The Combination of Peer and Self-directed Feedback on Writing Ability of EFL High Proficient Students

Rizky Amelia[1]*, **Mohammad Adnan Latief**[2], **Enny Irawati**[2]

[1]English Department–Universitas Lambung Mangkurat
[2]English Language Teaching–Universitas Negeri Malang
Jl. Brigjen H. Hasan Basri, Kayu Tangi, Banjarmasin 70124, Indonesia. E-mail: rizky.amelia@unlam.ac.id*

Abstract: This study examined whether high proficient students who are trained with the treatment of the combination of peer and self-directed feedback (PSF) have better writing ability than the high proficient students who are not trained with this treatment. Employing a quasi-experimental research, this study involved two groups of 28 students given a writing test. The results pointed out that the students who were trained with the combination of PSF had better writing ability than the students who were not trained with the combination of PSF. Teachers are suggested to provide the combination of PSF to high proficient students. Further investigation involving moderate and low proficiency levels is suggested.

Key Words: peer and self-directed feeedback, writing ability, English proficiency

Abstrak: Penelitian ini menguji apakah mahasiswa yang dilatih dengan perlakuan kombinasi umpan balik dari teman sebaya dan diri sendiri (PSF) memiliki kemampuan menulis yang lebih baik daripada mahasiswa yang tidak dilatih dengan perlakuan kombinasi umpan balik dari teman sebaya dan diri sendiri. Dengan desain kuasi eksperimental, penelitian melibatkan dua kelompok dengan 28 mahasiswa yang diberi tes menulis. Hasil menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa yang dilatih dengan kombinasi PSF memiliki kemampuan yang lebih baik daripada mahasiswa yang tidak dilatih dengan kombinasi PSF. Guru disarankan memberikan perlakuan ini pada siswa yang mahir berbahasa Inggris. Disarankan dalam penelitian lanjutan untuk melibatkan kemahiran bahasa Inggris sedang dan tinggi.

Kata kunci: umpan balik teman sebaya dan diri sendiri, kemampuan menulis, mahir berbahasa Inggris

INTRODUCTION

Providing teacher feedback is burdensome for teachers. They definitely must spend much more time to correct students' writing while the students merely spend a few minutes to look at the corrections (Lewis, 2002). It is also possible that students find difficulties on what to revise and how to respond (Ghani & Asgher, 2012). As a result, experts continue to question the effectiveness of teacher feedback (Long & Doughty, 2009; Hyland, 2003).

As an alternative to teacher feedback, the combination of peer and self-directed feedback (PSF) is offered in this study, especially given to English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students who have high proficiency level. The combination of the peer and self-directed feedback as the alternative to teacher feedback is rarely investigated, yet it is commonly found

in the real life that we learn from others and then apply to ourselves. Peer feedback gives students opportunity to acquire skills that they could not or would not acquire in the classroom where teacher feedback is used, obtain more practice, learn from their peers in case their peers are excellent target-language role models, and use the skills on their own writing (Hyland, 2003). It should be kept in mind that this self-directed feedback is given after the peer feedback (Suzuki, 2008) because it is understood that the obtained feedback from others as well as the students themselves will be more effective (Brinko, 1993 in Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Ellis (2009) also suggests teachers to give students opportunity to do this type of feedback. Students who are given the combination of PSF are limited to high proficient students since this type of feedback promotes and appreciates their intellectual and capacity (Eksi, 2010). In addition, these students are consid-

ered as the ones who prefer to revise independently (Harran, 2011).

Besides these advantages, peer feedback has limitations for instance confusion on what and how to respond to and potential tendency for giving critical comment or even reluctant to judge (Ghani & Asgher, 2010; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, these problems can be reduced through feedback training (Farrah, 2012; Ghani & Asgher, 2012; Gielen, 2010; Hyland & Hyland, 2006) and careful design of the feedback sheets (Cahyono & Amrina, 2016).

With reference from some theories, when peer feedback is combined with self-directed feedback, an alternative to the existing feedback (teacher feedback) is believed to affect students' writing positively. Above and beyond the supporting theories on the peer and self-directed feedback, researchers who are into this issue had conducted studies previously in which this short shoot of the following synthesis shows a brief picture of related research in feedback field.

