



SNAP TO READ

STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES OF THE PRACTICES OF ONLINE PEER- FEEDBACK IN EFL WRITING CLASS

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ABSTRACT:

Along with the development of educational technology, online peer feedback becomes an alternative in giving feedback. The flexibility in implementing the feedback makes it popular among the teachers. The activities in giving feedback can be practiced out of the classroom hours. However, the students may have different perspective on such practice. Listening to their voice will provide some insights in designing better online peer feedback. The findings of the present study reveals that the students perceive the practice of online peer feedback positively as it can improve their reading and writing skills. In addition, the practicality in utilizing the application can foster students' motivation. Despite the fact that the accuracy of the feedback is not high, the practice of online feedback sparks students' engagement in writing process.

Key words: Perspectives, online peer feedback, EFL writing

Feedback is crucial in the second language pedagogy as it gives information about the performance, mainly the weaknesses, of the students. In the field of writing, feedback provision is done through at least three ways; teacher written feedback, teacher-students conference, and students/peer feedback (Hyland, 2003, p. 196). Teacher written feedback is the most commonly practiced. It is so because the teacher can provide more suggestion than the students do since they have limited knowledge of writing. The

students, however, can be trained to practice peer feedback. Peer feedback is useful for the students because they can see their friends writing and give correction on the product. Peer feedback stimulates negotiation of meaning and exposes the students to any comprehensible input at the same time (Long, 1996, pp. 438-468). In addition, peer feedback increases self and peer-monitoring skills, in this case the skills to give judgment on their own and peer writing (Van Loon & Van De Pol, 2019).

In writing classes, teachers' comments are rated more positively but peer comment receives special attention by the students (Lee M.-K. , 2015). In any case, students' comments are simpler and easier to be understood. In other words, students' peer feedback can promote self-revision for both the writer and the feedback giver. Studies about the benefits of peer feedback are large, but very little can be found in the investigation how students perceives the practice of peer feedback especially online peer feedback. Like two sides of a coin, online peer feedback offers practicality and modernity in one side but in another side it is a high cost practice. Listening to their voice, thus, will help the teachers in designing feedback best to the students.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Peer Feedback

Topic about feedback has been massively discussed in the field of language learning. Feedback is defined as correction or suggestion of somebody's performance. In the teaching of writing, feedback appears in the form error correction or suggestion to make a writing product better. Peer feedback or student correction is alternative to make the process of correcting error become more efficient. Students, despite their limited knowledge of writing can be trained to give correction on their own and their peer writing. Peer feedback can be a means for mediating learning that improve writing competency. The students unconsciously learn the theory of writing by reading and giving suggestion on their peer work.

To apply peer feedback, three important things need to be considered

including reciprocity, transcendence, and meaning (Lee I. , 2017, p. 60). To stimulate reciprocity, students should be encouraged to have meaningful interaction with their peer. Sharing ideas either spoken or written is believed to boost creativity in writing. Giving and receiving suggestion require the students to think about how to write. Peer feedback should appear in the temporary drafts to support the transcendence. This means that the students are given opportunity to revise the draft after getting peer feedback to make the writing better. Meanwhile, peer feedback is called as meaningful when it is descriptive and diagnostic. The suggestion should describe the betterment given as well as diagnose the problems in writing so that the receiver can understand the suggestion and revise the writer well.

Extensive literatures regarding peer feedback focus on some issues like finding out the effectiveness of on improving writing skill (Ruegg, 2015; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; McGroarty & Zhu, 1997) and improving self efficacy (Ruegg, 2014). However, Van Steendam, Rijlaarsdam, Sercu, & Van den Berg (2010) found out that in term of the accuracy of feedback, it is still problematic because they are still novice. Even more accurate feedback by their peer is seen as inaccurate just because of their limited knowledge. Meanwhile, in term of content and style characteristics, peer feedback results on skills transferable in other learning setting. The knowledge and experience from peer feedback is applicable in different situation and type of text.

