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# THE ROLE OF *PEER* AND *TEACHER* *FEEDBACK* IN ACADEMIC WRITING CLASS

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## ABSTRACT

Writing skill enables the writer to communicate a variety of messages to a close or distance, known or unknown readers. Viewing the importance of writing as communication, students are encouraged to express and organize their ideas into a text that need to be clear, relevant, truthful, informative, and interesting. The writing process forces greater demands on the text since written interaction lacks immediate feedback as a guide. This study investigates the role of teacher and peer feedback inserted in the steps of writing process on students' writing achievement in academic writing for English department students. The writing processes include some steps; creating, planning, writing and polishing. The results showed that the technique contributed a significant improvement to the students writing achievement. To conclude, the role of teacher and peer feedback is considered to be one of the effective ways for the students in practicing writing.

**Keywords:** *peer feedback, teacher feedback, academic writing, writing achievement*

## INTRODUCTION

Writing academic English for university students seems to be a complicated activity related to how to arrange as well as organize their ideas in such a way that should be meaningful, relevant, informative and interesting for readers. The problems found are connected to selecting, sequencing and clustering of content; imbalances and incompleteness in the introduction, body, and conclusion of the texts; misleading or insufficient signposts and signals to guide the reader through the text; a lack of clarity as to how one section is related to other parts of the text; poor paragraph construction including lack of supporting evidence or elaboration of the main ideas in paragraphs. (O'Brian et al.,1995).

Academic writing required to do in university fosters the students' ability to express themselves by understanding of the language used and the ability to communicate in written form. They express their ideas in formal style in academic writing that differs from their personal writing. The differences can be seen in audience, tone and purpose (Oshima, 2006). In academic writing, the audience is primarily the professors or instructors or for certain projects may be classmates. The tone referred to the writing style or manner of expression that revealed by the diction, grammatical structures as well as the length of sentences. The purpose of writing

is to communicate a message determining its organizational pattern such as persuasive, comparison, argumentative and others.

The problems of writing encountered by students need to be guided by feedback. The goal of feedback is to teach skills that help students improve their writing proficiency to the point where they are aware of what is expected of them as writers and are able to produce it with minimal errors and maximum clarity (Williams, 2003). Feedback communicates how the student can improve by detailing his/her strengths and weaknesses. Feedback comments, such as 'structure', 'argument' and 'clarity' were of little help to students, and even lecturers were found to have difficulty in explaining what a good argument would be (Lea and Street 1998). Such comments contain 'implied development' (Mutch 2003, 35), giving no indication of how the deficiency can be addressed and therefore being 'of value only to those who recognise what the implied developments are' (in Wingate, 2010:520).

Peterson (2010) said teachers provide feedback on student writing to support students' writing development and nurture their confidence as writers. Teacher feedback often takes the form of written comments on their final graded compositions. When teachers spend a great deal of time providing written feedback to students, the feedback have a greater influence on students writing development. Written feedback can be a powerful teaching tool if it is given while students are in the process of writing drafts. When students receive feedback while they are writing, they are more enthusiastic to use it to revise and edit their drafts. They also have an immediate opportunity to try out the suggestions in their writing, allowing for meaningful application of what they have learned from the feedback.

In relation to peer feedback, it helps to develop student writers' sense of audience that is their recognition of the perspectives, language, sentence structure, voice and other elements of writing that provoke, entertain or satisfy their audience (Peterson, 2010). Peer feedback, when guided by teacher modeling and assessment criteria, is a useful assessment for learning tool that has been shown to support students' writing development and contribute to students' revisions to improve their writing (Boscolo & Ascorti, 2004; Graham & Perin, 2007). Peer feedback gives both benefits for the students who receive suggestions for improving the writing, and the feedback providers, as they gain a greater awareness of qualities of good writing through assessing and commenting on peers' writing. Peer feedback also develops students' self-assessment abilities, as they gain experience in using the criteria to read their own writing (Cho & MacArthur, 2010; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009). In these respects, peer feedback is truly an assessment-for-learning tool (Black, Harrison, Lee, Marshall, & Wiliam, 2003) that should be an ongoing part of writers' workshop (Graves, 1994 in Peterson, 2013).