On the university context, Cahyono and Amrina (2016) conducted a study on writing ability to investigate the effectiveness of peer and self correction based on guideline sheets. 71 Indonesian EFL students who enrolled on Essay Writing course were involved and divided into three classes given peer feedback, self correction, and conventional editing process of writing. The results showed that the students who had peer feedback were better than those taught by the conventional editing process of writing. Those students who had self correction had better writing ability as well than those who attained the conventional editing process of writing.

Meanwhile, Farrah (2012) conducted a quasi-experimental study on the impact of peer feedback on improving the writing skills among 105 Hebron undergraduate students. It investigated the effectiveness of peer feedback observed from gender and students' attitude toward it. The revealed results showed that the students' writing ability was improved, they had positive attitude, but there was not any significant difference on their ability observed from gender. The other study by Hajimohammadi and Mukundan (2011) in which they intended to investigate the impact of self-directed feedback method as an alternative to the traditional teacher-correction method and evaluating the impact of personality traits (extrovert and introvert) to 120 pre-intermediate Iranian female EFL students in a five-week period. It was found that self-directed feedback method showed to be significantly more effective than teacher-correction method and personality

type had no significant effect on learners' progress in writing.

Specifically, according to some researchers (Ghani & Asgher, 2012; Guenette, 2007; Hyland, 2003; 2011; Lundstrom & Baker, 2009; Suzuki, 2008), one of the factors is so-called the English proficiency levels. Students with different proficiency are likely to respond the given feedback differently due to their ability. Guenette (2007) stated that proficiency levels have to be carefully measured and considered in giving feedback to students as this might yield different results of the studies as well. In addition, students' proficiency is likely to influence the extent of the effectiveness (Hyland, 2003).

Some of the studies were conducted by Lundstrom and Baker (2009) and Watanabe and Swain (2007). By involving 91 students in nine writing classes at two proficiency levels, Lundstrom and Baker (2009) investigated the benefits of peer review to the reviewers' writing. The results showed that the givers gained more significant results than the receivers. Meanwhile, the other study by Watanabe and Swain (2007) aimed at investigating the effects of second language proficiency in pairs and patterns of interactions. This study verified the peer – peer collaborative dialogue importance as a mediator of L2 learning, yet the proficiency differences did not affect the peer assistance. The difference in English proficiency levels matters as it is one of teachers' efforts to maximize their teaching results.

In addition, Wakabayashi (2013) conducted a one-semester research on feedback at two proficiency levels. It involved 51 university students in Japan. The results indicated that the students at higher proficiency level who focused on reviewing their own texts made more total gains in score than the students at lower proficiency level who focused on reviewing peer texts.

Only few studies took English proficiency levels into consideration and the combination of peer and self-directed feedback study on writing ability of EFL high proficient students still remains under research. The need of investigating the English proficiency levels in the combination of peer and self-directed feedback particularly on high English proficiency level is presented in this study. On the whole, in regard with the theories and previous studies, this study answered the existing gaps by investigating the effect of the combination of peer and self-directed feedback on students' writing ability since previous studies separate peer and self-directed feedback. Therefore, the research question to be answered in this study is "Do students with

high English proficiency level who are given the combination of peer and self-directed feedback have better writing ability than the students with high English proficiency level who are not given the combination of peer and self-directed feedback?"

METHOD

Employing a quasi-experimental design, this study investigated the effect of the combination of peer and self-directed feedback on writing ability of EFL high proficient students. The subjects of this study were 28 sixth semester students of English Department STKIP PGRI Banjarmasin who took Writing IV course. They were only two classes available. The students were given a pre-test to see that they have equal knowledge and skill. The results revealed that the p-value was .06 was higher than .05. Therefore, the students were homogeneous. Then, these Class A and Class B were randomly chosen to be the control and the experimental groups by a cluster random sampling using a lottery coin for nine times. It was found that Class A was as the control group while Class B was as the experimental group. Afterward, by using TOEFL-like test to classify the levels, 15 students were taken from the control group which consisted of 31 students. Meanwhile, 13 students came from the experimental group that consisted of 26 students. The students from low English proficiency level were not included since the focus was merely on the high English proficiency level.

