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How Students Take the Benefits of Teacher Feedback in Writing?

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Abstract

Writing is important yet difficult to be learned, thus teacher feedback is needed in the learning process in order to help students improve their writing skills. Teachers often give feedback in the students' writing. Thus the researcher questions whether college students take the benefits of it. The purpose of this study is to acknowledge how the students' take the benefits of teacher feedback in their writing. The researcher used the descriptive qualitative which was supported by semi-structure interview to collect the data. The convenience sampling was used to select the participants. There were six students from batch 2011 who participated in this study. The 8th semester students have had a lot writing experience during their study so that they were compatible to serve as participants. There are two main findings in this study. Firstly, the participants take the benefits of teacher feedback by implementing different routines. Secondly, the participants feel happy yet frustrated because of teacher feedback on their writing. In conclusion, college students take the benefits of teacher feedback by implementing it on their writing.

Keywords: *Feedback, teacher feedback, writing benefits.*

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Introduction

Teacher feedback is defined as a tool to help students improve their writing skills. It can be in the forms of written or spoken feedback. By providing feedback, teachers can help students improve their writing skills. It is apparent that teacher feedback has essential roles. According to Lee (2007), “teacher feedback is a useful pedagogical device to enhance the teaching and learning writing” (p. 180). In line with Lee, Duomont (2002) defined feedback as an essential aspect in the writing process and it plays a central role to ensure the effectiveness of learning these skills. This argument is supported by other researchers who argued that teacher written responses continue to play a central role in most second language and foreign language writing classes (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). The previous studies have also shown the benefits of teacher feedback. For example, it identifies students’ strengths, weaknesses, and areas for improvement in a structured and cohesive way; and then students use these to set future learning targets (Hepplestone, Holden, Irwin, Parkin, & Horpe, 2011; Randall & Zundel, 2012). In other words, feedback helps students acknowledge and understand some areas which they do not know when writing their first writing.

It is important to identify the role and benefits of teacher feedback in students’ writing skills based on students’ point of view. Harmer (2001) said that “most students want and expect us to give them feedback on their performance.” (p. 104). The study conducted by Ferris (1997 as cited in Maarof, 2011) on teacher feedback showed that 93,5 percent of 155 respondents indicated that teacher feedback helped them improve their writing. It is also supported by some studies which indicate that students also want teachers to give them feedback on the content and ideas in their writing (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz 1994, 1996). In addition, students are positive about receiving indirect feedback on errors, giving them clues rather than corrections since they recognize that it encourages them to be more active in using the feedback (Arndt, 1993; Saito, 1994; Hyland, 2001a as cited in Hyland, 2006). However, some researchers argued that teacher feedback is

unnecessary. Truscott (1996), for example, said that “correction is harmful rather than simply ineffective” and that “error correction should be abandoned” (p. 360). The pros and cons of the roles and the benefits of teacher feedback leave the teachers in confusion as to how to give feedback or other types of pedagogical tools in students’ writing. Regarding the students’ reaction towards teacher feedback, Crisp (2007, p. 577) said that “only limited support for the idea that students actually do respond to feedback and make changes in a subsequent piece of accessible work consistent with the intentions that underlay the provided feedback.” Lee (2008) said that teachers need to pay attention to the reaction of the lower proficiency students since they will be difficult to catch the materials. While, based on Xuelian and Won (2014), students with higher proficiency are satisfied if given corrective feedback.

There is still uncertainty, however, whether the students’ take the benefits of teacher feedback into their writing. Currently, there are no data on how the students implement the teacher feedback on their writing. Thus, the purpose of this study is to investigate how students take the benefits of teacher feedback in writing. The research question of this study is “how do students take the benefit of teacher feedback in their writing?”

Methodology

This study employed qualitative descriptive in order to gain more of the students’ perspective. The researcher used semi-structure in-depth interviews in *Bahasa Indonesia* to collect the data. The sampling used is convenience sampling. Six students batch 2011 studying at English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta were recruited for this study. They were chosen because they were writing their undergraduate thesis. The data were transcribed and analyzed qualitatively using three steps of coding namely open, axial and selective coding. To validate the data, the researcher did the member checking where the participants read the transcription of the interviews. For this study, the students are referred as Participant A to F to keep the students’ identity.