Some suggestions are addressed to the area of writing to be assessed. Research by Leki (1990) suggests that peer feedback be focused on idea development and organization rather than grammar and spelling to have better correction and suggestion from peer. It is because checking grammar and spelling require deeper understanding than focusing on general structure of a text. Accordingly, Mendonca & Johnson (1994) note that students correction are more on surface language errors than more detailed language use. It is suggested that feedback is given on the macro skills of writing rather than on the micro skills. Students will find it easier to give feedback on general elements of a composition such as generating ideas and organization of

writing compared to correcting mistakes on grammar and detailed part of writing. Some other studies about peer feedback include the stance (positive vs negative). Students' comments are considered too general and unclear (Leki, 1990), vague/ formulaic comments (Stanley, 1992), and misinterpretation of peer correction (Yu & Hu, 2017).

Online Peer Feedback

The development of technology affects all parts of life including education. Using technology for giving feedback is an unavoidable fact. Students grow up in the digital era, so they will not find any difficulties in adjusting themselves to the practices of online peer feedback. Some benefits are offered by the use of online peer feedback. Hewitt (2000) notes that oral and computer-mediated learning can create two different types of talks about writing as well as prompt different types of changes in the writing. Further, Hewitt states electronic peer feedback focuses on more concrete writing and direct use of peer's idea, meanwhile, oral peer feedback focuses on abstract and self-generated idea. For the teachers who conduct process approach, online peer feedback proved to be effective and efficient in helping them deal with the revision stage (Pritchard & Morrow, 2017). Online peer feedback allows the students to receive anonymous feedback so that they can make optimum revision without being bothered of who give the feedback. Being anonymous frees the students in giving suggestion and correction of their peer's works. A study by Guardado & Shi(2007) show that e-feedback eliminates the logistical problem in writing and the anonymity allows the peers to provide critical feedbacks on each other's writing.

The use of technology to assist peer feedback activity starts from the spread of Internet and becomes more popular due its flexibility over time and space. Various application (software) is utilized to maintain effectiveness and efficiency in peer feedback activities. Karnedi (2004)reports that peer feedback through electronic mail is proven effective to enhance students' writing skills. Yusof, Manan, & Alias (2012) show that the comments and suggestions posted on Facebook Notes were found to be useful in helping

their peers to improve their outlines and their first drafts. Garrison (2013, p. 75) emphasizes the importance of Web conferencing to train students do peer feedback. The latest, Li & Li (2017) show the distinctive feature of Turnitin in facilitating peer review activities. However, little studies are found in the investigation of the practice of online peer feedback in writing class seen from the students' side. In fact, listening to students' voice will provide insight for providing the most suitable treatment to them. The present research, therefore, is intended to investigate how the students perceive and respond to the practice of online peer feedback in EFL Writing Class.

METHOD

Respondents

The present study is conducted quantitatively by using survey design. Such design is selected in order to get any data about the tendency of students' answers in relation to how they perceive the practice of online peer feedback in EFL writing class. The respondents of the current study are the students of English Department at State Islamic Institute (Institut Agama Islam Negeri) of Tulungagung, East Java. All the respondents are 121 students of the fifth semester. The consideration for selecting them is they have passed all required writing classes in the department and experienced various modes of feedback including online peer feedback. Therefore, they can provide information how they perceive the practices of online peer feedback.

Instruments

The data are collected by distributing questionnaires online by utilizing Google form. The students should answer 8 questions exploring their perception of online peer feedback in EFL writing class. To measure the tendency of the students' answers, Likert scale is utilized ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. Validation check by the expert and users are done to make sure that the questionnaires are valid. Meanwhile, reliability test is done by employing test and retest technique.

Procedures

The study is carried out through the following procedures: (1) identifying research problems, (2) developing instruments, (3) validating instruments, (4) collecting data, (5), analyzing data, and (6) writing research report.

