

## STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS AND CHALLENGES ON PEER FEEDBACK OF EFL UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' WRITING

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### Abstrak

Umpan balik sejawat merupakan sarana yang sangat baik untuk meningkatkan kinerja menulis siswa. juga umpan balik sejawat sering dianggap sebagai strategi pembelajaran yang penting. Dalam pandangan ini, tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengidentifikasi dua hal yang terkait dengan persepsi mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris dan tantangan dalam penerapan *peer feedback* dalam proses pembelajaran mereka sebagai evaluasi untuk pengembangan strategi pembelajaran *peer feedback* yang digunakan untuk masa depan, khususnya di bidang peningkatan pelaksanaan proses pembelajaran. Desain penelitian ini adalah penelitian kualitatif dasar yang menggali pengalaman siswa dalam suatu fenomena tertentu. Selain itu, peneliti menggunakan kuesioner terbuka dan instrumen wawancara semi terstruktur untuk memperoleh data. Subyek penelitian ini melibatkan 15 mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris di Surabaya, Jawa Timur. Teknik yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah *purposive sampling*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa (1) Mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris memberikan persepsi positif terhadap penerapan *peer feedback*. Mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris memandang bahwa *peer feedback* memberikan berbagai manfaat, pandangan, juga saran terhadap kinerja menulis mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris. Kemudian, melibatkan mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris dalam implementasi *peer feedback* dapat meningkatkan kesadaran kinerja menulis mereka, memantau, mengevaluasi, dan mengembangkan tujuan dan rencana pembelajaran mereka sendiri. (2) Tantangan yang dihadapi mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris menjadi pengalaman bersama mahasiswa Bahasa Inggris yang melibatkan *peer feedback* sebagai proses pembelajaran. Ini membuktikan bahwa implementasi umpan balik sejawat adalah sarana yang benar-benar berharga untuk meningkatkan kinerja menulis. Kesimpulan dan saran untuk guru, pendidik, atau staf pengajar dan peneliti masa depan dibahas.

**Kata Kunci** : menulis, umpan balik, umpan balik sejawat, persepsi, tantangan.

### Abstract

Peer feedback is an excellent tool to improve the students' writing performance. Also, peer feedback often considered as an important learning strategy. In this view, the aims of the study are to identify two things related to the EFL university students' perceived and challenges in the implementation of peer feedback in their learning process as an evaluation to the development of peer feedback learning strategy that is used for the future, especially in the field of improving the implementation of the learning process. This research design was a basic qualitative study that explores the students' experiences in a particular phenomenon. In addition, the researcher used an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interview instruments to obtain the data. The subject of the study involved 15 EFL university students of English Department in Surabaya, East Java. The technique used to conduct this research was purposive sampling. The result of the study revealed that (1) The EFL university students gave positive perceptions toward peer feedback implementation. The EFL university perceived that peer feedback give various benefits, views, also suggestions to the EFL university students' writing performance. Then, involving the EFL university students in peer feedback implementation could raise awareness of their writing performance, monitoring, evaluating, and developing their own goal and plan of learning. (2) The challenges faced by the EFL university students becomes a shared experience by the EFL university students' who involving in peer feedback as the learning process. These proved that peer feedback implementation is the truly valuable tool for improving writing performance. The conclusion and suggestion for teacher, educator, or teaching staff and future research are discussed.

**Keywords:** writing, feedback, peer feedback, perception, challenge.

### INTRODUCTION

Writing is an act of expressing idea from what is in our mind, in the form of a work that can be read and provide

new knowledge, as well as being part of liaison with others. Writing is not an easy skill, especially in

university students, due to writing as a skill where the university students have to dive in and explore a linguistics science to make grammatical and structure accurately in a sentence (Zhang, 2018).

According to De Smet et al. (2012), writing is a part of four English skill that become one of the most complex expertise students must acquired and accomplish. Writing can be typing on paper or computer, which have different purposes and different writing stages (Nunan, 2003, p. 99). Because of the complexity, writing has a long process if the students want to improve their writing performance. Based on Harmer (2004), the process of writing is the way or stages writers go through to produce their writing. The process of writing depends on the content, type and medium of writing. According to Oshima (2007), writing has four stages; there are prewriting, organizing, writing, and polishing. While, based on Mackenzie (2007), a series of writing consist of planning, drafting, revising, and editing. EFL university students need to be given feedback in that revising process to clarify the latest version' editing process.

