Feedback in English Writing for Indonesian EFL Students

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Abstract: This study provides an overview about the feedback given to the students' English writing. The essential of feedback in teaching writing for Indonesian EFL students due to the shift from process to product is becoming the rationale of this study. Student writing is often influenced by the students' writing concept in addressing their ideas in Indonesian writing and English context as Foreign Language (EFL) in which is different. As giving feedback is one of the teachers' tasks, the study on teachers' perception on students' writing and students' perceptions on teachers' responses need to be done. Some previous researchs on writing have been conducted on English department students in Lancang Kuning University. This study intends to get the views how feedback is given in EFL classroom in which the findings of the study is expected to know the needs of the students on their EFL writing in accomplishing good writing.

Key Words: Feedback, Writing, EFL _(English as a Foreign Language)_

1. Introduction

There are many reasons as to why students of EFL/ESL find difficult to write good English writing. In teaching and learning prosess of English as a Foreign Language, errors made by the students always become a significant concern to almost English language teachers. Errors often found in students' subject tasks revealed in their foreign language use. Based on the teaching experience for writing subject, it was found that the students need guidance or more explanations to have their writing better.

It is often found some students' errors in transferring cultural words and preserve the degree of grammatical and lexical oddity in translating their ideas in Indonesian language to English as target language. Some students' writing errors are often categorized into grammatical, lexical and semantics. Grammatical errors include sentence fragments, incorrect punctuation, verb tenses, nouns, adjectives, clauses, participles and improper use of subjuctive. Lexical errors often found in application of vocabulary incorrectly. Meanwhile for semantic errors, many sentences are not coherent in meaning.

As giving feedback is one of the teachers' tasks, feedback is needed to be given because it plays an important role in the development of students' writing. However, it is often found that feedback is still limited and neglected. Some feedback given is dominated by teachers without any further explanation about what the students should do to improve their writing quality.

Constructivism principles imply that a teacher or lecturer has main role as mediator and fasilitator in achieveing the good and successful teaching and learning process. One of actions can be done is by providing some activities which can improve students' curiousity , help the students in expressing ideas and giving learning chance and experience. Some research findings indicate that students have favor error feedback given by the teachers under consideration that the students will get benefit for their writing correction [8]. Moreover, due to practical time constraint most teachers/lecturers only offer perfunctory comments such as "well-written", "poorly organized", or "awkward wording".

Feedback has been said to be one of the distinguishing marks of learner-centerd instruction, as opposed to the traditional "content based teaching". The teachers' feedback is a direct consequence of the predominance of the teacher-dominated instructional style and the examination-driven assessment system. Feedback is important in learning language because of three reasons [12]. They are the mistake in spelling and grammar could not be ignored, students need their language mistake to be corrected and langauge mistakes can be diagnosed easily.

In English Department students of Lancang Kuning University, the feedback given on students' writing was in giving symbols and markings for every students' writing task. It was done before giving the score for the students' writing based on the five indicators; Contents, Organization, Vocabulary, Grammar and Mechanics. The lessen students' confusion, teachers should consistently use a standard set of symbols or markings to indicate place and type of errors. [13]. Further, It is shown by the table below:

Table 1.1

ESL/EFL Grading Symbols for Global Errors

No	Symbols	Explanation
1	vt	Incorrect verb tense
2	vf	Verb incorrectly formed
3	modal	Incorrect use or formation of a modal
4	cond	Incorrect use or formation of a conditional sentence
5	Ss	Incorrect sentence structure
6	wo	Incorrect or awkward word order
7	conn	Incorrect or missing connector
8	pass	Incorrect use or formation of passive voice
9	unclear	Unclear message
ESL/EFL Grading symbols for Local Error		
1	sv	Incorrect subject -- verb agreement
2	art	Incorrect or missing article
3	Num	Problem with singular or plural of a noun
4	Wc	Wrong word choice, including prepositions
5	Wf	Wrong word form
6	Non Idiom	Non idiomatic (not expressed this way in English)
ESL/EFL Grading symbols for Local Error		
1	cap	Capitalization-capital letter needed
2	coh	Coherence- one idea does not lead to the next
3	cs	Comma splice-two independent clauses joined by comma
4	dm	Dangling modifier-phrase or clause with no words to modify in a sentence
5	frag	Fragment-incomplete sentence
6	lc	Lower case-word incorrectly capitalized
7	P	Punctuation
8	pro ref/ pro	Pronoun reference/agreement unclear or incorrect
9	ro	Run-on – two independent clauses joined with no punctuation
10	sp	Spelling error – word incorrectly spelled