Data Analysis

The collected data are analyzed using descriptive statistics so that it can portrait the central tendency of students' perception on the practice of online peer feedback.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

As presented below, the findings and discussions are arranged based on the questions in the survey. It reveals how the students perceive the practice of online peer feedback implemented in their writing class.

The first question in the questionnaire is "Online peer feedback improves my writing ability". All the students in the present study show positive response on the practices of online peer feedback in the EFL writing classes. 84, 3% (102) of the students answer they agree that the practice of online peer feedback can improve their writing ability. Meanwhile, 12.4% (15) of the students state they strongly agree that they can improve their writing ability after the practice of online peer feedback. Little number of the students, 2.5% (3) of the students shows disagreement that online peer feedback can improve writing ability. As a matter of fact, the case of using technology to improve students' learning is seen as positive especially by the students who are digitally native. The students are familiar with some applications provided by Google for learning.

In the present study, Google docs is used as the media for the providing online peer feedback. Google docs provides easy access for the students in during the process of sharing the work and providing the feedback. The finding of the present study confirm Neumann & Kopcha (2019)'s study which show that students are engaged in discussions by using Google docs

to give feedback to their peer. There is a reciprocal process of feedback where the students give and receive suggestion. Such activity is done outside the classroom to reduce the feeling of under pressure among the students. It implies that the use of online peer feedback brings positive vibe toward learning writing. In other words, such mode of feedback also offers enjoyable experience to the students. Enjoyable learning is one of the goals when a teacher uses technology for teaching English. Effectiveness and efficiency are the goals to be achieved. However, further studies about to what extend the students' writing ability increases need to done.

The second question is "Online feedback improves my reading ability". The finding of the present study reveals that the improvement does not lie upon single language skill, in this case writing. Some other language skills are prone to increase due to the exposure of technology in teaching and learning. Besides improving writing ability, 84.3% (102) of the students agree that online peer feedback also improve their reading ability. Meanwhile, 13.2 % (16) of the students strongly agree that their ability to comprehend text improves after they practice online peer feedback. However, 2.5% (3) of the students state they do not increase their reading ability. In the process of providing feedback, the students were required to read their peer's writing. This means that they have to use their knowledge of reading such as organization of ideas, vocabularies, grammar, and so on in order that they comprehend the message. At the same time, they would acquire the abovementioned knowledge from the text they read. Like the saying 'killing two birds in one shot' the students improve their knowledge on writing and reading simultaneously. This finding confirms Lee I. (2017)'s statement that peer feedback can boost students' creativity. Creativity in reading and writing can be boosted by utilizing software like Google docs in which sharing was essential to the learning process. In addition, this finding also strengthens Shofiya (2017)'s findings that a practice of writing can foster students' reading ability. Shofiya notes that a "writing to read" program in which the students get more practices on writing reflective essay and peer feedback, develop

students ability to read as well as to write.

The third question of the survey is “I improve my understanding about the material after giving and receiving feedback online”. In relation to the benefits of online peer feedback, the students views that by reading the peer’s writing they get significant improvement on their knowledge about the material of writing. 74.4 %(90) of the students agree that by providing suggestion on their peer’s writing they understand the writing material better. 9.1% (11) students strongly agree with the statement. 16.5% (20) of the students disagree that they improve the materials. Online peer feedback requires them to be critical reader. They read more before giving feedback. As they also receive feedback from their peer, they also read and digest the suggestion. This affects the increase of their understanding of the writing material unconsciously. Even though studies show that teacher feedback is more favorable because the teacher is more knowledgeable in providing suggestion (Lee M.-K. , 2015), the students still benefit peer feedback from the online discussions. Through the utilization of Google docs the students get exposed to others’ writing and thus develop knowledge about their own writing. The data of the present study, however, show that some students do not see the improvement of their knowledge. This is normal because the students do not make the same progress in learning. Some students seem to learn faster than the others because they have their own route in learning. It affects the speed in acquiring the knowledge. Moreover, an increase of language ability can be seen only after several time of practices.