Findings

The following part of this article moves on to describe in greater detail the findings. It has two parts that are described separately in order. The first part refers to the first findings, and the second part is the second findings.

Figure 1 is the summary of the two findings that were analyzed by the researcher. The first data answered the research question, while the second data is the other important finding collected from the interview. There are a total six findings regarding the implementation and the students' feeling.

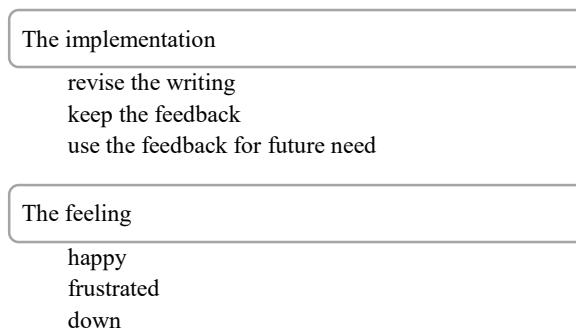


Figure 1. Summary of the findings.

The Implementation of Teacher Feedback

The data showed that participants have different routine after they got teacher feedback in their writing. The common routine is directly revise the writing, but there are also other routines that the participants do before and after revising their writing. Despite that six of the participants do not have the same routine, but they revise the writing based on the teacher feedback.

Firstly, two of the total participants directly revised their writing based on the teacher feedback. Participant A admitted that she usually revises her writing based on the teacher feedback directly. Then she will also apply the teacher feedback in her next writing to avoid the same mistakes. After revising, she usually re-read her writing along with the feedback. Thus she knew that her writing is better after she got teacher feedback.

“I usually revise my writing directly based on the feedback. Then I apply the feedback for my other writings. I usually re-read my writing, and I found it better than before after I got feedback.” (Participant A, 2015)

The other participant who directly revises her writing is participant E. She said that she will also re-read the past subject while revising her writing.

“For sure I will directly revise my writing based on the feedback while I re-read the past subject.” (Participant E, 2015)

The next participant said that she would re-read her writing along with the teacher feedback. And then she would make sure to the teacher about the feedback before finally she started to revise her writing. She added that she usually saved the feedback to be able to learn it another time.

“First, I re-read my writing, then I keep the paper so that I can study it again later. If there is something I do not understand, I will ask the teacher. After that I revise my writing.” (Participant B, 2015)

The next participant has unique routine before revising his writing. Participant C said he usually meditates, finds new theory and re-read the past subject before starting to revise his writing. He meditated because he felt confused and frustrated after obtaining the teacher feedback.

“At first, I will meditate, and then I find the theory that relate to the feedback and re-read past subject. After that I will revise my writing.” (Participant C, 2015)

Then, participant D usually memorizes the feedback before applying it to his writing and after that he would notice his mistakes in order to avoid the same mistakes in the future.

“Of course I will remember the feedback, so that I will not make the same mistake. Then the right one will be applied in my writing. Last, I will notice the mistakes.”
(Participant D, 2015)

The last participant has different routines other than revising their writing. Participant F said that she will analyze teacher's aim through his/her feedback before starting to dig her mistakes. The next is that she will revise her writing and re-read it afterward. The last routine of participant F is to ask her friend to proofread her writing.

“First, I will not directly revise my writing based on the feedback, but I try to analyze teacher's aim, then I try to dig my mistakes. After that I will start to revise my writing, and then I read it and revise it again. The last, I will ask my friend to proofread and then I revise it again.” (Participant F, 2015)

In conclusion, all the participants have their own routine to revise their writing after getting teacher feedback. They do not ignore or underestimate their teacher's feedback because they took the benefits of the teacher feedback for the betterment of their writing. In other words, the participants paid attention to the teacher feedback and used it as a learning tool for other subject or writing.

