in the process approach is the importance of seeking and responding to the feedback of others while a text is under development (Caroline, et.al 2003). English foreign language (EFL) writing teachers or lecturers need to develop an activity that can encourage students in giving feedback to their peers' work. Feedback on students' drafts may take the form of oral or written comments by peers or the lecturer, designed to guide students in their revisions.

Peer feedback is considered as an important dominant tool in enhancing the process of learning English writing. It also is regarded as a social activity (Hyland: 2003). Some researchers consider peer feedback as an ineffective technique for improving students' writing and prefer teacher feedback to peer feedback (F. Hyland, 1998). Several studies have done to investigate the use of peer feedback in teaching writing. Sapkota (2012) claimed that peer correction and teacher correction technique was found productive in teaching writing through action research as a whole. Furthermore, regarding mechanics of writing, their writing was found systematic in case of punctuation, proper use of paragraphs, in coherence and cohesion in writing. Another scholar, Susanti&Wicaksono (2014) found that the role of the teacher was still needed when doing the peer

feedback in writing instruction. The students would directly ask the teacher if they did not understand the process or when they found different opinion between the writer and the corrector when doing correction.

Practicing peer feedback also contributes well for advanced students at university level. It can be functioned as a rehearsal for the peer review that occurs in professional academic settings. In order for peer feedback activity to be successful, lecturers need to explain and ideally model it, whether students engage in peer feedback during lecture time or on their own (Berg, 2000). With training and practice, students can actively engage in peer review which can help them develop their critical faculties and understand how other readers respond to their writing. Considering the problem and the context of discussion above, this study is conducted to investigate the implementation of peer feedback in writing instruction. Therefore objectives of this study are as follows:

1. To know the implementation of peer feedback in the writing instruction at the fourth semester of English education department of State Islamic University of *Sulatan Maulana Hasanuddin* Banten.
2. To know the students' writing ability after peer feedback being implemented in the writing instruction at the fourth semester of English education department of State Islamic University of *Sulatan Maulana Hasanuddin* Banten.
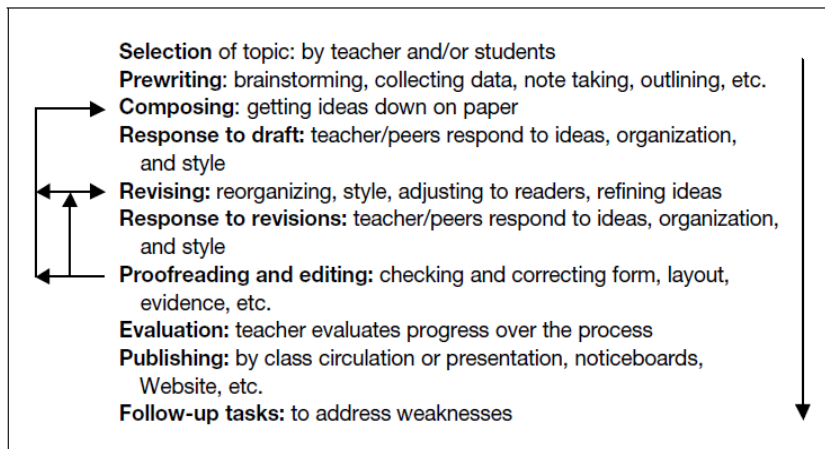
1. Writing as a Process

Hyland (2003) states that The process approach to teaching writing emphasizes the writer as an independent producer of texts, but it goes further to address the issue of what teachers should do to help learners perform a writing task. The model of writing processes most widely accepted by L2 writing teachers is the original planning-writing-reviewing framework established by Flower and Hayes (Flower, 1989; Flower and Hayes, 1981). This sees writing as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983: 165).

Process approaches focus primarily on what writers do as they write rather than on textual features. But, depending on the writer's immediate task, these approaches may also consider text features. The process approach includes different stages, which can be combined with other aspects of teaching writing, for example, the study of textual features. Process approaches are premised on the notion that writing is an iterative process, as shown in Figure 1 below, involving the stages described below. Stages of the writing process can happen in various orders at different points. Lecturers can help clarify students' misconceptions about writing by explicitly teaching the stages of the writing process.

As figure 1 below shows planning, drafting, revising, and editing do not occur in a neat linear sequence, but are recursive, interactive, and potentially simultaneous, and all work can be reviewed, evaluated, and revised, even before any text has been produced at all. At any point the writer can jump backward or forward to any of these activities: returning to the library for more data, revising the plan to accommodate new ideas, or rewriting for readability after peer feedback.

