

Applying Direct Peer Feedback to Foster Vocational School Students' English Writing Performance

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Keywords: Direct peer feedback, writing performance, vocational students.

Abstract: By expecting to give theoretical and practical contribution to English as Vocational Purposes (EVP) as part of English as Special Purposes (ESP) in vocational high schools, this study is conducted with an aim at determining whether there is significant difference between vocational students' writing performance treated using direct peer feedback, teacher feedback and no specific feedback. This study uses a quasi-experimental design in which three assigned groups as experimental and control groups are given direct peer feedback contrasted to teacher feedback and non feedback application. Inter-rater scoring rubric using Jacob's ESL Writing Assessment considering Language Use, Mechanic and Rhetoric as aspects is used to score students' writing performance. Research findings shows that there is significant difference between students' writing performance taught using direct peer feedback compared from students' writing performance using teacher feedback and conventional with no special feedback instruction. It is also found that direct peer feedback is even more effective than teacher feedback.

1 INTRODUCTION

The demands for writing in academic areas is increasing because the impact of globalization. One of that demands is in vocational schools. Vocational schools in Indonesia are growing rapidly. The rapid growth of vocational schools is not only due to the enormous support from the government, but also because of the industrial need for the graduates of vocational schools in the present time. One of the skills a vocational school graduate must have is good writing skills. In vocational schools English is given as English as Vocational Purposes (EVP) as part of English as Specific Purposes (ESP) (Widodo, 2016; Hua and Beverton, 2013). One of the English language materials given is writing lessons. Because of the importance of writing lessons for vocational school students, it is significantly urgent to find an effective teaching innovative writing for them. The character of the vocational school students is always learning and working in teams or groups. For that need, it is urgent to study about writing teaching techniques that fit with this character. One of the

teaching techniques of writing that suits that character is peer feedback (Woo, Chu and Li, 2013).

Writing is very complicated skill to learn. It involves a complex cognitive activity in which the writer should be able to organize some specialized skills at the same time, such as content, format, sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, and letter formation. Those are the challenge for teachers to get the success of increasing the students' writing ability. Process of teaching writing consists of four basic stages: they are planning, drafting, revising, and editing (Richard and Renandya, 2002). The fourth stage revision is not a simply activity of checking language errors, it has a big effect for appearing the better writing product.

In revision process, there is feedback that leads students to revise their writing product. Feedback is necessary because it can inform the students of their weaknesses and tell the teachers about the effectiveness of their teaching. Feedback is defined information on performance which affects subsequent performance by influencing students' attention to particular matters so that those matters undergo a change in the subsequent performance

(Haoucha, 2012). Generally, there are three types of feedback: self-monitored feedback, peer feedback and teacher-student feedback. Traditionally, teachers are the only one who provides feedback to students' writing. Then, peer feedback was introduced as a new strategy to developed students' writing performance and it became an important role in writing classroom.

Ellis (2008) proposes six strategies for providing feedback on writing performance, they are: direct feedback, indirect feedback, meta-linguistic feedback, focus and unfocused feedback, electronic feedback, and reformulation feedback. This study focuses on investigating the first category that is direct feedback. Birk (2007) found that using peer feedback the students began to recognize problems in their peers' writing and began to recognize the same problems in their own. Later, Yu (2013) finds peer feedback helpful for their students to be aware of the common errors in their writing, learnt from their peer's writing, raised the audience's awareness, enhanced their own writing quality, stirred self-reflections, and promoted interest and motivation in L2 writing.

From the above rationales there is still a gap between the facts of the importance of teaching writing in vocational school, the advantage using direct peer feedback technique (Nelson and Schunn, 2009) and the need to combine the two. Therefore, this study aiming to identify whether there is any significant difference of vocational high school students' writing performance treated using direct peer feedback and students' writing performance treated using conventional method is really in need to bridge the gap.

2 METHOD

2.1 Participants

Four vocational high schools located in Malang district, East Java Province, participated in this study. Thirty five students randomly selected from every three vocational high schools completed in 10 effective meetings preceded by pre-test, followed with the instructional program as treatment and ended with the post-test. A group given peer feedback was as experimental group. As control groups, two groups consisting of 35 students of every group were given teacher feedback and no special feedback technique in instruction. These three groups did not differ significantly from the dropouts with respect to age or all pre-test measures, p values > 0.10 .

