

Peer-Correction Technique in Writing Class

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ABSTRACT

This study investigated the effectiveness of peer-correction technique in writing class. The participants of the study were the students of a Composition 1 Class in one of the universities in Bandung. There were 8 weeks in the process. The peer-correction was done every week with different kinds of paragraphs. For the first week, the students did peer-correction in pairs. It was to know the rules, what to be corrected and how it had to be done. And for the rest of the weeks, they did peer-correction using a laptop and presented the paragraph through LCD projector so that each of the students got all the attention in class and also could correct their classmates' paragraphs together. Data collection methods were questionnaires and interviews. There are 22 statements in the questionnaire sheet and 8 questions in the interview session. The results of the research were; there were 5 advantages of applying the pre-correction technique and 2 disadvantages found.

Keywords: *peer-correction, teaching writing technique, composition*

INTRODUCTION

Writing in English is one of the challenges for English as Foreign Language students to master this productive skill. In some researches, it is found that the students do face difficulties in writing. Al Fadda (2012) found that her participants faced some difficulties in academic writing. Alfaki (2015) stated that his students also faced some writing problems such as mechanical, linguistic, or language problems, cognitive or intellectual problems, and psychomotor problems. Moreover, as found by Fareed et al. (2016: 85), their participants of the research experienced some struggles; they were lack of knowledge of appropriate vocabulary, found difficulties in grammar and syntax, and lack of idea and organization of the writing.

Some writing problems were also found in Composition 1 in STAI Siliwangi Bandung. Some of the students were not confident in their writing that they needed their classmates to discuss (questionnaire, point 2: no.1). To solve those problems, a writing technique is needed to help students face their problems. One of the techniques that can

be used is the peer-correction technique. The peer-correction technique is done in the revising or editing stage.

There are some purposes of this study. They are to find out whether applying the peer-correction technique improve students' writing ability, to see how this technique help the students to improve their writing ability, to discover the students' experience and opinion after they implement this technique and it can be used to determine teaching technique, specifically to improve writing abilities.

In conclusion, this research was conducted to know the impact of peer-correction technique in Composition 1 Class, especially for beginner EFL students. It was conducted in Composition 1 Class in STAI Bandung, majoring in English Education Program.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Writing Skill

Writing is the producing skill; however, it does not mean that the students have to focus on their final paragraph only. They also have to gain experience on every stage of the writing process so that they can gain important experience in polishing their paragraphs because writing is the process that begins with imperfect, incomplete, unclear hunches, ideas, and concepts (Murray and Moore, 2006:5) to create good and understandable writing. In this research, it is in form of a paragraph.

Brown and Abeywickrama (2010: 262-263) state some micro and macro skills of writing. There are 6 micro-skills of writing: (1) the students can produce graphemes and orthographic patterns in English, (2) write at a well-organized rate of speed to costume the purpose, (3) create a suitable of words and use proper word order pattern, (4) use the standard grammatical system, (5) express a specific meaning in different grammatical forms, and (6) manage the consistent method in written discourse. There are also 6 macro skills of writing. Brown and Abeywickrama add that the students should be able to (1) manage the linguistic forms and conventions of written discourse, (2) complete the communicative functions of written text base on the form and purpose, (3) use links and connections, (4) differentiate among literal and implied meaning, (5) properly take specific reference and (6) improve writing strategies.

Moreover, Cook and Bassetti (2005:430) state that the students have to comprehend the use of the form and function of writing language to make them know the appropriate words and grammar they use in their writing. As Wati and Della (2018) found that students prior understanding of a written text is strongly correlated to their writing product. In addition, Cook and Bassetti also list some obstacles that may occur in EFL writing class, such as there is a challenge in transferring the idea from first language writing system to English one that brings out the creation of a new system. It is because their knowledge in their first language of writing is in their mind that they need to change it to an English writing system. These kinds of errors sometimes unconsciously happen and the correction is needed to be done after the writing stage.

To sum up, there are the micro and macro skills of writing that the students in Composition 1 Class need to know, understand, and gain to produce a good writing product.

