

## OPTIMIZING THE STRENGTH OF ONLINE PEER REVIEW TO TEACH WRITING SKILL FOR INTERMEDIATE STUDENTS

*Dewi Cahyaningrum<sup>1)</sup>, Hasan Zainnuri<sup>2)</sup>*

<sup>1)</sup>Teacher Training and Education Faculty, UNS, Solo, Indonesia  
cahyaningrum23@gmail.com

<sup>2)</sup>Teacher Training and Education Faculty, UNS, Solo, Indonesia  
hazanain@gmail.com

### Abstract

This article explores how peer review influences students during writing process. Peer review is considered as an important tool to enhance students' better understanding of the writing process and to encourage students' more confidence in analyzing their own writing as writers and others as reviewers. Peer review promotes students to work collaboratively in groups to become better writers. Through peer review activities, students will have more opportunities to ask for clarification, point out discursive gaps, find errors, and provide suggestions and critics for others to make better writing as in the same time they also develop skills needed to critically read and revise their own work. This case study underlies the strength of online instruction for learning. The writer incorporates peer review with WhatsApp, an instant messaging application for smartphones becoming a more frequent component in universities. In general, this paper reports the result of a case study research mainly talking about (1) the idea of accommodating *Online Peer Review* to build students' writing skills by fostering them to *be critical learners*, (2) practical *Online models of Peer Review* to teach writing for intermediate students completed with its challenges.

**Keywords:** writing skill, online peer review, intermediate students

### INTRODUCTION

The twenty-first century require Information Literacy known as a set of skills needed to find, retrieve, analyze, and use information since this era is characterized by owing to the explosion of information and the information sources. Information Literacy is needed for students in order to succeed academically and in their future job opportunities. This literacy equips students with the critical skills necessary to become independent lifelong learners. There are many skills supporting this kind of literacy. One of the skills focused in this article is writing. It is increasingly important for students and more people to have good writing skills. After being successful in finding, retrieving and analyzing information, students should be able to express their ideas about something accurately and appropriately to communicate ideas and feeling to others clearly. By writing, the students can express their ideas and feelings to persuade and convince other people (White and Arndt, 1997:1).

Writing is considered a complex skill to be learned and mastered by the students. The students have to be able to organize their ideas to construct sentences; use punctuation and spelling well, and arrange their writing into cohesive and coherent paragraphs and text. In this case, it involves using several language components such as content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Besides, the students have to know the steps in writing process. In fact, there are some difficulties faced by intermediate students in developing ideas into a good paragraph since they did not know where to start writing, still make some mistakes in applying grammar rules, mechanic, punctuation and spelling. It is also found that the students have low inner motivation and joy to write meaningfully. They are accustomed to receive instruction from teacher and then write a text to full fill the assignment or to write for the teacher, not for themselves. In this case,

students are often blocked by perception that teacher is their only audience.

Need to design effective learning process

Writing is thinking process that generates, organizes, and exchanges one's ideas to the reader. Effective writing needs prewriting, organizing, drafting, revising, editing and documenting the final draft. Considering this long process, the teacher brings the strength of team work and peer feedback to help each student following every stage of writing process.

Some teachers and writing theorists have fostered peer groups in high school and college classrooms as a way to encourage students to write and revise. As Moffett (1983) suggested, teachers teach students to teach each other.

Rollinson (2004) found that feedback is more useful between drafts, and little improvement is made when it is done at the end of the task. Ideally it is expected that teacher could be able to give feedback and correction on students' scripts in any stages of writing. However, the observation data show that teachers are often become overwhelmed by the task of giving feedback and correction the students' writing. Another research conducted by Seow (2002) in (Yugandhar, 2015) shows that the teacher's guidance to students' writing is a significant technique in developing writing process. Feedback on students' scripts on regular basis by the teacher is not practically possible due to lack of time during the semester. Concerning this condition, the researcher proposes an effort to provide students with conducive feedback on students' scripts and enjoyable classroom atmosphere by accommodating online peer review. It is main goal is to provide our students with a massive amount of writing practice considered effective for students' learning. Moreover, peer-review in this article is modified with the current trend of communication technology for learning. It specifically discusses about incorporating WhatsApp, an instant messaging application for smartphones becoming a more frequent mobile learning activities in universities. According to Jimoyiannis, Tsiotakis, Roussinos, & Siorenta (2013), educational mobile technology today is frequently used in online instruction in universities worldwide.

In general, this paper is reporting the result of case study focused on (1) the idea of accommodating *Online Peer Review* to build students' writing skills by fostering them to *be critical learners*, (2) practical *Online models of Peer Review* to teach writing for intermediate students completed with its challenges.

## METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted in writing class of English Department of FKIP, UNS while the subject of this research was the third semester students of academic year 20014/ 2015. It uses descriptive case study as the research design in which the researcher gained an in-depth understanding of the subject's perspective using case study method. Yin (2003) states that a case study is used when a "how" or "why" question is being asked about a contemporary case over which the investigator has little or no control, and when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within some real life context.