2.2 Procedure and Assessment

Following the completion of the pre-test, the students were assigned randomly to the instruction group. Students in were taught in groups of 10 meetings. There were 2 lessons per week for a total of 5 weeks. Each lesson lasted for 90 min. The instruction used for this study as treatment was mainly process writing to promote the participants' peer feed-back giving. It was process writing approach with some steps in which the step of peer feedback was intensified. For the two control groups, one group was given with teacher feedback, whereas another was given with conventional instruction with no special feedback.

The students in experimental group were not only as writers but also as feedback providers through their peer's writing product. The researcher gave the students peer editing worksheet. It was also suggested by Gebhard (1996) that teachers should provide students guidelines or a short list of questions for giving feedback. Peer editing worksheet would lead them to evaluate the peer's writing product.

This research also employed written test in the form of writing prompt as one of the instruments to obtain the data of the students' achievement in developing argumentative composition. The subjects were asked to write an argumentative composition using topic that has been determined. This test was administered for 100 minutes to the subjects. Within that time duration, the subjects are expected to finish writing an argumentative composition containing around 500 words. To score the students' compositions, a ready-made scoring guide called ESL Composition Profile. Inter-rater reliability were used in this study instead of intra-rater reliability since the last one is usually applied by a classroom teachers who asses their own students for grading purpose. Therefore, to the reliability scores, this study employed two raters.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The following is testing the effect of peer feed-back, teacher feed-back and no special feed-back on subjects' writing achievement. The purpose of the analysis in this section is to determine whether there is any effect of applying three different feed-back applications on subjects' writing achievement across study specifications.

Table 1 gives a description that the *F-ratio* for teaching technique is 6.437 with the *degrees of freedom* 2. The *P-value* is .002. This research uses significance level .05 ($\alpha = .05$). It can be interpreted

that there is significant different mean score of the students' writing achievement after being taught using teacher feed-back peer feed-back and no special feed-back technique. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is significant different effect of applying

three different kinds of feed-back techniques on the vocational students' achievement in making composition.

Table 1: Tests of between-subjects effects.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	6799.396(a)	8	849.925	11.346	.000
Intercept	1278166.44	1	1278166.404	17062.092	.000
Feed-back techs	964.391	2	482.195	6.437	.002
Voc. Study Specs	543.163	2	271.581	3.625	.028
Feed backs * Study Specs	5291.843	4	1322.961	17.660	.000
Error	19552.200	261	74.913		
Total	1304518.000	270			
Corrected Total	26351.596	269			

a R Squared = .258 (Adjusted R Squared = .235).

From the result of analysis of estimated marginal means, as shown in Table 2, the rank of the three groups is known. The highest mean score of writing achievement is achieved by the group of students given peer feed-back. The second position is achieved by the group of students taught using teacher feed-back, whereas, the lowest position is achieved by the students given non feed-back writing.

Table 2: Estimated marginal means.

Teaching Writing Orientation	Mean	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval	
			Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1=Teacher Feed Back Writing	66.700	.912	64.904	68.496
2=Peer Feed-Back Writing	71.283	.912	69.487	73.080
3=No Specific Feed Back Writing	68.428	.912	66.631	70.224

The result of this study is relevant with the result found by Hashemnezhad (2012). He revealed that feedback in the form of direct feedback was more beneficial than indirect feedback especially for proficient learners. Direct feedback can give spontaneous response. The suggestion given with feedback can be spontaneously responded by the students that result in revision of the error quickly. Besides, direct feedback has possibility to be

confirmed. Sometimes the feedback given is not always understood easily. It needs confirmation. Direct feed eliminates the gap between the time needed to make confirmation and the response to make revision. Therefore, direct peer feedback has really can give many advantages and can be claimed as the effective method in teaching writing.