Writing Process

Writing has a long process before the writer produces a good writing product. Harmer (2004: 4-5) states that there are 4 stages of writing; they are planning, drafting, editing, and final draft. Planning is the first stage that the learner should have to decide what they are going to tell. They can write detailed notes that relate to their theme or simple words only. The learner has to consider three things in the planning stage; the purpose of their writing, the readers, and also the content structure. The second stage is drafting. It is the very first version of their writing. It will be developed from the second version to the third, and so on in the next stage. The third stage is editing. It is the reflection and revising stage of writing. The students have to read their writing thoroughly to check which parts are done and which one is not. They check the structure, grammatical error, spelling, and the development of the idea. In addition, Wigati and Iman (2018) mentioned that linguistic factors that may impact on writing are, for examples, organization, vocabulary, sentence structure, and mechanics.

Besides, Nation (2009: 113) also suggests some processes and subprocesses of writing; they are “considering the goals of the writer, having a model of the reader, gathering ideas, organizing ideas, turning ideas into written text, reviewing what has been written and editing”. Furthermore, Sorenson (2010:3) argues that a good writing product is starting with the process. He proposes the writing process that can start from

prewriting, and continues to the writing, revising, and proofreading stage. Four of them can be applied in any kind of writing.

In this research, the peer-correction technique was done in this stage. The students checked their classmate's writing to see their classmates' errors and suggested to them. And the final stage is the final version. The writing is done in this stage, it is ready to read by the audience or readers. In general, three stages of writing are applied in Composition 1 Class. It is started from pre-writing and continues to writing and revising. And peer-correction technique was done in the last stage, which was revising.

Peer-Correction Technique

Many studies have found that achieving the writing class target, which was to prepare the students to be able to write academically, was quite challenging. It is in line with what Hinkel (2004:4) said that many teachers applying many techniques in teaching writing found numerous obstacles and shortfalls. The assumption was that the students needed to do two things when they wrote: an attainment of sufficient and linguistic proficiency.

There are some techniques that lecturers can apply to improve their students' ability in writing. One of the techniques is peer correction. This technique can be applied to any student's level of ability. In this research, the peer-correction technique was applied in the first stage of writing class, called Composition 1 Class, that the students learn writing from the very basic theory of writing. This research focused on finding the effectiveness of using peer-correction technique to improve students' writing skills.

Also, Zemach and Rumisek (2005: 21) state that peer correction is the activity that changes students' work by asking them to read and comment on their classmates' writing. After the writing stage is completed, they exchange their writing with their classmate. The students can write directly on their classmate's paper and suggest to improve their classmate's writing.

There are some benefits found related to peer-correction activity in the class. As stated by Ferris (2003: 70), the students can increase self-confidence, perspective, and critical thinking skills from being able to read texts of their classmates. They also have more feedback on their writing than from the lecturer alone, feedback from more diverse readers that have multiple perspectives, and feedback from non-expert readers in case their paragraph is unclear in terms of ideas and language. At last, this activity can

build a sense of classroom community.

Oshima and Hogue (2007: 18-19) call this technique peer editing in which the classmates read the paragraph and help their classmates to improve the content and organization of the writing by reading, asking the question and commenting on their classmate's writing to be better and clearer. Since writing is a process that starts from imperfect, this technique is believed to be one way to improve incompleteness.

Associated with the advantages of applying peer-correction technique, some of them are put forward by some experts that the students get through doing peer correction; it gives opportunities to the students to practice revising more and build editing habit (Harmer, 2004: 106). It is beneficial when the students can read and revise more writing and paragraph. They can gain the feeling of a good paragraph by unconsciously comparing one paragraph to another. Peer correction also lets the students work collaboratively (Harmer, 2004: 115). When they revise and correct their classmate's paragraph, they will discuss the issues and errors together that they can be able to work together for every paragraph. Hammer (2004: 116) also states that applying peer correction is also beneficial to the students that the correction is less rigid rather than the lecturer's correction.

