STUDENTS' ABILITY IN GIVING PEER FEEDBACK TOWARD THEIR WRITING TASKS (A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY IN ENGLISH CLASS OF BIOLOGY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT, FKIP UNTIRTA)

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ABSTRACT

This writing is a report of a minor research conducted to describe students' ability in giving peer feedback toward their writing tasks and to find out the impact of peer feedback toward their writing tasks improvement. In this study, method of the research is descrituve qualitative. The researchers collected the data through classroom observation, semi structured interview and documentation (students' tasks and students' feedback). The researcher chose 2A students as the participant of this research. Based on the previous data, 2A had low mean score in English subject. Further, the data analysis used in this research done through data reduction, data analysis and data display (Miles and Hubberman's analysis). And, to make the data credible, the researchers used triangulation on techniques. The process and finding of the research in implementing peer feedback will be good recommendation for lecturers and teachers to develop their evaluation technique towards students writing tasks and it will also improve students' ability in mastering writing skills.

Keywords*: students' ability, writing tasks, feedback*

INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of productive skills in learning a language. Producing opinions, ideas, thoughts and feelings within the written words is not as simple activity as spoken one. It needs complex skills to create standardized writing product. Since the university students are demanded to produce academic paper and scientific product so all the criterions should be based on the standard of those products.

A writer needs to master grammar, enrich his words and select appropriate dictions toward the topic discussed, know the application of linguistic features and all techniques in academic writing and scientific writing. In short, a writer must apply his writing skills well in producing writing product to avoid misunderstanding and misperception of the dual communication between writer and reader since there is not any direct respond from the readers.

In taking English as one of Personality Development Subjects, the students are guided to develop their language skills. The language skills like reading writing, listening and speaking are taught integratedly by the English lecturers. Writing is a compulsary skill that should be mastered by the students of Biology Education Department of FKIP (Faculty of Teacher Training and Education) of Untirta. Moreover, they are demanded to write well and appropriately since there is a demand to write their research paper not only in Bahasa Indonesia but also in English. This demand reflects to the era of globalization which needs to promote the writing products globally (locally, nationally and internationally).

There were three classes of second semester in Biology Education Department. And there was a class which all students were relatively good at English in the terms of speaking, reading and listening but need special attention in writing skill. The researchers have taken the data about their writing skill. They conducted semi structured interview and observation during the teaching and learning process of English to have reliable data. The information obtained from the data were that the students got problems in selecting dictions / certain terms to be used in academic paper, having lack of grammar, making the paragraph unity and generating the ideas into the form of writing products.

Based on those preliminary research, the researchers have implemented peer feedback as their promoted technique to develop the students' writing skill. Being the English lecturers, in this case, the researchers have implemented it in one of Biology Education Department class. The researchers were glad to describe the students' ability in giving peer feedback toward their writing tasks and to find out the impact of peer feedback toward their writing tasks improvement.

Research Problems

Researchers stated the problems as followed:

1. How are the students' ability in giving peer feedback toward their writing tasks?

2. What is the impact of peer feedback toward their writing tasks improvement?

Research Objectives

Accordingly, the objects of the research were:

1. To describe students' ability in giving peer feedback toward their writing tasks.

2. To find out the impact of peer feedback toward their writing tasks improvement.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Writing Concept

Writing is a productive skill that needs certain efforts to enhance the skills. For English learners, it is challenging skill to be able to communicate the ideas through written text. Writing is defined as a communication process, between a writer and the readers (Nation, 2009). Further, Raimes (2008) states that through writing, a writer does not just display what he knows, he can also discover what he knows and thinks. So, by doing the process of writing, a writer has a certain area in communicating ideas, thoughts and feelings.

For some EFL learners, writing in a target language is not an easy task to do. It needs careful and high effort to produce the project. A writer has to generate ideas, make planning (outlining), write the draft, edit the draft, revise the mistakes and add the lacking points, and the project is ready to be produced. It is a process of writing if the writer wants his writing product is qualified.

Harmer (2004) promotes process of writing into four main elements. They are planning, drafting, editting (reflecting and reflexing) and final version. While Raimes (2008) writes that the process in writing involves recurring activities. They are planning (critical thinking and reading; determining purpose, audience,

voice and media); prewriting (generating and a topic and ideas, establishing a focus and a tesis, considering multimedia); drafting (organizing and developing ideas, composing drafts); reading and feedback; revising and editing (working on style, revising for clarity, coherence and unity editing, proof reading, designing the document).