The fourth question in the survey asks that, “I improve my skill in assessing writing”. Editing and revising activities are often seen by the students as complicated because of the limitation of their knowledge of writing. They find it difficult to provide suggestion of the detailed aspect of writing. Even they do not know what to do with their friends’ works. However, with the help of assessment sheet, every aspect of a text such as organization of ideas or language can be corrected by the students. Eventhough the assessment is done online, the students are provided with

assessment sheet and are given a training on what aspects of writing to be paid attention to. The finding of the present research shows that 76.9% (93) of the students agree that the existence of assessment sheet is helpful. Some students (15,7%/19 students) strongly agree that assessment sheets help them very much in checking and giving suggestion to their peer's writing. The theoretical background for the present research was Vygotsky's (1978) social learning that suggest the collaboration among students in learning. Students will receive insights from their peer about what is already good and what needs to improved. In addition, according to Van Loon & Van De Pol (2019), learning with and from their peers have long term effect on students' social skills. However, little number of the students (7.4%/9 students) disagree that online peer feedback improve skill in assessing writing. In fact, the difficulties lay upon giving correct feedback rather than just finding out the errors. So, the students do not feel the improvement of their skill.

The fifth question is "Online peer feedback elevates my motivation in learning English". The question is intended to know the students' perception if using technology in writing class elevates their motivation. In the era of industrial revolution 4.0, one of the challenges the teachers meet is the use of technology for learning. This is so because the students are millenials who grow up with technology. Most of them are familiar with the use of internet and various softwares. Meanwhile, teaching writing commonly employs process approach involving planning, drafting, editing, and revising stages. This process is time and energy consuming, of course. To ease the teachers' burden in correcting students' writing, peer feedback is employed. Combining peer feedback and technology can increase students' motivation. The data of the present study show that 83,5%(101) of the students agree and 9.1% (11) of the students strongly agree with the statement that using technology can improve learning motivation. The exception is that 7.4% (9) of the students show the disagreement that online peer feedback increases their motivation. Through the use of Google docs the activity of reading and giving suggestion on their peer writing becomes challenging and interesting

as well. Such fact is in line with Ruegg's (2015) statement that peer feedback can increase students' self efficacy. When the students are motivated, their self efficacy increases. In the end, learning become enjoyable process. For the students who do not see the increase of their motivation in learning, there is possibility that their exposure toward technology is a bit limited. In fact, in some areas of the country internet is not easily accessed. So, the students cannot progress in the same speed.

To obtain effective teaching and learning, the media or tool should be supportive for the learners. In other words, it should be user friendly. The sixth question of the survey is, "I perceive that Google docs is categorized as easy to use". 81.8 % (99) and 18.2% (22) of the students agree that Google docs is user friendly. Google docs also promotes casual communication and close interaction among students and teachers. Nevertheless, thoughtful revision come from this interaction. The flexibility of Google docs offers comfort and joyful learning to the students. Even the teachers also take the benefit of implementing such kind of mode of giving feedback. Neumann & Kopcha (2019) state eventhough does not improve writing score overall, using Google docs is effective and give good support for learning writing. For the time being, using Google docs is a good alternative for teaching and learning writing.

Education is viewed as a way to develop "whole" person whose cognitive, affective and psychomotor aspects grow well. In such case, students are seen to have opinion and feeling on the activities provided for them in learning. In the era of communicative language teaching, classroom interaction is directed in two ways; teacher-student and student-student interactions. Students should have the freedom to express their idea or feeling so that the interaction goes in two ways. The same is true in the teaching of writing. Online peer feedback can accommodate this need.