Each group taught using the same materials but they obtained different types of feedback namely the teacher feedback for the control group and the combination of peer and self-directed feedback for the experimental group. Ten meetings were allocated for this study based on some careful considerations namely the amount provided sufficient length of time for writing four essays (one essay for pre-test, two essays on the treatment, and the last essay for post-test), building constructive feedback, and measuring the effect of feedback. In relation to the ten meetings that were carried out, meeting one was for the pretest, meeting two was for the TOEFL-like administration, meeting three to meeting nine were for the feedback training and treatment, and meeting ten was for the posttest.

On the treatment for providing the combination of peer and self-directed feedback on the experimental group, the steps suggested by Barkley, Cross, and Major (2005); Lewis (2002) and Bangert-Drowns and

Drowns (1991) in Marzano (2006) were taken into account. The peer and self-directed feedback given in this study was designed by combining two types of peer feedback mentioned by Lewis (2002) namely exchange papers and compare writing peer feedback. Then, in relation to the writing instruction employed for this study, the writing process from Harmer (2004) was employed. It includes planning, drafting, editing (reflecting and revising), and final draft. On the treatment in the experimental group, the students obtained a set of feedback sheets depending on the stage of the writing process. They can be seen on Appendix 1. Since feedback in this study was not given on the final product only, each stage in the writing process provided opportunity for the students to get and give feedback in order to maximize their argumentative essay. Moreover, the focus of the feedback was given on all writing aspects namely content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

Specifically, both of the groups were asked to write two argumentative essays during the treatment. In the experimental group, at the beginning the students obtained a feedback training and in the control obtained a teacher feedback review. In the training, the students were given models of how to do the combination of peer and self-directed feedback and were told about the ethics in it. Then, the students started writing their argumentative essay 1 in pairs. Two exchange paper peer feedback was done in this planning stage on brainstorming and organizing content and the mistakes were revised. After that, in the third meeting on the drafting stage, they wrote draft 1 of their essay and were told some guidelines in drafting. As soon as the students finish with draft 1, they were asked to do the third feedback namely the exchange paper peer feedback to check that they have already taken a stance, provide opposite view as well as counter-argument, and use persuading sentences on their essay. In every feedback including the students exchange their paper, the pairs reported to each other on one good feature and aspects that could be improved and revised.

Subsequently, in the editing stage which was the last meeting for writing argumentative essay 1, the students proceeded to the next stage that was writing draft 2. Again, the peer feedback was provided in the form of exchange paper peer feedback. The teacher provided parts to check and the students still worked in pair to check their friends' work. Then, they revised it. If all the stages were done and all the input has been considered, thought, and communicated, they wrote the final draft and published as well as shared

the essay. Continuously, the students on the fifth, sixth, and seventh meeting of the treatment were asked to write argumentative essay 2 individually. All the stages were the same with writing the argumentative essay 1. The difference was only on the feedback provider which was the students themselves.

Meanwhile, in the control group of this study, the implementation of the teacher feedback was like a common procedure that the students follow each writing step starting from planning, drafting, editing, and publishing. The teacher gave feedback to the students' writing either by directly correcting, underlining, giving comments, or suggestions related to the content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics above or near the incorrect form, then the students will revise their writing, and finally submit it.

There were two instruments used in this study namely English Proficiency test to classify students into high and low levels and the writing test for collecting the data in the form of the students' writing ability.

In developing the instruments, some efforts were done. The first effort was matching the writing test with the aspects being measured in writing ability. The second was covering all aspects being measured on the writing test (Latief, 2000). Then, the writing tests used in this study were also in the format of a direct test so that the students were able to show their writing ability. The validity of this writing test was also ensured by employing SPSS 18.0 software specifically using the Pearson Correlation/Product Moment.