Feedback is a provision of information by an agent related to the result of performance. According to Irons, A. (2008, pp. 17–18), feedback is a activity that helps the students learn from their activity mainly through encouraging dialogue. In other words, feedback is viewed as a fundamental issue of the outcomes in giving knowledge or connection from the mistake and give effect to the students' learning process in getting the good result of the learning itself (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Gibbs & Simpson, 2005; Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Liu & Carless, 2006). Moreover, feedback can be positive and negative depending on the giver or acceptor of the feedback. Feedback can be from a teacher. Teacher feedback is carried out in two forms of activities: conferencing feedback (feedback given individually and face-to-face) and collective feedback (feedback that the teacher gives to each student orally and summarizes the feedback), but this teacher feedback is ineffective.

The teacher will not be able to correct one by one if there are many students in the class, which makes students feel off guard (do not want to study more selectively) if there are no red notes in their work mistakes. The effectiveness of teaching-learning process for students is when the teacher or teaching staff gives the best quality and timeliness of feedback. The teacher and/or teaching staff must know that feedback affects students' motivation, both intrinsic (willingness to learn) and extrinsic (neediness to learn). In this case, the number of types of feedback that will address is peer feedback.

In general, a peer is someone who has the same social position and a pupil who is at the same age and education level, according to Goldschmid and Goldschmid (1976) in Falchikov (2001, p. 25). Then, peer feedback is a method that trains students to not only think critically about their work but the work of others who also can produce two important learning outcomes related to receiving and giving feedback (Falchikov, 2001, p. 26). As quoted by Harutyunyan & Poveda (2011), the peer feedback method is a way that used to lend a hand to students learning improvement in their writing skills, despite the fact that at the same time, peer feedback advancing in collaborative work and critical tasks. Peer feedback also attempts students to practice using their knowledge as well as their abilities to comment, explain, and correct the work of one students to another (Hovardas et al., 2014).

Some peer feedback implementations in EFL writing performance is in State University of Malang, Indonesia. Kusumaningrum S.R., Cahyono, B. Y., & Prayogo, J. A. (2019) conducted peer feedback about the result of various types of peer feedback provision in EFL writing classroom. The study implemented peer feedback in a class and/or small group learning environment. The outcomes show that EFL university students have good writing after implementing two learning environments in peer feedback. Implementation of learning strategies to improve the quality of students during the learning process is often claimed by the teacher or teaching staff that the methods or strategies being taught are very good. It becomes a comfort zone for every teacher. With this, it is sufficient to feel that knowing students' perceptions of the views and values of the way teachers teach is very important.

Based on the explanation mentioned in the previous study above, there are several gaps from research conducted by Kusumaningrum et al. (2019), such as there is no investigation regarding students' perception towards peer feedback implementation. It is supported by Iswandari & Jiang (2020), which stated that the study are not given the students choice for willingness to participate in the study. It means that Kusumaningrum's research does not involve students' point of view or perception. Here, are the aims of the study related to students' perceptions and added by researching students' challenges on peer feedback implementation. In this case, involving students' perceptions of peer feedback will assist to guarantee that the diverse learning benefits of the method used is achieved effectively (Mulder et al., 2014). Thus, knowing the students' perceptions can make teachers or teaching staff improve the teaching-learning for the betterment and convenience of students in the

classroom. Whether from the media and/or how they teach. Students' perceptions are the key elements and valuable guide of that classroom atmosphere (Petegem et al., 2007).

Also, there is only a little research about EFL university students' perceptions and challenges from implementing peer feedback in the Indonesian context. Meanwhile, how peer feedback should be organized has been neglected and restricted. The researcher can explore more about these. In this research, the researcher will describe how the university students perceive peer feedback implemented. Then, the researcher will make the categories of students' challenges on peer feedback implementation.

The researcher expects this research to give other researchers insight to conduct their research without doubt about this study in the Indonesian context. This study can help as a contribution for the teaching staff to improve the teaching-learning process that they implemented to their EFL university students on peer feedback implementation. So, the teaching staff can maximally support the learning process of EFL university students in writing performance. Then, the researcher expects this study will help EFL university students get to know more knowledge to minimize their mistakes. In the future, it will be even better not to repeat the same mistakes. Finally, EFL university students' writing performance has improved over time.