Peer-correction techniques allow students to be helpful to each other (Ferris, 2003: 164 and Mittan in Hyland, 2003: 198). Additionally, there is some point that needs to be corrected by the students in this research. It is adapted from Hedge in Harmer (2004: 122), Oshima and Hogue (1998: 11-12), Oshima and Hogue (2007: 6-7), and Zemach and Rumisek (2005: 22). They are punctuation, spelling, grammar, well-structured sentence, good organization of introduction, body, and conclusion, and keeping to the title. The students assess their classmate's work by writing directly on their classmate's paper. It is one way that is suggested by Harmer (2004: 113). And the role of the lecturer in this stage is as an assistant that help the students along and as a resource that is available when the students need information and guidance (Harmer, 2004: 109).

Also, the research focuses on the very first level of writing class in one university in Bandung. This class's objective is to guide the students to compose a paragraph. There are variations of paragraphs in each meeting. So, the peer-correction technique in this research was applied to the paragraph. In conclusion, this research was conducted to know the impact of peer-correction technique in writing class on the students, especially

beginner EFL students. It was conducted in Composition 1 Class in one of the universities in Bandung, majoring in English Education Program.

METHOD

The design of this research was a descriptive qualitative method and this research was theory-driven (Holliday 2005: 19; Sugiyono, 2008: 7). This research focused on the study of the impact of applying peer-correction technique in a writing class called Composition 1 Class in one university in Bandung. As the nature of qualitative research, this research figured out the impact of that technique on students writing ability (Harmer, 2004: 106, 115, 116; Ferris, 2003: 164 and Mittan in Hyland, 2003: 198).

This research used a questionnaire and interview as data collection techniques. First, there are 22 statements in the questionnaire sheet. The students chose one of four answers that represents their feeling towards each statement; strongly agree, agree, less agreeable and not agree. The statements were taken from the theory of peer-correction technique based on Harmer (2004), Hyland (2003), and Ferris (2003). The statements focus on how much the techniques impact their teaching-learning process and their writing skills. Second, there are 8 open-ended questions that the students can answer based on their experience in applying the peer-correction technique. They answered as clear-honest-direct as possible.

The data of the questionnaire and interview were analyzed by using grounded theory or was called inductive process (Gray 2004: 346). It is “the analytic process through which data is fractured, conceptualized, and integrated to form a theory” (Corbin in Frankel, Wallen, and Helen Hyun, 2012: 436). The data found were crossed check to the theory of peer-correction technique that the experts proposed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

There were two results found in this research; the advantage and the disadvantages of applying the peer-correction technique in Composition 1 Class. According to the data from the interview it was found that all students never tried this technique before. Student 1 said that this was the first time for him to try this technique in writing. He used to discuss the grammar and other writing aspects with his classmates who had proficiency in English. It could be the appropriate sentence he made, whether it

was correct or still needed improvement.

Student 2 clearly stated that they also never tried this technique before. She added that the lecturer usually did the correction to her writing directly. Students 3 and 4 also said that they had not used the peer-correction technique before. It can be concluded that almost all of the students in this Composition 1 Class never used the peer-correction technique before in any kind of program, so it was a brand new activity for all of them. Their answers were also their first impression of peer-correction, especially in writing a paragraph. Composition 1 Class focuses on writing a simple paragraph that consists of 1 to 10 sentences, so the students read and gave suggestions to a paragraph.

Furthermore, in general, the classroom activities during 8 weeks were materials presentation by the lecturer that contain paragraph theory, writing the paragraph, and after that doing peer-correction. Based on the interview data, Student 1 explained what she went through in 8 weeks. One week before the peer-correction technique was done, the lecturer instructed the students to make a paragraph following the material previously discussed. She gave the example if this week discussed narrative text; the lecturer assigned the students to make narrative text with topics that have been determined by the lecturer for the students to choose. Paragraphs were typed in Microsoft Word and not printed out.

At the next meeting, the paragraphs that had been made by the students were displayed using an LCD projector in front of other students and also the lecturer. The peer-correction process was carried out by students and the lecturer. The lecturer gave an appeal to other students to correct paragraphs that have been made by their classmate. The peer correction included several aspects of correction, namely; the paragraph title, topic, the topic sentence, supporting points and supporting details, sentence structure, grammar, punctuation, capital letters, and words spelling.