Further, related to reliability problem, the act to avoid the inter-rater reliability was employed statistically. The students' argumentative essays were scored by three raters, the lecturer of Writing IV class, the researcher, and another lecturer. In addition, the Intraclass Coefficient Correlation (ICC) in SPSS 18.0 software was also used to know the level of the reliability among the three raters. Additionally, factors affecting the degree of reliability were minimized. They were, for instance, designing the test to assess solely one skill namely writing and developing appropriate instruments of neither being too easy nor too difficult. Then, conducive atmosphere for both groups in the posttest and the raters when rating were also provided. Lastly, watching the students for not cheating in the post-test administration and giving supportive classroom on the test were done (Latief, 2001). The prompt of the writing test for the post-test were also validated by an expert. The things covered by the expert in validation form were the appropriateness of the test with the students' level, the length of the essays, the objective of the tests, the test instructions, and the scoring rubrics. Then, the try-out of the prompt of the writing test and the opinionnaire were done before the test was administered. It was tried out on Tuesday, February 22nd 2016 to 30 English Department students of Kanjuruhan University Malang since it has similar characteristics to the setting of this study.

On the scoring rubric, since this study was conducted to investigate the students' writing ability focusing on the writing aspects of the students' writing ability, the chosen scoring rubric was the analytic one. It was also due to classroom evaluation of learning was best served through an analytic one (Brown, 2004). Moreover, analytic scoring rubric gave high reliability and more construct validity because it was appropriate for L2 writers as there are different aspects of writing ability developed at different rates and provides useful diagnostic information (Latief, 1991; Weigle, 2002). To see the clarity of this scoring rubric, it was tried out to three different raters. They were given three essays which have different quality namely very good, good, and poor quality of writing. The result showed that the raters had similar and the same judgment. It means the scoring rubric had already understandable and measurable. In addition, all the raters were trained and told about the agreement scoring process. The raters were informed and trained on the use of the scoring rubric. Meanwhile, the scoring agreement itself was discussed when 4 or more different points appeared among the raters. Principally, rater 1 was the central of the scoring decision.

The data of this study were taken from the TOEFL-like test and the students' post-test scores. The first finding of this study was obtained from the TOEFL-like test. The data were scored and tabulated. These data from the TOEFL-like test were classified in the form of groups. The students in the control and the experimental groups were classified into two contrast levels namely high and low levels. Then, the second finding data were obtained from the post-test writing. In the data analysis, the first step was conducting a preliminary statistics by analyzing obtained data for fulfilling the statistical assumptions on the homogeneity and normality testing. The second step in the data analysis was testing the hypotheses by deploying independent sample *t*-test using SPSS 18.0 software. Finally, the last step in the data analysis was making a decision of accepting or rejecting the null hypotheses.

RESULTS

The results of the pretest, TOEFL-like test, the posttest, and the opinionnaire are presented in this section.

The Results of the Pretest

The mean score of the control group was 74.48 while the mean score of the experimental group was 73.71. These pretest data were not used to test the hypotheses since this study involved posttest scores only as the main data. The homogeneity testing computation resulted p-value .221 which was higher than .05 level of significance. Therefore, the students were homogeneous.

TOEFL-like Test

The classification of students based on the English proficiency levels is available on Table 1. Table 2 shows the number of high proficient students in the control and experimental groups were 28 students.

Table 1. The Results of the TOEFL-like Test in the Control and the Experimental Groups

	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Control g	31	388	51.330	303	547
Exper. g	26	397	36.076	327	477

Table 2. The Classification of the Students based on the English Proficiency Levels

	N	High Proficiency Level
Control group	31	15 students
Exper. group	26	13 students
		28 students

The Results of the Hypothesis Testing

In regard to the posttest results, the data computed to Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Levene's Test. The data were homogeneous, showing by the p-value .896 and 7.23. They were also normally distributed by the p-value .60. Therefore, independent sample t-test was deployed.

Prior to the hypothesis testing, descriptive statistics analysis was employed to see the range, minimum and maximum scores, mean scores, as well as the standard deviation of the two groups (Table 3).