This study aims at revealing the role of peer and teacher feedback in academic writing class by implementing assessment modelling criteria guided by teachers in students' writing process. Previous research on peer and teacher feedback in first language writing education identifies the beneficial effects of peer comments and proves them to be of equal or even greater effect than teacher comments (Tsui & Ng, 2000). Although peer and teacher assessors might follow the same assessment procedure, a teacher's background is more sophisticated, possibly rendering their feedback more trustworthy, on the other hand, teachers have to divide

their time for personal interaction among a lot of pupils, giving peer feedback an advantage at this point (Sadler, 1998).

### **The Role of Teacher Feedback**

Peterson (2013) states that teacher feedback should be both criterion-based and reader-based. Criterion based feedback indicates how well the writing meets the criteria on scoring guides or rubrics. This feedback refers to features such as the appropriateness of the ideas and information, the level of detail and the chosen point of view. Criterion-based feedback also expresses the clarity of communication through the organization of ideas and use of writing conventions and effective language. This feedback is most useful when students have previously been given the assessment criteria and have a clear understanding of the expectations. Indeed, students gain a deeper understanding of the expectations when they have an opportunity to participate in determining the assessment criteria. Reader-based feedback reflects the reader's experience of the writing. Such feedback identifies images visualized, emotions evoked and words or phrases that had the greatest impact on the reader. It also describes how the writing makes the reader feel and summarizes what the writing says to the reader. Because writing is a form of communication, student writers benefit from reader-based feedback, as they get a sense of how well their writing achieves the intended communicative purpose for example to entertain, inform or persuade.

A good teacher uses experience and skills that are not available to students (Sadler,1998), such as superior knowledge, a set of attitudes and dispositions towards teaching as an activity and towards learners such as empathy and desire to help, and a deep knowledge of criteria and standards or insights into the set of expectations for a specific assignment. Teachers also bring expertise in judgment from experience on similar tasks, giving them insight into various ways to solve the assignments and in the difficulties previous learners encountered. Hence, a good teacher knows how to formulate feedback most effectively. Therefore, students are not always deemed appropriate assessors whose feedback can function as a worthy substitute for teacher feedback (Cho & MacArthur, in press). Counter arguments are that Sadler (1998) describes the 'ideal' teacher and not the 'average' teacher, that students' peer assessment skills can be trained so that their feedback becomes as effective as teacher feedback in the end (Sadler, 1998; Sluijsmans, 2002; Min, 2008); and that the use of peer feedback has some beneficial 'side-effects' or advantages that teacher feedback lacks, resulting in a positive effect on student learning in another, but equally effective way. (Gielen. at al, 2010)

Keh (1990) and Hedgcock and Leftkowitz (1996) cited in Purnawarman (2011:21) suggest four teacher's roles in providing feedback for students' writing: a reader or respondent, a writing teacher or guide, a grammarian, and an evaluator or judge. First, teacher as a reader or as a respondent interacting with a writer. In this role, teachers respond to the content and they may show agreement about an idea or content of the text. Teachers may provide positive feedback such as *"You made a good point"* or *"I agree with you"* without giving any suggestion or correction. Second, as a writing teacher or as a guide who may show their concern about certain points or confusing or illogical ideas in students' text. In this case, a teacher still main-

tain their role as a reader by only asking for clarification or expressing concerns and questions about certain points in the text without giving any correction. They may, however, refer students to strategies for revision such as choices of problem solving or providing a possible example. Third, as a grammarian. Teachers write comments or corrective feedback with reference to grammatical mistakes and relevant grammatical rules. Teachers may provide a reason as to why a particular grammatical form is not correct or not suitable for a certain context such as choice of tense, use of article, or preposition. In this case, teachers may also elaborate clearly about grammatical rules to help students improve their writing text. Fourth, as an evaluator or judge. It is very common that many writing teachers may act only as an evaluator whose main role is to evaluate the quality of students' writing as an end product of a writing process and grade students' writing based on their evaluation.