Figure 1. A Process Model of Writing

Selection of topic: by teacher and/or students
Prewriting: brainstorming, collecting data, note taking, outlining, etc.
Composing: getting ideas down on paper
Response to draft: teacher/peers respond to ideas, organization, and style
Revising: reorganizing, style, adjusting to readers, refining ideas
Response to revisions: teacher/peers respond to ideas, organization, and style
Proofreading and editing: checking and correcting form, layout, evidence, etc.
Evaluation: teacher evaluates progress over the process
Publishing: by class circulation or presentation, noticeboards, Website, etc.
Follow-up tasks: to address weaknesses

A significant number of writing teachers adopt a process orientation as the main focus of their courses and the approach has had a major impact on writing research and teaching. The teacher's role is to guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on

form to help them develop strategies for generating, drafting, and refining ideas. This is achieved through setting pre-writing activities to generate ideas about content and structure, encouraging brainstorming and outlining, requiring multiple drafts, giving extensive feedback, seeking text level revisions, facilitating peer responses, and delaying surface corrections until the final editing (Raimes, 1992).

According to Richards and Renandya (2005) The process writing as a classroom activity incorporates the four basic writing stages planning, drafting (writing), revising (redrafting) and editing and three other stages externally imposed on students by the teacher, namely, responding (sharing), evaluating and post-writing (Richard: 2005). The process of writing will be explained in the following section.

a. Planning (Pre-Writing)

Prewriting helps the students to generate ideas for writing assignments. The point of prewriting is narrowing the subject of the paragraph to a specific focus, so that students can write about the topic clearly and completely. Pre-writing is any activity in the classroom that encourages students to write. It stimulates thoughts for getting started. In fact, it moves students away from having to face a blank page toward generating tentative ideas and gathering information for writing. The following activities provide the learning experiences for students at this stage: listing, free writing, clustering.

b. Outlining

An outline is a formal plan for a paragraph or an essay. In an outline, the students write down the main points and sub-points in the order in which they plan to write about them. With the outline, it should be relatively easy to write a specific paragraph or an essay. There is a topic sentence, main supporting points, supporting details for the first main point, and another supporting detail for the second main point. The students could add some examples and a concluding sentence but the main planning for the paragraph or the essay is completed.

c. Writing and Revising Draft

Stage III in the writing process is writing and revising several drafts. Writing is a continuous process of discovery. Therefore, as the students are writing, they will think of new ideas that may not be in the brainstorming list or in the outline. The students can add new ideas or delete original ones at any time in the writing process as long as those new ideas are relevant with the topic. After writing the rough draft, the next step is to revise it. At the revising process, the students change what they have written in order to improve it. Students check it over for content and organization, including unity, coherence, and logic. The students can change, rearrange, add, or delete, all for the goal of communicating the thoughts more clearly, more effectively, and in a more interesting way.

d. Responding

Responding to student writing by the teacher (or by peers) has a central role to play in the successful implementation of process writing. Responding intervenes between drafting and revising. It is the teacher's *quick initial reaction* to students' drafts. Response can be oral or in writing, after the students have produced the first draft and just before they proceed to revise.

e. Editing

At this stage, students are engaged in tidying up their texts as they prepare the final draft for evaluation by the teacher. They edit their own or their peer's work for grammar, spelling, punctuation, diction, sentence structure and accuracy of supportive textual material such as quotations, examples and the like. The process of editing is not done for its own sake but as part of the process of making communication as clear as possible to the readers.

f. Evaluating

In evaluating student writing, the scoring may be analytical (i.e., based on specific aspects of writing ability) or holistic (i.e., based on a global interpretation of the effectiveness of that piece of writing). In order to be effective, the criteria for evaluation should be made known to students in advance. They should include overall interpretation of the task, sense of

audience, relevance, development and organization of ideas, format or layout, grammar and structure, spelling and punctuation, range and appropriateness of vocabulary, and clarity of communication. Depending on the purpose of evaluation, a numerical score or grade may be assigned.

g. Post Writing

Post-writing constitutes any classroom activity that the teacher and students can do with the completed pieces of writing. It includes publishing, sharing, reading aloud, transforming texts for stage performances, or merely displaying texts on notice-boards. The post-writing stage is a platform for recognizing students' work as important and worthwhile. It may be used as a motivation for writing as well as to hedge against students finding excuses for not writing.