Therefore, based on the research gaps and the reason that already stated above, there are two research questions formulated in this study:

1. How do EFL university students perceive the implementation of peer feedback in writing cause and effect essay?
2. What challenges do EFL university students' writing face on peer feedback implementation?

## **METHOD**

This research was a qualitative study that accomplished the aims of the study. The researcher used a basic interpretive study, one type of qualitative study, to collect the data that explored the students' experiences in a particular phenomenon. The researcher has selected a basic interpretive study; it became the design used when the researcher is interested in comprehending how the participants bear meaning for circumstance or experience. The researcher researched EFL university students' writing classroom at one State English Department in Surabaya, East Java. The EFL university students in the 4<sup>th</sup> semester who took the course. The whole number of students in the class was 15 EFL university students who would be the subject of this research. In this case, the researcher selected based on the classroom that has

implemented peer feedback, namely the Expository and Argumentative Essay Writing classroom. Purposive sampling became the technique used to detect and choose a potential participant group of potential participants who know and experience the phenomenon under the study.

The researcher used two instruments to facilitate the researcher to acquire the data. There were questionnaire and also semi-structured interview. The kind of questionnaire that was used by the researcher is the open-ended questionnaire. The researcher adopted the questions for the questionnaire (See Appendix A) were from Nguyen(2016), Dijks et al. (2018), Yang, Y.F., & Meng, W. T. (2013), and Tian, L. & Li, L. (2018) which have been revised before use. The researcher distributed the questionnaire to all participants online used Google Form. Then, a semi-structured interview was the second instrument used to take the data in this research. The interview questions were prepared, but the interviewer could change the arrangement of the question throughout the interview process, and the questions in this interview are assorted (Ary et al., 2010, p. 457). The researcher adopted the questions for the interview (See Appendix B) from Guardado & Shi's (2007); Tian & Li's (2018); Dijks et al. (2018); & Nguyen's (2016), which has been revised before use. In the interview process, the researcher did an online interview used Audio Call in Whatsapp. Later, the result was transcribed. Finally, all the data gathered were analyzed using a basic interpretive study.

The researcher used the stages of analysis data planned by Ary et al. (2010) in data analysis. First, organizing and familiarizing. It is a step in which the researcher organized the data collected by giving a questionnaire and interview. Then, the second step is coding and reducing. In this step, the researcher gathered and categorized the data relevant from data one to another. Here, the researcher, gave a code such as the first answers of participant coded by the word "P1". Besides, the researcher also reduced the data which not related to the study to interpret the next step. Last, interpreting and representing. This is the last step from the basic interpretive qualitative study. In this step, the researcher interpreted the result of the questionnaire and interview by describing university students' perceptions and challenges in peer feedback. Then, the researcher explained all the steps done by the participants. Finally, all of the findings presented in the form of paragraphs.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

In this part, the researcher reveals the results of this study which can answer the first and second research question related to EFL university students' perceive the implementation of peer feedback and the challenges EFL

university students' writing face on peer feedback implementation in writing cause and effect essay. After collecting the data and analyzing the data, there are research results that ready to be presented and discussed as follow.

### **How EFL university students perceived the implementation of peer feedback in writing cause and effect essay**

During collecting the data for the first research question, the researcher uses a questionnaire instrument. The researcher give 4 questions related to EFL university students' perceived.

1) What did you think about peer feedback in cause and effect essay writing? Please explain it briefly in sentences! (Ex : I think peer feedback in writing...because...)

*P2 : "I think PF in writing is a process of feedback that is given by one person to another, It can be said helpful process of feedback given by our friends to make our writing better because this way help us to check than fix our work".*

*P7 : " I think peer feedback in writing Is important strategy to be used for enhancing writing performance".*

According to the second and seven participants as the representative of all participants reveals that peer feedback got the positive perceptions which the EFL university students seems know as well as understand what the peer feedback is, what is its role in the learning process, and what will be gained from this strategy. All 15 EFL university students answer and explain peer feedback implementation. The researcher summarized that peer feedback is a beneficial learning strategy, good, worthy, effective and necessary way of the learning process in writing, which applied especially to the EFL university students. This is in line with the support theory from Cao (2019), peer feedback is an effective activity and fully contributed to serve university students in their learning process.