The results of the research are explained in two points below:

1. The advantages of peer-correction in writing class

There are some advantages found in this research regarding applying the peer-correction technique. First, peer correction enables the students to correct paragraphs. As mentioned by Harmer (2004: 106), this technique trains the students to learn from mistakes by correcting others' paragraphs. The more the students read and correct, the more they will be aware of the writer's errors. The students were also unconsciously

forced to explain their errors, what they meant, what they wanted to tell their readers, and what their sentences meant. Based on the data from the questionnaire, there are 25% of the students strongly agree that through peer correction, they can correct many paragraphs along the semester. They read and corrected many paragraphs in one meeting that they gained more knowledge in writing errors; which one was correct, suitable, and appropriate to use in writing.

And undoubtedly, the rest of the students agree that this technique trains them to learn from mistakes by correcting their classmates'. It is because the students are easier to find out their classmates' mistake rather than their own mistakes (Ferris, 2003: 167) like what 25% of the students think based on the result of their questionnaire, 50% of the students agree and 25% of them less agree. Moreover, through applying this technique, the students know whether their paragraph is understandable or not (Hyland, 2003: 199). It is proved by 75% of the students think that is based on the data from the questionnaire, the rest of them even strongly agree. In addition, peer correction can fix their paragraph so that it is understandable (Hyland, 2003: 198). 50% of the students strongly agree and the rest 50% agree with that statement. In short, by applying the peer-correction technique, the students are trained to learn from the mistake, both their classmates' and theirs.

Second, peer correction enables the students to work together with a classmate (Harmer, 2004: 115; Mittan in Hyland, 2003: 198). Based on the data from the questionnaire, 75% of students think the statement is correct, and only 25% of them less agree with it. In line with Ferris (2003: 164), the students can help each other to compose a good paragraph. 25% of the students strongly agree and 75% of them agree about it. Furthermore, all of the students agree that it is a pleasure to discuss with their classmates about their writing rather than listening to the lecturer all the time (Ferris, 2003: 167; Medonca and Johnson in Hyland, 2003: 198). All of them also agree that it is a pleasure to correct their classmates' writing (Ferris, 2003: 167).

Then, as stated by Ferris (2003: 167), peer-correction is helpful because the students can write anything in their classmates' paper including the material they do not understand. According to the data from the questionnaire, 50% of the students strongly agree and 50% of them agree with that. Leki in Hyland (2003: 198) argues that it is also a delightful activity that the students can give suggestion, idea, and recommendation to

their classmate about their paragraph. It is what 25% of the students strongly agree and 75% of them agree. Last, through this activity, all of the students agree that they feel united because they work together as a team to create good paragraphs (Ferris: 2003:70-71).

Third, this technique encourages students to be more active in class. As stated by Hyland (2003: 199), the students can give their suggestions to their classmates and force them to think more, not only for their paragraph but also for their classmates'. Based on the data from the questionnaire 75% of them agree that they are more active in the class to apply this technique and only 25% of them less agree. In process of this technique, each student can participate freely without feeling afraid of making mistakes. They give their best suggestions to their classmates' papers.

Then, according to the data from the interview, Student 3 argued that the peer-correction technique was appropriate to be applied in the Composition 1 Class to find out how far she understood using correct grammar, and whether her paragraph was easy to understand by people who read it, and knew her error and mistakes. Moreover, Student 4 also gave his opinion that this technique was good to be applied in the composition course because it required students to produce their essays regularly and students also had room for evaluation and reflection on whether their paragraph to improve theirs.

Fourth, peer correction also allowed the students to think critically. Hyland (2003: 199) argued that peer correction forced the students to develop their reading critically. There were times when their classmate's paragraph did not make sense and understandable, the students needed to think harder to understand the meaning and gave the suggestion to make it better. It was proved by the data from the questionnaire that 25% of the students strongly agree and 75% of them agree with Hyland. They needed not only to compose a good and understandable paragraph but also to read and give the best suggestion to their classmate. They did both to their and others, that the more they thought the more they could gain the skills of writing.