In witing, a writer has a purpose. The purposes could be the ideas to keep generating the paragraphs of writing. Ur (1996) categorizes the purposes of writing are to inform, to explain and to persuade. To inform is to transmit necessary information about the subject to the readers and to tell the readers what the facts are. To explain means to take what is unclear and make it clear. And to persuade means to convince the readers about the main idea eventhough it may be uncontroversial (Brown and Burnette, 1984).

Peer Feedback

Giving feedback is one of the lecturers activity after instructing the students to write a sentence, a paragraph or a text. In general, feedback is professional task done to improve not only students' ability in certain skill of a language but also to inform the teacher or lecturer the students' level of understanding. In short, for lecturers or teachers feedback is the reflection of the teaching process that they have conducted. As Anderson in Hyland (2006) says that feedback is widely seen in education as crucial for both encouraging and consolidating learning. Hyland (2006) adds that giving feedback to students, whether in the form of commentary, error corrections, teacher-students conferencing or peer discussions has been recognized as teachers' important tasks as individual attentions to the students.

Hyland (2006) says that feedback is a process of peer review done by students' peer. It is the process of peer responses to give the writers opportunities to discuss their text and discover others' interpretations of them. Chaudron in Hyland (2006) says that the influence of teacher and peer feedback on students' writing improvement to be about the same. It is supported by Connor and Asenavage in Hyland (2006) that peer feedback gives more positive influence to students' writing. For instance, peer feedback influenced students' revision

significantly and led to improve in a kind of text. The students used their peers' comments in more than half of their revisions. In addition, peer feedback is also students' training with the instruction encouraging a greater level of engagement with the task and more helpful and concrete advice for their own writing improvement.

Teaching Writing Using Peer Feedback

There are some steps promoted by Hyland (2006) in implementing peer feedback in the classroom. They are, as follow:

1. After composing sessions, first drafts are collected and randomly paired.

2. Two external raters determine   independently which paper need more revision.

3. Students then pair for each review sessions and instruct to record their interactions as they revise the draft.

4. Each pair consists of a writer and a reader.

5. The participants starts their interaction with the writer, reading the paper aloud to the reader.

6. Drafts are returned to the writer. They will do final version at home and submit to the instructor a week later.

These steps can be implemented by lecturers or teachers to create students' responsibility of their own writing, to gain more understanding of their own writing weaknessess, and to create social interaction among the students. The last but not least, to improve students' critical thinking in recognizing the mistakes of their friends' writing.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Method

The method of the research is descritive qualitative. It is to describe the facts and phenomenon during the research.

Site and Participant

The research was conducted at the second semester (2A) of Biology Education Department of FKIP (Faculty of Teacher Training and Education)

Untirta. The participants for this research were chosen purposively. To purposefully select participants or sites (documents or visual material) means that qualitative researchers select individuals who will best help them understand the research problems and research questions (Creswell, 2014).

Data Collection Techniques

In collecting the data, researchers did observation, semi-structured interview and documentation. The observation was taken during the teaching and learning process of writing. The interviewed done before and after the treatment. And the documentation was in the form of photos and students' writing and the result of their peer feedback.

Data Analysis

In analyzing the data, the researcher used techniques from Miles et al. (2014), which is divided into: data condensation, data display and drawing and verifying (conclusion).

Trustworthiness of The Research

The researchers used Triangulation on techniques to prove that this research can be trusted to have valid and realiable data. All data had been checked and analyzed to be credible.

RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

A. Findings

Findings of Observation

In conducting the research, the researchers used peer feedback to the students of 2A in Biology Education class. In conducting the peer feedback, there were some steps taken in the class. The procedures started with dividing the students into some groups and giving them a task to create a short dialogue and then read it aloud in front of the class. These steps were in accordance with the steps suggested by Hyland (2006) in the previous discussion. The steps were:

1. Firstly, students composed the writing, then first drafts were collected and they were randomly paired.

2. Two external raters determined independently which paper needed more revision.

3. Students were then paired for each review sessions and instructed to record their interactions as they revised the draft.

4. Each pair consisted of a writer and a reader.

5. The participants started their interaction with the writer, reading the paper aloud to the reader.

6. Drafts were returned to the writer. They then did final version at home and submitted to the instructor a week later.

In doing these procedures, there were two types of peer feedback conducted in the class. The first was oral feedback, and the second was written feedback.

(***Oral Peer Feedback***) While conducting the observation the researchers found a little problems in implementing peer feedback. For the first time when the lecturer asked the students to participate in peer review, students rushed through the peer-review process and offered their peers only vaguely positive comments, such as "I liked your paper," or "Good job," or "Good paper, but a few parts need more work." Furthermore, many students seemed to ignore peer-reviewers' comments on their writing. In fact, this situation changed after the lecturer motivated the students to be more detail and more honest in delivering the corrections or criticisms in order to make their peer catch the points to be revised later.