2) Do you think peer feedback is important to improved your writing performance especially in cause and effect essay? Please explain it briefly in sentences! (Ex : Yes, I do think so because ... / No, I don't think so because...)

*P1: "Yes, I do think so because it can improve our writing, especially about grammar".*

*P5 : "Yes, I do think so because it could raise self-awareness and more confidence with my essay".*

Here, after the researcher asked about what is the peer feedback was behind their perceptions, the researcher

asked to the EFL university students regarding what the important of peer feedback. Finally, they was mention it. Peer feedback becomes the best and the important way which helps the EFL university students learning with communicative and collaborative in giving or accepting feedback (Tian & Li, 2018).

3) How did you find peer feedback helpful to improve your writing performance especially in cause and effect essay?

*P5 : "My peer's feedback can help me to correct some errors and mistakes in my essay. So, I can ensure that my essay is well written before I submit it to my lecturer".*

*P10 : "When I did peer feedback with my college mates, I can easily revise my mistake in my essay since my peer already gave me the correct answer and the reason and a bit explanation related to the correction. Thus, I can compare between those incorrect answers and correct answer".*

Peer feedback makes the EFL university students know and learn from their mistakes like checking, clarifying, solving the problem, and fixing the writing each other during the learning in cause and effect essay also helping to improve their writing performance with more confidence before submitting to the lecturer. These findings support by the result of the previous study from Mulder (2014), who also found peer feedback on ESL/EFL writing looks vulnerable to have good advantages on developing EFL university students' awareness and problem solving in the writing performance.

Implicitly, this strategy provides both written feedback and oral feedback. Written feedback is done by EFL university students that using the comment tool in Microsoft Word. While oral feedback is done by the EFL university students when they are discussing any detail information, both students are not clear, confused, and attempt misunderstanding. The way peer feedback activity help the EFL university students is finding, correcting, decreasing the mistakes in grammatical error, and explaining the existing errors. Thus, peer feedback gives various benefits to EFL university students in the learning process of cause and effect essay writing. For the other researchers who also found the benefits of peer feedback implementation that is peer feedback becomes considerable to improve the students' writing work not only about getting a good score but also the value of the learning process (Berggren, 2013, 2015; Hansen & Liu, 2005; Kusumaningrum et al., 2019; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009).

4) How did you find peer feedback satisfied to improve your writing performance especially in cause and effect essay?

P4 : *"By applying writing feedback, I can improve my writing quality which can affect my writing score. The more often I use peer feedback, the higher the score that I get from writing"*.

P14 : *"I always make sure and ask my friend if there is any correction that I don't understand"*.

Next, EFL university students feeling satisfied when they know their mistakes, accepting the feedback (got the correct one of their mistakes), be able to improve and enhance their writing quality in terms of vocabulary choice, grammar, and mechanics (which affect their writing score), and also the important one is their writing result is always better than before. Although out of 15 participants, 3 participants stated that they were not sure that they were satisfied with peer feedback, but they also said that peer feedback is very good for them. The researcher concludes the unsatisfied is because they had not found their standard satisfaction feedback yet.

P2 : *"I don't feel that it was satisfied for improving my writing, but I can say that It is a very good way to help us know our mistakes when creating cause and effect essay. We need someone to recheck our work before submitting it to our lecturer, so it is useful for us"*.

This reinforcement by another research result Huisman (2018), who agree that peer feedback can make the university students satisfied with the feedback they received, made them ready and willing to revise their writing to improve their writing performance. While unsatisfied feedback is supported by Mulliner (2017), the characteristics of effective feedback are common, appropriate, detailed, and specific. Thus, the three EFL university students are not found any of these characteristics.

#### **The challenges do EFL university students' writing face on peer feedback implementation**

Peer feedback proven that provides many benefits in the students' learning process. However, despite providing many benefits, peer feedback can also present problems. Here, the researcher asks related things in detail.

5) How did you accept or reject your peer's feedback in cause and effect essay writing?

P2 : *"I accept it when I realized I made mistakes in my writing, then I revised it to be better. While, I didn't revise it (you can say I reject it) when I was still confused and I feel that I was true. I tried to find some information on about my mistake, then I tried to tell*

*my friend. We could recheck together, I truly made a mistake or not"*.

6) What were your challenges in accepting your peer's feedback to cause and effect essay?