### **The Role of Peer Feedback**

Peers can also make helpful contributions to students' writing development. They provide reader-based feedback that shows student writers the effect that the writing is having on a peer audience. 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 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" (Liu and Hansen, 2002:1 in Bijami, 2013). Peer feedback should be valued for the information it provides about how readers respond to a piece of writing. However, peers are not the best providers of criterion-based feedback, because they often do not have the needed grasp of conventions. Teacher feedback is generally more useful for moving students along in their use of writing conventions. (Peterson, 2010).

Peer feedback has been several benefits. For example, Hyland (2000) mentions that peer feedback encourages student to participate in the classroom activity and make them less passively teacher- dependent. Yarrow and Topping (2001:262) claim that peer feedback plays a pivotal role in "increased engagement and time spent on-task, immediacy and individualization of help, goal specification, explaining, prevention of information processing overload, promoting, modeling and reinforcement". Moreover, using peer feedback can lead less writing apprehension and more confidence as well as establish a social context for writing. Yang et al., (2006) also add that peer feedback is beneficial in developing critical thinking, learner autonomy and social interaction among students. More importantly, the practice of peer feedback allows students to receive more individual comments as well as giving reviewers the opportunity to practice and develop different language skills (Lundstrom and Baker, 2009 in Bijami, 2013).

Gielen (2010) states the benefits of peer feedback to students are to increase the social pressure on students to perform well on an assignment. This way, regardless of the actual output of the peer feedback, a mere announcement that it will take place might suffice to raise performance. Moreover, students often perceive peer feedback as more understandable and

more useful because fellow students 'are on the same wavelength' (Topping, 2003). Peer feedback also increases the students' ability to understand feedback. When a learner sees what happens behind the curtains of an assessment and participates in it, learning goals are clarified and internalised. A clear view of the goals, criteria and standards of assessment is essential and can even without the actual feedback taking place raise performance by generating appropriate learning activities (Gibbs *et al.*, 2004). Next, peer feedback is quicker. As teacher feedback often has a considerable delay after the submission of an assignment or test, feedback sometimes is not available until after the curriculum has passed to another topic. In that case, 'imperfect feedback from a fellow student provided almost immediately may have much more impact than more perfect feedback from a tutor four weeks later' (Gibbs *et al.*, 2004, p. 19). Finally, peer feedback can be part of an increase in the frequency or amount of feedback. Gibbs and Simpson (2004) emphasise that only giving feedback at the end of the learning process is not enough to support learning effectively and may provoke frustration in the learner. Several 'intermediate' peer assessment sessions on draft versions of for instance an essay or report could answer to this need of regular feedback if teachers are not able or willing to increase its frequency themselves.

Pearson (2010) states that teachers may set up more formal opportunities for peer feedback by scheduling time for students to exchange their writing with peers or to read compositions aloud to peers in a small group setting. A reading is followed by a discussion of what the peers got out of the writing, what stands out about the writing and what questions the writing raises. Many teachers use a "two stars and a wish" framework, asking peers to identify two elements of students' writing that they thought were strong and one element that could be improved. Students give comments to their peer writing and opportunities to improve their writing. They follow teacher's guidance model to help peer find their error or mistakes in their drafts. By this feedback, they can revise their writing.

## **Implication for Classroom practice**

### **A. The Writing Process**

The first step of writing process is Creating by choosing a topic and collecting information. Students were given several topics then they choose one of them. After choosing the topic they may narrow it into more specific one. They began to collect information and develop their ideas related to the narrowing topic they have made. To generate ideas, students may have brainstorming or clustering technique.

The second step is Planning or Outlining that is to organize ideas into an outline, a formal plan of a paragraph. Students divide ideas into sublists related ideas and then write a topic sentence, main supporting points, supporting details and even a concluding sentence or paragraph.

The third step is Writing the rough draft. Students began to write their first drafts by following their outlines.