So far, studies are focused on the effect of implementing peer feedback on the quality of students' writing or the improvement of students' ability in writing. In other words, the studies emphasised on the cognitive aspect of

the student. Meanwhile, education is intended to touch all domains of human being including affective aspect. The seventh question of the study is “My feeling after my friend assesses my work is....”. The present research shows that there is a variety of students’ answers regarding to how they feel when their partners give feedback to their writing. 77.7 % (99) of the students state that they are happy to have their partner correct their writing. 9.9 % (12) of the students answer that they are sad having their work corrected by their friend. 4.1% (5) of the students feel angry. Meanwhile, 7.3% (11) of the students show 11 different answers ranging from confused, unhappy, curious, nervous, mixed, their partner is not understanding, sad, not really satisfied, awkward, nothing, and common. Even though the students have experienced being assessed by some modes of peer feedback, their feeling of uncomfortable being assessed by the friends remains the same.

Having the writing corrected by the peer lead to the feeling of untrust and insecure among the students. This is so because the peer often overwrites the correction so that the writer finds it difficult to grab the meaning. In addition, the students think that the suggestion is not better than the original form. In other words, the peer’s competence is questionable. The peer might be less credible than the writer. This fact confirms Van Steendam et al. (2010) that the low accuracy of the peer feedback is caused by the students’ limited knowledge. That is why the response of the students show their inconvenience after receiving the feedback. Issue about peer’s credibility is usually related to negativity or positivity of the response. Feedback received from a highly credible person is usually responded positively by the writer (Strijbos, Narciss, & Dunnebier, 2010). On the other hand, when the person is less credible, the response might be negative. In this context, the 12.4% of students’ feeling unhappy is categorized as negative.

The last question in the survey is “Using online peer feedback is more preferable than using paper-based feedback”. Along with the improvement in the education system, the use of online peer feedback offers profit and benefit at the same time. Even though online peer feedback cost highly, generally it

reduces the expense for buying paper. In the paper feedback, a lot of paper is spent since the process of drafting until revising always requires paper. Nevertheless, through online peer feedback, such process is done through computer or hand phone. Online peer feedback also brings benefit for the students since they have more opportunity in providing suggestions. Since the activity in providing feedback can be carried out anywhere it is possible, the tension in correcting their peer work is less than the paper feedback that forces the students to sit on a chair reading the paper seriously. The data of the study show that 81.8 % (99) of the students agree that using online peer feedback is more preferable than offline (paper-based) feedback. 18.2% (22) of the students strongly agree with the abovementioned statement that using online peer feedback is more preferable. Online peer feedback happens in a more casual communication and feedback is given in a less formal revision (Neumann & Kopcha, 2019, p. 2). The data of the present study show that similar situation also happen to the students. Online peer feedback provide more interesting way of giving feedback rather than using paper-based feedback. Almost all the students agree to have their writing be given feedback online. Despite the fact that the feedback is less accurate, online peer feedback brings new experience for the students. In addition, the students' engagement in the learning process can be fostered by using such mode of feedback. They are active in the discussions of the feedback outside of school hours and beyond the teacher's inspection. It is good to promote students' self regulated learning.

CONCLUSION

Online peer feedback, in this study it is conducted by using Google docs, brings new perspective about learning English especially for the students. Most students perceive positively that online peer feedback brings benefits toward their learning. The students see that online peer feedback contributes to the improvement of language skills such as writing and reading. The use of technology fosters their participation in the learning activities in a

more casual communication instead of rigid student and teacher interaction. This leads to the increase of students' motivation. The impacts are learning become enjoyable and the students become more productive. The goal of teaching writing, at one point, is achieved. Despite the accuracy of the feedback is low, the practice of online peer feedback is seen as contributive toward students' affective development. Most of the students feel happy after receiving the feedback from their peer. Together with the students' limited knowledge of writing, the suggestions are usually simple and easy to follow. The teacher, of course should check the students' works and provide better feedback.

The findings of the present study imply that the use of online peer feedback is meaningful to assist students in developing their writing competence. While technology is seen as an ordinary companion for students' learning, creativity will be the next aspect to be emphasized in the teaching of writing. The students are provided with overwhelming sources of learning. All of them can be accessed just by exploiting the available technology. They must be creative in selecting the sources that support their learning. New discussions should be on how to promote students' skill in doing self revision through the help of technology.

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