Then, the active collaboration and discussion ran well during the implementation of giving oral peer feedback in the English class, focused on writing skill improvement. The students' participation in peer feedback really helped the students to recognize the problems found in the product of writing. They became self regulated learners, independent learners.

(***Written Peer Feedback***) It was proven from the observation done in the class that the students had more confidence to give and receive feedback from their peer. They seemed more comfortable to receive and give feedback from their own peer than from the lecturer. By doing the written feedback, not only they

corrected their peer's writing but also they became aware of their own problems in writing sentences to paragraphs.

Moreover, the results of their writing tasks were also relatively better than before conducting the peer feedback. The previous data showed that the students got problems in selecting dictions / certain terms to be used in academic paper, having lack of grammar, making the paragraph unity and generating the ideas into the form of writing products. After they did the peer feedback, those problems decreased. The researchers found that the students' ability in their writing tasks improved after they had done the peer feedback method.

Findings of Interview

There were five main questios delivered to students related to the process of giving peer feedback to their friends. Those questions were about asking their problems in English writing, asking their techniques to cope with those writing problems, asking about the advantages of implementing peer feedback for themselves, asking about problems appeared in implementing peer feedback in improving their writing and asking about their impressions of learning English writing using peer feedback technique.

For the first questions, there were twenty-two students (67%) had the same answers, they were having lack of vocabularies and grammar. There were seven students (21%) got confused in generating ideas and making the paragraph unity. There were four students (12%) got difficulties in translating their ideas into good English sentences.

For the second questions, it was about techniques to cope with writing problems. There were eighteen students (55%) answered using traditional and digital dictionaries, five students (15%) asked to their lecturers and ten students (30%) answered asking their friends to write in English well.

For the third question, it was about the advantages in implementing peer feedback. Here is the answer: 1) They could learn how to read carefully, with attention to the details of a piece of writing (15% students). 2) They could learn how to strengthen their writing by taking into account the responses of actual and anticipated readers (10% students). 3) They could learn how to formulate and

communicate constructive feedback on a peer's work (15% students). 4) They could learn how to gather and respond to feedback on their own work (60% students).

For the fourth question, it was about the problems in implementing peer feedback technique. There were twenty students (61%) said that they felt uncomfortable to give judgement to their peer's writing. They were afraid of hurting peer's feeling. And the rest, about thirteen students (39%) stated that when they took seriously feedback provided by their peers, they did not know how to incorporate that feedback when they revise their papers later.

For the last question, it was about the students impression on implementing peer feedback in the classroom. There were nineteen students (57%) said that peer feedback helped them minimizing doing mistakes in writing. It was about seven students (21%) admitted that peer feedback trained them to think critically of one's writing. There were four students (12%) stated that peer feedback made them learn how to be close and discuss with their peers. Three students (10%) informed that they practiced their speaking to convey their corrections and criticism to their peers of writing tasks.

B. Discussions

Peer Feedback requires students to produce a substantial amount of writing. It also creates opportunities for students to read and respond to one another's writing. Such opportunities to engage in "peer review," when it planned well, it can help students improve their reading and writing skills and learn how to collaborate effectively.

On the real process of implementing peer feedback, feeling uncomfortable either the position as the reader / reviewer or as the writer might be the obvious barrier among the students. A reader who is also the reviewer needs to use certain technique in delivering his comments or criticisms in order that his constructive feedback caught well by the writer. The lecturers should keep reminding the students to avoid feeling uncomfortable with the task of a judgment on their peers' writing. This discomfort may be the result of their maturity level, their desire not to hurt a peer's feelings (or simply their inexperience with providing constructive

criticism on a peer's work). As it is supported by Nilson (2003) that a vaguely positive response allows them to avoid a socially uncomfortable situation and to create an environment of mutual support.

Participating in peer review could help the students learn to shape their written language as a medium of communication with readers. For example, seeking out peer feedback can help one student construct a convincing argument. Then their own arguments also influenced to their sense of being good writers.

CONCLUSION

The result of the research showed that students' ability in English writing tasks has improved. It could be seen from the better scores of their writing tasks. Meanwhile, from the result of the observation in the class, the interview done to some selected students of 2A, and also the documentation from their writing tasks, it can be concluded that they showed similarity. They had more vocabularies hence understood more terms to be used in academic paper. Their grammars were improved it made them easier to construct a paragraph for their writing task. Thus, it was proven that peer feedback did have positive impact toward students' ability in writing.

Moreover, there is an interesting phenomenon that students had particular behaviours during the process of peer feedback. It can be observed that they had more confidence in writing tasks and became self regulated learners.

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