Moreover, the researcher also found four advantages during implemented direct peer feedback as a method in teaching and learning writing. They are building learning community in the classroom, negotiation possibility, building higher accountability and finding different perspectives. As Hairston (1999) proposed, peer feedback can build a leaning community in the classroom. When the students exchanged and shared their ideas with their peers by negotiating about the feedback given, the students could learn from each other and they could build a higher level of accountability to submit a well-written product to the teacher. Additionally, Spear (1988) finds that while interaction helps students to share ideas, communicate meaningfully, and obtain different perspectives on their writing, there are a number of factors that are potential inhibitors of successful peer discussion.

As shown in Table 2, the writing performance of the students given peer feedback is better than the writing performance of the students without peer feedback. Even, it is still better than the writing performance of the students given teacher feedback. The finding of this study confirms what Chen (2010) and Sashok (2008) propose that direct peer feedback

helped the students become more critical in analyzing and evaluating their peer's writing product. It is in line with Topping (2007) and Williams (2005) stating that peer feedback not only helped students improving their writing skills, but it also enhanced their critical thinking and reading and at the same time motivated them to write.

Another advantage of direct peer feedback in writing is about the comfort and easiness of the students in engaging mutual criticism and reciprocal information. They indicated that it was easier to talk with friends than teacher. To the friends they could say whatever they wanted. Although it seems about the psychological reason, but it really affect their writing performance. The data as described in Table 2 empirically shows that direct peer feedback had a positive effect in social aspect hence increase the students' writing performance.

Another reason about why direct peer feed gives advantages to students hence increases significantly their writing performance is concerning with awareness of their error, learning from their peer and self-reflection. Those three reasons affect not only to psychological but also empirical experience to the students. As proposed by Yu (2013) peer feedback is helpful for their students to be aware of the common errors in their writing, learnt from their peer's writing, raised the audience's awareness, enhanced their own writing quality, stirred self-reflections, and promoted interest and motivation in L2 writing. What has been proposed by Yu is empirically proved in this research.

When the students evaluated their peer's writing product, they automatically read all the paragraphs. By reading their peer's writing product, they got new knowledge to improve their writing product such as different writing style, points of views, vocabulary, etc. The improvement was clearly showed in every assignment. The first assignment (pre-test) until the last assignment (post-test) showed that the students writing style increased. They used variants vocabulary to describe the topic well, and the grammatical error was reduced. It was confirmed by Rollinson (2005) that by reading the writing task of their classmate, it can stimulate students to put more effort to write and it encourages them to write more and learn to improve their stories. Direct peer feedback reduced the teacher's workload in providing feedback. It meant that the teacher could avoid time consuming due to the students provided feedback on what their peers writing product. By using direct peer feedback as a method in teaching writing, it helped the researcher as a teacher to correct all the students' writing product quickly without spending more time and energy. Therefore, direct peer feedback was not

only effective but also efficient as a method in teaching writing.

In this study, the major feedback providers were the students, and the researcher as a teacher still had a big role in teaching learning process. Considering teacher's workload reduced, the teacher has enough time to evaluate the students' writing product and take the conclusion of why the students make mistakes. Then, the researcher discussed with the students in the next meeting about their mistakes in order to avoid the mistakes happened again. As William cited by Nuraeni (2013) mentioned that feedback without explanation or discussion from or between teacher and students would not bring significant positive effect toward students' writing. In this study, it was proved that the students did not repeat the same mistakes. It could be seen of their post-test score which increased. In this study the researcher as a teacher not only explained about descriptive text but also became a facilitator. Being facilitator meant the researcher gave motivation to the students to be good writers, reminded them to avoid the same mistake, and gave appreciation when they could improve their writing performance. Even though, it was a simple activity but it could influence their motivation to be a good writer (Barkaoui, 2007).

In summary, direct peer feedback was the effective method used in teaching and learning writing. This method not only increased the students' writing score but also gave some advantages for the students themselves in learning writing and also the teacher in teaching writing.

4 CONCLUSIONS

From the pedagogical point of view, these findings are good news for the students and teachers. By providing direct peer feedback as a method in teaching and learning writing, the students' writing score who are treated using direct peer feedback better than students' writing score who are not treated using conventional method. Additionally, direct peer feedback also bring the advantages for the students and the teacher; it made students active in the classroom, helped the students more critical in analyzing and evaluating their peer's writing product, made the students got new knowledge to improve their writing quality product, reduced teacher's workload in providing feedback.

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