The Students' Feeling

Another finding obtained is regarding the students feeling after they got the teacher feedback. Five of the six participants mentioned how they feel towards teacher feedback. One participant unfortunately did not mention how she feel. The first feeling most mentioned is happy. Three participants said that they feel happy towards teacher feedback in their writing. Then, there are two participants that feel frustrated yet happy because of teacher feedback.

“At first, I feel down, maybe because I am not used to feedback.” (Participant B, 2015)

“I feel so happy because of teacher feedback.” (Participant D, 2015)

“I have mix feeling about it like feeling down, sad, frustrated yet happy. But, the main feeling is frustrated.” (Participant C, 2015)

In conclusion, the participants felt various feelings about teacher feedback in their writing. But the dominant feeling is happiness. The participants are positive towards the existence of teacher feedback.

Discussion

Students believe that the role of teacher feedback has a really big effect towards the improvement of their writing. According to Hyland and Hyland (2006), teacher written responses play a central role in most second and foreign language writing classes. The finding showed that students consider teacher feedback as an important and good thing in writing skills is appropriate with Maroof's (2011) opinion. Maroof (2011) said that students considered teacher feedback as an important and necessary aspect in responding to their essay writing. It is clear that students still give good responses if the teacher gives written feedback. In addition, the students' routines in implementing the teacher feedback agree with Wang (2013) who said that students revise their errors so that they can learn and improve their texts. It is proved by the students' feeling and belief towards teacher feedback when they revise their writing based on it. They believe that it can help them write better. I can conclude that students pay attention and appreciate the existence of teacher feedback in their writing.

Moreover, the implementation of the teacher feedback that students usually do after they get it is also essential. Chandler's research (as cited in Hyland, 2006) indicated that the accuracy of students' writing improved significantly over a semester when they corrected their errors after feedback compared to when they did not. It also happens at the English Education Department of Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta since the

findings above revealed that students usually revise their writing based on the teacher feedback they got. Students admitted that their writing has improved after they implement the teacher feedback. Note that the students noticed their mistake because of teacher feedback. These findings are appropriate with Garcia's point of view stating that "teacher feedback can help students become aware of errors and other writing problems" (1999 as cited in Jing, 2010, p.1). Students admitted that after they got teacher feedback, they can avoid the same mistakes in the future.

Previous research dealing with students' perception towards teacher feedback indicated that students are frustrated if there is no teacher feedback. As Leki (1991), Ferris and Roberts (2001) (as cited in Srichanyachon, 2012, p. 9) said that students tend to expect the teacher to comment on their written errors and are frustrated if this does not happen. Based on Lee (2008) stated that feedback sometimes could be a barrier for the students to catch the materials. The finding revealed that some of the students are frustrated after they got teacher feedback. Students may feel frustrated if the teacher feedback are unexpected or confusing. Then it can demotivate the students to understand the material.

Yet there are also students who feel happy with the existence of teacher feedback. The findings showed that students in fact feel happy with teacher feedback. This finding is in line with Alamis (2010). He said that the students would be enthusiastic to learn if they got advice and suggestion in their work. Lipnevich and Smith (2008), they also stated that students could have satisfaction in learning if the teacher took through the feedback clearly. I believe that students are still happy with teacher feedback despite that it makes them frustrated.

Conclusion

Teacher feedback is essential for students' improvement in writing skills. It is clear that students take the benefits of teacher feedback in their writing. The finding showed that students respond to the teacher feedback by revising their writing, keep and use it for future need. Then students also feel that their writing improved because of teacher feedback. Regarding the students' feeling, it is found that most of the students are happy

with the existence of teacher feedback. Even though students also feel down or frustrated, the dominant feeling is happy. In other words, the students admitted that they are happy if teachers give kinds of teacher feedback in their writing.

This study does not explore the students perspective of teacher feedback in complete. Thus other study should be done in order to gain the perspective regarding this topic in detail, especially dealing with the students' feeling. The researcher suggests that teacher should give feedback on the students' writing without hesitation.

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