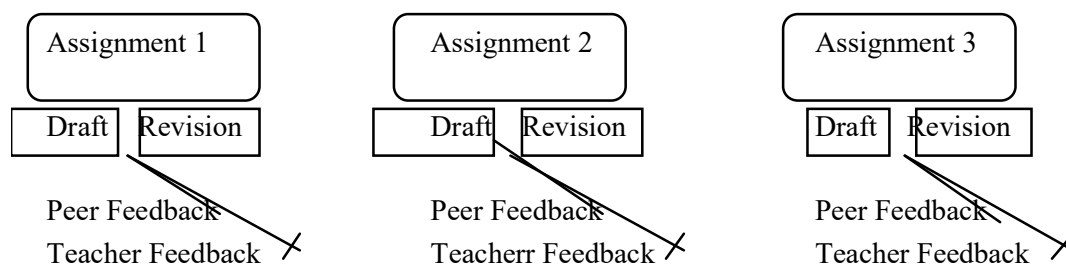
The last step is Polishing that is called the step of revising and editing. Polishing is done in two stages; attack the big issues of content and organization (revising), then work on the smaller issues of grammar and punctuation (editing). After writing the first drafts, the next step

is revise it, to check for content and organization. Next, in polishing the writing is proofreading it for possible errors in grammar, sentence structure, spelling and punctuation.



**Figure 1. The process of student's writing**

After having the the first draft, students work with their peer and have peer feedback. Next, teacher has control by giving feedback. The students then do the revision as their final writing.



**Figure 2. Peer and Teacher Feedback treatment**

### **B. Students Autonomy to Use Feedback**

Peterson (2010) states that students feel a greater commitment to improving their writing when they have the autonomy to decide whether or not to incorporate the feedback in subsequent drafts. Students may decide to use the feedback in their own way – that the feedback is suggestive, rather than prescriptive. To support students' sense of ownership of their writing, feedback should:

- be given in the spirit of showing student writers the positive effects their writing has on readers
- identify potential areas where students may revise their writing to clarify meaning or more fully engage readers
- take the form of suggestions, observations and open-ended questions, rather than instructions and criticisms

Student as the writers will fully understand and get the benefit of feedback by explaining their interpretations of the feedback and speculating what they might do to use the feedback

(Explaining their plans for using the feedback may also strengthen commitment to improving their writing.) and submitting a “revise-and-resubmit” letter, explaining how the feedback has been addressed, or providing a rationale for disregarding it (Writing such letters enhances students’ metacognitive awareness of their writing processes and intentions.)

## CONCLUSION

To sum up, the role of peer and teacher feedback is very crucial in developing and improving students’ writing achievement. Peer feedback help students to learn the power of writing and teacher feedback allows students to get much improvement for their writing and to support students writing development.

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### Appendix. Peer/Teacher Editing Checklist of Writing Dimensions

Name of Peer/Teacher :	Day/date:		
<b>Format</b>			
The essay is correctly formatted (title centered, first line of every paragraph indented, margins on both sides)	Yes	No	
<b>Mechanics</b>			
The essay was checked for punctuation, capitalization and spelling	Yes	No	
<b>Content and Organization</b>			
The essay has all three parts ; introduction, body and conclusion	Yes	No	
<b>Introduction</b> : Type of introduction used (funnel, historical background, surprising statistics, dramatic story, etc) _____			
The introduction ends with thesis statement	Yes	No	
<b>Body</b> : The body has _____ paragraphs. The topics of the body paragraphs are as follows :			
1. _____	3. _____		
2. _____	4. _____		
(If there are more or fewer paragraphs, add or delete the lines.)			
<b>Unity</b> : Each paragraph discusses only one main idea, and there are no sentences that are “off the topics.”	Yes	No	
<b>Coherence:</b>			
Each paragraph has coherence.			
The essay flows smoothly from beginning to end.	Yes	No	
Repetition of key nouns			
Transition signals are used to show relationship among ideas	Yes	No	
Transitions are used to link paragraphs	Yes	No	



**Conclusion :** The conclusion (a) summarizes the main points or (b) paraphrases the thesis statement (circle one)

**Grammar and Sentence Structure**

**Number found and corrected**

The essay has been checked for ..... errors

\_\_\_\_\_

The essay has been checked for ..... errors

\_\_\_\_\_

The essay has been checked for ..... errors

\_\_\_\_\_

The essay has been checked for ..... errors

\_\_\_\_\_

*(Adapted from Oshima and Hogue (2006:325))*