Table 3. The Descriptive Statistics of the Students in the Control and the Experimental Groups

	N	Range	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Control g	15	29	57	86	69.06	9.066
Exper. g	13	15	73	88	79.53	5.394

Means of both the control and the experimental groups are transferred to Figure 1 to see general difference of these groups.
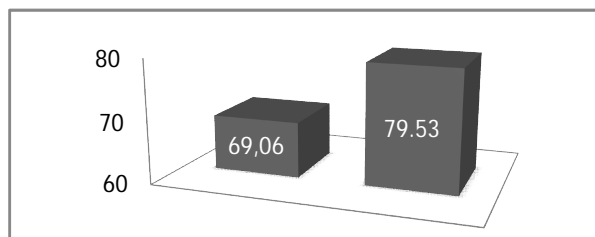

Figure 1. The Mean Difference of Post-test between the Control and the Experimental Groups

Figure 1 shows that in a rough difference, the experimental group mean score was higher than the control group mean score. The experimental group obtained 10.47 points higher than the control group.

Going further to a more specific difference of these groups, the results of the post-test specifically based on each aspect of writing namely content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics show to what extent their differences were. Table 4 provides these results.

Table 4. Mean Difference of Writing Aspects in the Control and the Experimental Groups

	Writing Aspects				
	C	O	V	G	M
Control g	20.60	14.93	14.00	12.20	7.40
Experi. G	22.53	16.69	16.61	15.38	7.54

It can be clearly seen on Table 4 that the mean of each aspect of writing obtained by the experimental group outperformed the control group' mean scores. As a result, the experimental group not only gained higher scores on the overall mean score, but also higher scores on each writing aspect than the control group of this study.

The next step was testing the research hypothesis under this study. The results of the independent sample *t*-test to evaluate this null hypothesis can be seen on Table 5.

Table 5. The Results of t-test for Independent Sample *t*-test of the Control and the Experimental Groups

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means		
Equal variance assumed	F	Sig.	T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	3.831	.060	-3.545	28	.001

It can be seen on Table 5 that the p-value was .001. It was smaller than the .05 level of significance (.001 > .05). Therefore, there was not enough evidence to accept the null hypothesis. From this result, it was established that the students with high English proficiency level who were given the combination of peer and self-directed feedback had better writing ability than the students with high English proficiency level who were not given the combination of peer and self-directed feedback.

DISCUSSION

The results of the high proficient students in both the control and the experimental groups brought good news to teachers that the combination of peer and self-directed feedback on writing ability in the high proficient students was effective. The high proficient students in the experimental group had better writing ability than those in the control group. The factor that affects the effect of feedback is English proficiency levels. Muth'im (2013) in his dissertation suggested observing written feedback from different level of mastery in language. Therefore, the high English proficiency level was involved in this study. Ghani and Ashger (2012), Guenette (2007), Hyland (2003), Lundstrom and Baker (2009), and Suzuki (2008), also supported this idea of English proficiency involvement in investigating the feedback effect. The following part aims at unveiling the results of the combination of peer and self-directed feedback across English proficiency levels.

This result has been supported by Krashen (1981) statement that when students work in pairs, they have chances to produce and respond better. Peer feedback has successfully promoted an effort of appreciating the high proficient students' intellectual and capacity (Eksi, 2010). In addition, the high proficient students were undoubtedly could work individually on the self-directed feedback due to enough knowledge that they owned. In addition, it is the high proficient students

themselves who prefer to revise independently (Harran, 2011). As a result, the autonomy of learning is bridged (Ellis, 2009; Lewis, 2002).

The related previous studies in line with this finding were the ones conducted by Liao and Lo (2012) and Sotoudehnama and Pilehvari (2016). They found the givers or high proficient students had better writing ability than the receivers or low proficient students. Liao and Lo (2012) reported that high proficient students were able to provide more details in explaining identified problems and offering suggestions for revisions. Their study had the same foci with this study under the argumentative essay and involving high and low proficiency. Then, Sotoudehnama and Pilehvari (2016) study focused on writing in general, involved high and low proficiency as well and took a 3-week-session training.