2. Peer feedback in Teaching Writing

Peer feedback, which is referred to under different names such as peer response, peer review, peer editing, and peer evaluation, can be defined as:

> "*use of learners as sources of information and interactants for each other is such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing*" (Liu and Hansen, 2002:1).

Peer review, feedback, and evaluation are intended to be used interchangeably. According to Liu and Hansen (2002), peer editing refers to the use of learners as sources of information, and interaction for each other in such a way that learners assume roles and responsibilities normally taken on by a formally trained teacher, tutor, or editor in commenting on and critiquing each other's drafts in both written and oral formats in the process of writing.

The theoretical advantages of peer response are based largely on the fact that writing and learning are social processes. Collaborative peer review helps learners engage in a community of equals who respond to

each other's work and together create an authentic social context for interaction and learning (e.g., Mittan, 1989). Practically, students are able to participate actively in learning while getting responses from real, perhaps multiple, readers in a nonthreatening situation (Medonca and Johnson, 1994).

Peer response or peer feedback can take a number of different forms and occur at various stages in the writing process. Most typically it consists of assigning students to groups of two, three, or four who exchange completed first drafts and give comments on each other's work before they revise them. This normally occurs during class time and can take up to an hour to complete, especially if readers are asked to produce written comments and writers are required to provide written responses to these. Some peer sessions involve the free exchange of reactions to a piece of work, but L2 learners typically work with a set of peer review guidelines to help them focus on particular aspects of the writing and the conventions of the genre.

The participants of this research were the fourth semester students of English education department who were attending the Writing III course. There were 24 female students of the 2017/2018 academic year who participated in this research. In this research, the researcher used two kinds of research instrument. The research instruments are: (1) Observation using Peer feedback format. The format was taken from, *Introduction to Academic Writing Third Edition* By Alice Oshima & Ann Hogue (2007) and (2) writing test. The test was intended to know the students' writing skill.

METHOD

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FINDINGS

1. The Implementation of Peer Feedback in Teaching Writing.

In this study, the researcher as well as the lecturer herself conducted the research in the Writing III class. The research was conducted in the fourth semester class of English education department academic year 2017/2018. The lecturer delivered lesson about essay along with its structures organization. To limit the discussion, the teacher explained about one example of essay that was opinion essay. Then, the students were asked to provide two opinion essays for the peer feedback activities.

The implementation of peer feedback in the teaching writing instruction followed the stages such as pre-training stage, while peer editing, and post peer editing as proposed by Charoenchang (2011). Below will be described each stage of peer feedback activity more briefly.

2. *Pre-training Stage*

In this part, the teacher explained and demonstrated the structure organization of an essay along with the parts of an essay comprehensively. Some examples of the essay were also given to the students to be analyzed. After the students were understand and were ready for making an essay, the teacher prepared some essay topics to be chosen by the students and developed them into a full essay.

Then, the students corrected each other's essay based on the peer feedback format. The teacher guided and demonstrated how to fill in the format. This stage was part of exercise for the students to be more familiar with the peer feedback activity. There is no result from this activity only to make the students more familiar with the peer feedback. At the end of this stage, the students might keep the essay and the peer feedback format as their personal document. Below is the format for peer feedback format proposed by Alice Oshima and Ann Hogue (2007). This format has been edited to some extents and it stresses more on the

structure organization of an essay. So, it is expected that the students can make a good essay with correct structure or format.

Table 1. Peer Feedback Format

1.Do the first few sentences of the introduction lead you to the thesis statement?

Where is the thesis statement?

2. How many paragraphs are there in the body?

What are the topics of the body paragraphs?

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

(If there are more or fewer paragraphs, add or delete lines.)

3. What kind of supporting details does the writer use in each body paragraph (examples, statistics, facts, etc.)?

4. Check each paragraph for unity. Is any sentence unnecessary or off the topic?

   If your answer is yes, write a comment about it (them).

5. Check each paragraph for coherence. Does each one flow smoothly from beginning to end?

a. What key nouns are repeated? _____

b. What transition signals can you find? _____

6. What expressions does the writer use to link paragraphs? If there is none, write none. (If there are more or fewer paragraphs, add or delete lines.)

To introduce the first body paragraph: _____

Between Paragraphs 2 and 3: _____

Between Paragraphs 3 and 4: _____

Between Paragraphs 4 and 5: _____

To introduce the conclusion: _____

7. What kind of conclusion does this essay have? A summary of the main points or a restatement of the thesis statement? _____

Does the writer make a final comment?