(Lane and Lange:1993)

Table 1.2

Writing Assessment

Level	Criteria	Component
30-27	Excellent to very good: knowledgeable, substantive, relevant to assigned topic	Content
26-22	Good to average: some knowledge of subject, adequate range, and mostly relevant to the topic but lack details	
21-17	Fair to poor: limited knowledge of subject, little substance, inadequate development of topic	
16-13	Very poor: does not show knowledge of subject, non substantive, non pertinent or not enough to evaluate	
20-18	Excellent to very good: fluent expression, ideas clearly stated, supported, well-organized, logical sequencing, cohesive	Organization
17-14	Good to average: somewhat choppy, loosely organized, but main idea stand out, limited supported, logical but incomplete sequencing	
13-10	Fair to poor: non- fluent, ideas confused or disconnected, lack logical sequencing, and development	
9-7	Very poor: does not communicate, no organization, or not enough to evaluate	
20-18	Excellent to very good: effective words/idioms, choice and usage, word form mastery	Vocabulary
17-14	Good to average: occasional errors of words/idioms form, choice, usage but meaning not obscured	
13-10	Fair to poor: frequent errors/words/idioms form, choice and usage meaning confused or obscured	
9-7	Very poor: little knowledge of vocabulary, idioms, and word form or not enough to evaluate.	
25-22	Excellent to very good: effective complex construction, few errors of agreement, tense, number, article, pronoun, preposition.	Language use
21-18	Good to average: effective but simple construction, several errors of agreement, tense, numbers, pronouns, and preposition	
17-11	Fair to poor: major problem in simple, complex construction, frequent errors of negation, agreement, tenses, numbers, article, pronoun, preposition and or fragment, run-ons, deletion, meaning confused or obscured.	
10-5	Very poor: virtually no mastery of sentence construction rules, dominated.	

5	Excellent to very good: demonstrate mastery of convention, few errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization	**Mechanics**
4	Good to average: occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, but meaning not obscured	
3	Fair to poor: frequent errors of spelling, punctuation and capitalization, meaning confused or obscured	
2	Very poor: no mastery of convention, dominated by errors of spelling, punctuation and capitalization. Not enough to evaluate.	

(Lane and Lange:1993)

Tabel 1.3

Score Classification

Score Classification	Category
80-100	Good to Excellent
60-79	Average to Good
50-59	Poor to Average
0-49	Poor

(Oshima: 2010)

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2. Feedback on Students' Writing

Feedback is needed to help the students in correcting their mistakes. Feedback gives the positive effects to the students. It can make language learning more effective, can promote changes in their interlanguage systems and lead them to the next linguistic developmental stage[10].

Moreover, when learners understand that making mistakes is a part of the learning process, and that their teachers try to help them learn target forms, they are likely to take risks and build up confidence through practice.

3. Method

The data got from 33 students' writing tasks who joined Writing subject. The students' writing tasks which have been given scoring were collected again to analyze the revisions given whether the students did the revision or not.

It was also to know the students' reactions, preferences and questions given by the students to the teacher's feedbacks. Then the teacher did interview for some students about the reasons of why and why not they revised the feedback given.

4. Findings and Discussion

From the students' writing tasks collected it was found that the students' writing skill was categorized into average (71,8). Since the purpose of conducting this research is to know the students' need on writing feedback, it was found that many feedbacks given on the students' feedback were not revised yet. The teacher has revised some writings that are composed by the students seem to be culturally odd and linguistically absurd for English writing. The problem encountered from this problem is that the students tend to focus too much on the aspect of grammar. Consequently, their writing was sound bare.

Then the teacher did the interview for the students about their reactions on the teacher's feedbacks. From the interview it was drawn that many students did not understand about the feedbacks so they did not know what should do in their writing. From the teacher's analysis in writing subject it is decided to facilitate the students' need on writing feedbacks by giving instructions for the students to revise, of course, after giving clarifications about the feedbacks. The teacher stressed the instruction that the students' tasks will not be scored before the revised writing is collected.

5.   Conclusion and Implications

From the finding it can be concluded that students' need on writing feedback is needed to improve students' writing skill better. The students' improvement in their revised versions can be evident that feedback could improve English students' writing skill especially in Lancang Kuning University. This research finding also can give contribution for Writing teacher in designing future writing tasks and course book (*Buku Ajar*) to apply the linguistics rules.

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