The design of this study itself paired the high to low proficient students as it was suggested by Watanabe and Swain (2007). The subsequent result was that high proficient students could perform well while the low proficient students had difficulties on how to respond due to their limited knowledge. They were in favor to teacher feedback instead of peer and self-directed feedback. These students were then included to those who tend to choose teacher feedback (Ghani & Ashger, 2012). What Leeser (2004) in Watanabe and Swain (2007) questioned was on the right point that the low proficient students were not developmentally ready to discuss with the high proficient students. Hyland's (2003) theory that students learn from their peers as excellent target language role models. In addition, this brings an insight that proficiency levels were empirically influenced the results of the effect of peer and self-directed feedback. Krashen (1981) mentioned that feedback is available when the peers are helpful in providing the input.

The combination of peer and self-directed feedback bring us to the point out the students with high proficiency level is recommended to get the combination of peer and self-directed feedback while the students with low proficiency level get teacher feedback. This is a good alternative since providing teacher feedback only to all students is burdensome for teachers (Lewis, 2002). In addition, giving teacher feedback only to all students in a class makes the feedback is not throughout (Ghani & Ashger, 2012) because the students get very little opportunity to produce language in class (Lightbown & Spada, 2013). As a result, employing appropriate feedback to appropriate students should be considered by teachers.

This study established a positive finding that social mediation is not solely the central task of teacher, but also peers and the students themselves. The peer and self-directed feedback was more effective than teacher feedback. It was proved by the results of the students in the experimental group given the peer and self-directed feedback outperformed the students in the control group given the teacher feedback.

By this conclusion, teacher should not force himself/herself to provide feedback in writing class as we all know that there is time limitation in the process of teaching and learning in the classroom and it is burdensome to teacher in some cases to give teacher feedback to all students. In regard to the effect of peer and self-directed feedback of this study, there were important things that this study addressed. They were peer and self-directed feedback sheets, process writing approach usage, and the involvement of all writing aspects.

Second, the concern of English proficiency levels was prominent that the results revealed that the students with high proficient English proficiency in the experimental group more benefited from peer and self-directed feedback than the low proficient students in the experimental group. In other words, the peer and self assistance worked to students who have high English proficiency level. Meanwhile, the results of peer and self-directed feedback on low proficient students in the control and the experimental group did not show any significant result.

Third, there was not any interaction found between types of feedback and English proficiency levels. Even though high English proficient students showed significant result, the interaction between types of feedback and English proficiency levels could not be found.

Limitations of this Study

As this study employed an experimental study, every single thing under the umbrella of this study has been tried to be equal but the treatment in the control and the experimental groups. However, there might appear things which are suspicious to the researcher's eyes namely subjects of the study and length of the treatment.

The number of students is one of the limitations of this study as it could not ensure the mortality threat in this study. The other limitation of this study is the length of the treatment. These 6 meetings used for the treatment is short compared to those longitudinal study for semesters or years. However, all limitations are expected not to affect the unexpected results of this study.

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion of this study lead to the following conclusion. There was also no enough evidence to accept the second null hypothesis. In other words, the second alternative hypothesis was also accepted. It was concluded that the students with high English proficiency level who were given the combination of peer and self-directed feedback had better writing ability than the students with high English proficiency level who were not given the combination of peer and self-directed feedback. In other words, the combination of peer and self assistance worked to students who have high English proficiency level.

The established conclusion above is along with the suggestion for writing teachers and further researchers. This present study has established the practical and empirical evidences that peer and self-directed feedback is beneficial for the high proficient students. In addition, it is important that writing teachers note students' English proficiency levels. This study found that high proficient students are better given the combination of peer and self-directed feedback. Therefore, writing teachers are suggested to treat certain students with appropriate feedback. The high proficient students are better peer and self-directed feedback.

Third, moving to the suggestions for further researchers, despite the effectiveness proof through this research, they should keep in their mind that careful consideration on the research design, timing of giving feedback which is on the process of writing instead of the product of writing, the involvement of all writing aspects, ways of giving feedback, and students differences for instance school levels need to be taken into account.

Fourth, which is the last, further research to moderate and low proficient students is needed. The other students' differences are also interesting and fruitful cases for further researchers.

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