What is it? _____

Is this an effective ending (one that you will remember_____

8. In your opinion, what is the best feature of this essay? In other words, what is this writer's best writing skill? _____

3. *While Peer Feedback Stage*

In this stage, the students were ready with their essay (first draft), that were going to be evaluated using the peer feedback format. There were two activities with peer feedback and it meant the students had to write two opinions essays with topics provided by the teacher. The students had given one week to finish the essay with different topics, provided by the teacher. Then, on the following week the students did peer feedback activity by reading each other's essay. The teacher was moving around, observing and providing support both in terms of language and how this activity leads to more helpful feedback (for/from) learners. The teacher monitored the activity while the students were doing the peer feedback. The students were free to ask questions and guidance from the teacher during this stage.

On the second essay the students did the same activities as the first. This time, the students were more familiar and more independent in doing the peer feedback. The teacher's role in controlling and guiding the activity was not much needed because the students had already been understood about the process. In this second activity, the teacher's role in controlling the peer feedback activity was still needed. There was not much questions proposed by the students at this time, concerning that they had been understood the process very well.

4. *Post Peer Feedback Stage*

In this stage the teacher and students discussed any problematic points that came up during peer feedback activities. Students raised questions related to the composition of an essay that they had not been understood. There was interaction between teacher and students in solving the problem. The result of this discussion would be valuable resources for making the revision for the final copy of the essay.

DISCUSSIONS

To evaluate the students writing skill on opinion essay and to check whether the students have understood the concept of writing essay (with correct structure of organization) the teacher used the peer feedback format and simplified the format into a check list format. Below is presented the result of the students' writing skill from the first and the second writing tests.

Table 2. The Result of Students' Writing Skills

NO.	ITEMS	EXERCISE 1	EXERCISE 2
1.	Thesis statement is stated clearly	23 (95%)	24 (100%)
2.	There are body paragraphs	24 (100%)	24 (100%)
3.	There are supporting details in every body paragraph	22 (92%)	24 (100%)
4.	There is unity (consistency of the topic)	24 (100%)	24 (100%)
5.	There is coherence: the sentences flow smoothly from beginning to end	22 (92%)	22 (92%)
6.	There are transition signals between paragraphs	23 (95%)	24 (100%)
7.	There is a concluding paragraph	21 (87,5%)	24 (100%)
8.	The writer ends the essay with effective ending	9 (37,5%)	14 (58%)

From the table above, it could be seen that the students have shown improvement in their writing skill in many aspects. This was because they had been trained and been familiar with the structure of the essay. During the peer feedback activity the teacher monitored and guided the students whether they had questions related to the structure organization of the essay. Grammatical elements or sentence structures were also discussed during this session.

To answer the second research question on students' writing skill after peer feedback was being implemented the researcher conducted two kind of exercises with peer feedback. The students created two opinion essays in different sessions. Then, in the following week the students read one another essay and evaluated the essay with peer feedback format.

From the result, it could be seen that all the students (100%) had shown good skills at making the thesis statement, making the body paragraph, making the supporting details of the paragraph, showing the unity of the essay, using transition signals between paragraphs, and making a concluding paragraph. Meanwhile for other skills were showing the coherence of the essay (92%) and making effective ending of the paragraph (58%).

CONCLUSION

The peer feedback activity in this study was done by the students by commenting other students' work, in this case the students' essay. There was a peer feedback format that the students used for doing peer feedback activities as their guidance. The format conveyed some information related to: making the thesis statement, composing the body paragraphs, making the supporting details, showing unity and coherence of the essay, showing the connecting paragraphs, making a concluding paragraph and making effective final ending. The overall activity in peer feedback itself consisted of three steps, namely Pre-Training Stage, While Peer Editing Stage, and Post Peer Editing Stage. From the result of peer feedback activity it was shown that the students gained skills in writing the essay with proper structure of organization. The result showed that all the students (100%) have shown good skills at making the thesis statement, making the body paragraph, making the supporting details of the paragraph, showing the unity of the essay, using transition signals between paragraphs, and making a concluding paragraph. Most students (92%) have shown the coherence of the essay, and 58% of the students could show effective ending of the paragraph. The result also showed that peer feedback could develop students' self-assessment abilities

through providing opportunities to learn and apply aspects of writing. It also could provide helpful information to guide revisions that improve students' writing skills.

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