P3: *"The challenges that I face in providing and receiving feedback are about the different English proficiency levels and feedback about the mistakes. However, we're going to give correctness what is true in the structure .It can happen since the lack of knowledge of grammar in certain part. And it can lead to the confusion of our partner. Not only the grammatical structure but perceptions of the idea also can become a challenge for me. Sometimes we don't get the point of what they have written"*

7) What were your challenges in rejecting your peer's feedback to cause and effect essay?

P2: *"As what I did when I accept my peer's feedback, I have to find the information on then I tell to my friend and I ask her to recheck together whether it was really wrong or not"*.

P8: *"My challenges are they are my friends, I feel bad when I reject something from my friend"*.

P14: *"My challenge is when I was told to correct my friend. I'm afraid of being wrong"*.

Overall, terms of the challenges faced by EFL university students in peer feedback implementation: (1) Dealing with disagreements (2) Getting unclear feedback and without reason given (3) Having a different level of proficiency (4) Difficulty to accept or distrust in the feedback given or received (5) Don't know if the feedback is right or wrong (6) Feeling afraid of being wrong in giving or receiving the feedback (7) Worrying about ruining their friendship.

According to the listed above, the challenges of EFL university students are not only about grammar, but related to their trust in accepting the feedback, lacking of knowledge, also the keeping their partner's feeling. Those are those are commonly experienced by the students as their involvement in the learning process with peer feedback. This findings are in line with the theoretical discovery from Zhu & Carless (2018), that stated peer feedback poses challenges to EFL university students as reviewers or reviewee often lacking of their knowledge in providing feedback and misunderstand the writers' intent. From all challenges presented by the EFL university students, the researcher continue to dig deeper regarding the challenges of the EFL university students faced, especially how the EFL university students deal with the problems.

P5: "To deal with this problem, at first, my peer and I are in good term. We usually use a positive item in commenting on each others' essay. There would be a discussion related to a different perception in grammar context or the content. We just are professional".

P3: "When I get distrust comments or suggestions, I try to clarify them and ask my partner to make them. Sometime, distrust can occur because of incomprehension and differences of opinion".

P2: "If I am not sure of my peer's feedback and my peer also doubts her feedback, I try to search other sources or ask other friends".

Here, the researcher thinks that all the subject in this study is always thought critically and put positive thinking and being the professionally of reviewer and reviewee. Objectivity in this study is measured indirectly by all the explanation of EFL university students explain that they avoid biases such friendship even though it has been explained above that the challenges they faced were worried that their friendship will be ruined, attitude, lack of knowledge, and confidence, they have to think about how to be professional pair. When they are doing peer feedback process always did the discussion. The EFL university students read first, analyze, give suggestions or correctness, then discuss when they have something that does not understand or needs more information and give the evidence behind the reason. The EFL university students agreeing if their partner is reluctant to get the feedback, can deny and stand with their writing. While the feedback is not clear enough and both partners do not know what's right, they have to try to find other sources together.

## CONCLUSION

Returned to the research question, exploration of importance, benefits, and satisfaction of implementing peer feedback are related to how students perceive peer feedback implementation. The researcher found that the EFL university students' perceived the implementation of peer feedback as good. Peer feedback implementation serve the EFL university students in their learning process with a variety of benefits. Then related to the personal relationships between friends, reluctance or the desire of friends to get feedback which is an exploration of research questions related to the challenges students face in implementing peer feedback. The researcher found that there are many challenges faced by the EFL university students, but the writing performance improves. The EFL university students know what they should do in their peer feedback regarding their learning process of writing. This confirms that peer feedback is a strategy that brought a variety of benefits that could

choose to help improve students' writing performance, even there are several suggestions.

## Suggestions

Accordingly, in peer feedback implementation, some suggestions from the EFL university students as the executor for the betterment of the future implementation. For the teacher, educator, and lecturer, to be better than implementing this strategy in the learning process, the teacher may vary the strategy in providing peer feedback. Such as, try to provide other offers such as providing peer feedback that not only judges but gives a piece of advice. Then, using the application so that teachers can control each peer. It is better if EFL university students use the application. The point is that the teacher must control the students, and the more comments given from each student, the better the knowledge given to students who have writing. Then, for the other future research whose have conducted the same research topic, it is suggested to observe other difference setting and/or characteristics (i.e .measuring proficiency levels, in quantitative research study, etc) to see which will work more to better the EFL university students' writing performance.

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