Besides, Ferris (2003:70-71) also had the same idea that the students had to find out both the mistake and solution so that it developed the students' critical thinking. Based on the data from the questionnaire, 25% of them still strongly agree and 75% of them agree. It was much amount of number that it was proved that this technique enabled the

students to improve their ability to think critically.

The fifth, peer-correction technique improved the students' ability in writing. Student 1 stated that as a beginner writer in English, this technique was helpful because she could get information and knowledge from her classmate in terms of diction, grammar, spelling, etc. Student 2 added that he could know how a good paragraph be like without writing unneeded content. In line with Students 1 and 2, Students 3 and 4 stated that they can know their mistakes that they did not realize before. In addition, Students 1, 3 and 4 also thought that this technique was appropriate to apply in writing class. Student 2 stated that it was useful to know how well her paragraph in terms of using correct grammar and whether it was understandable to others. She also argued that it was useful to know the mistakes that she did not realize. And, Student 4 added that peer-correction could reflect whether her paragraph was understandable so that she could know her mistakes and fix them to be better.

2. The disadvantages of peer-correction in writing class

Meanwhile, there were two disadvantages or lacks in applying this technique in Composition 1 Class based on the students' opinions. First, the lecturer's correction was better than the classmate's correction. It was not in line with what Harmer (2004: 116) and Hyland (2003: 199) stated that this technique can be more flexible and comfortable than lecturer's correction. It was shown from the questionnaire data that 75% of the students did not agree that this technique was flexible and comfortable rather than lecturer's correction.

In addition, the data from the interview found that most of the students felt lecturer's correction was more comfortable. Student 2 said that lecturer's correction was better because the students' abilities were not the same, so not all students could participate actively in the correction session. Second, the peer-correction technique took much time. It was what Ferris (2003:70-71) argued that each of the students had their ability and time to understand a paragraph so that there would be a different amount of time needed by every student. It was also proved by questionnaire data that showed 25% of the students strongly agree that this technique requires much time, 50% of them agree and only 25% of them less agree. It also depended on students' ability to comprehend the paragraph, found the error, and gave the solution. Each of them had their ability and pace.

Also, based on interview data, it was found that Student 3 argued that it took so much time to complete this technique in the classroom. Student 4 also thought the same that it took much time to read and correct the entire paragraph in the classroom. The result was that the explanation of other material was delayed.

Furthermore, the students gave some suggestions related to applying the peer-correction technique in the classroom, especially in Composition 1 Class. Because many of the students found that this technique took too much time to complete in the classroom, they suggested doing this technique outside the class or after the teaching-learning process in the classroom over. According to interview data, Student 4 proposed to apply this technique outside the classroom, so that she could have her own time to read and correct the paragraph with unlimited time. She could do it at home with a relaxing atmosphere so that she could understand the paragraph more before revising it. She could consult the dictionary or grammar book before suggesting for her classmate's paragraph improvement. This also proved what Ferris (2003:70-71) stated before, that the students had to be given their own time to do peer-correction technique.

In conclusion, according to the data from the questionnaire and interview, it was found that there were 5 advantages and 2 disadvantages of applying the peer-correction technique in Composition 1 Class.

CONCLUSION

There were two points found in this research; the advantage of peer correction and the challenges faced when the lecturer applied it in Composition 1 Class. First, there are five advantages of peer correction in Composition 1 Class. First, peer correction enabled the students to correct paragraphs. Second, peer correction enabled the students to work together with their classmates. Third, this technique encouraged the students to be more active in class. Fourth, peer correction also allowed the students to think critically. The fifth, peer-correction technique improved the students' ability in writing. Meanwhile, there are two disadvantages found. First, some students liked lecturer's correction more because they were not confident with their ability in checking their classmates' paragraphs. Second, the peer-correction technique took much time.

To sum up, peer-correction technique had both advantages and disadvantages in terms of applying them in Composition 1 Class. This technique indeed could improve

students' writing ability but took more time. The suggestion that can be given is that this technique is better done outside the classroom so that the students have more time to check and do not disrupt other materials.

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