In this research, the researcher sought to gain an in-depth understanding of the case by collecting multiple forms of data (Creswell, 2012). In this research, the sources of the data needed by the researcher are events, and documents. Besides, the research data were collected using qualitative method. There are data collection techniques, namely document analysis, interview, and non-participant observation. The technique used in analyzing the data is qualitative data analysis. Miles and Huberman (1994: 10-11) proposes the steps in analyzing the data in qualitative data analysis as the following: (1) Data reduction, (2) Data display, (3) Conclusion drawing and verification.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

**(1) Accommodating *Online Peer Review* to build students' writing skills by fostering them to *be critical learners***

Peer review underlines the importance of feedback for language learning. According to Raimes (1993), feedback is an important part of every language teaching and learning process, careful work on the job will be a contribution to pedagogy. By accommodating peer-review, teacher fosters peer groups in writing class to encourage students to follow a cycle consisting of writing, reviewing, revising, and editing the drafts of students' writing. In this case, peer feedback has recently drawn the researchers' and teachers' attention as Moffett (1983) suggested, teachers teach students to teach each other. This peer-feedback is one of changes in writing pedagogy and research in which teacher comments often supplemented with peer comments (Hyland and Hyland, 2006).

In general, in order to become successful communicators, language learners require exposures based on a real need to communicate with one another. Ideally, language learners need to interact on meaningful tasks with one another and with native speakers of the target language. In context of second language learning, Kessler (1992: 57) underlines that learners also need opportunities to learn from and to teach one another. Adapting this second language learning process, the EFL learners involved in this research should be encouraged and accustomed to read and to write frequently to foster critical reading and reflection and in the same time to sharpen writing skill and linguistics knowledge. Moreover, It is argued that students should be encouraged to act critically, cooperatively, and autonomously (Murphey, 2000).

Peer-review provides student with this learning habit formation as it is scheduled and managed well following students' condition and needs to boost students' motivation and joy of writing that leading to students' information literacy. Sengupt (2000) found that through using peer feedback, the responsibility moved gradually from the teacher to peer, and finally, to the students themselves. Students positioning self as a writer at one time then reviewer at another time read and write more frequently. In reviewing process, they will find an experience in approaching topics of interest to them from multiple perspectives triggering to critical thinking. They also get experience in asking for clarification, pointing out discursive gaps, finding errors, and providing suggestions and critics for others to make better writing. Students are benefited from this training regarding writing improvement, confidence build-up, language acquisition and being motivated to write more and enjoy writing. Moreover, according to O'Muircheartaigh (1990), peer response would help learner autonomy and it is possibly positive that the teacher is not always the only audience for the written work. Data show that peers can oftentimes be a lot more honest with each other than with their instructor when they have to share their experience in writing.

## **(2) Practical Online models of Peer Review to teach writing for intermediate students completed with its challenges.**

### **(a) Practical Online models of Peer Review to teach writing for intermediate students**

Practical model of peer review to teach writing in this article refers to the ideas proposed by Hyland's (2000) stating the aspects of peer feedback mentioned most positively by the students joining writing workshop interactions in interviews were related to informal peer support mechanisms. In this case, rather than focusing on a finished product, students' interactions functioned mainly at the affective level, with students informally providing each other with support and advice during the writing process. Besides, there are some principles in implementing peer review adapted from idea proposed by Yugandhar (2015) as follows: (a) assigning students in heterogeneous groups to enhance students' learning, (b) providing students with guidelines for reviewing writing drafts and giving comments and feedbacks, (c) providing students with rehearsals for effective peer review covering: reading drafts, writing appropriate comment and discussing about the comments among the group. In this case, presenting students' reviewing comments to the class is helpful to direct students to give constructive comments that can be useful to improve the text.

Moreover, this learning instruction goes online since teacher accommodated social media

application, WhatsApp. Students are grouped into small discussion group and setting individual *WA* then collectively sign in *WA* group account. In the field of online teaching and learning, a community is a group of learners who cooperate and collaborate to participate in course activities (Cross, 1998). The principal objective of this community is to advance the construction and sharing of knowledge between groups through collaborative learning activities (Bielaczyc & Collins, 1999). They get more opportunities to question and negotiate meaning, work cooperatively and collaboratively as a community in reviewing, revising and editing the drafts of their writing with which students' writing skill were also improved.

**(b) Challenges in applying *online models of Peer Review* to teach writing for intermediate students**

The basic implementation of peer review is by assigning students together in small heterogeneous groups and then having each student read and react to the strengths and weaknesses of each other's writing. However, data collected from observation and interview show that constructing specific and constructive comments and feedback that can be useful to improve the text are not easy for students. It is revealed that only the high achievers noted as trained students who can construct constructive comments on their peers' writing and incorporate peers' comments to improve their writing. This finding indicates students' need of training on peer feedback. Harmer (2004) noted that with extensive training inside and outside of class, trained peer review feedback can positively impact EFL students.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Peer review is considered as an important tool to enhance students' better understanding of the writing process and to encourage students' more confidence in analyzing their own writing as writers and others as reviewers. Peer review promotes students to work collaboratively in groups to become better writers. Through peer review activities, students are accustomed to read and to write frequently to foster critical reading and reflection and in the same time are accustomed to sharpen writing skill and linguistics knowledge. Besides, assigned in Online Peer Review students are benefited regarding writing improvement, confidence build-up, language acquisition and being motivated to write more and enjoy writing. However, data collected from observation and interview show that constructing specific and constructive comments and feedback that can be useful to improve the text are not easy for students. However, data collected from observation and interview show that constructing specific and constructive comments and feedback are not easy for students. This finding then indicates students' need of training on peer feedback that expected can positively impact students' writing skill.

**REFERENCES**

- Kessler, Carolyn. (1992). *Cooperative Language Learning- A Teachers' Resource Book*. UK: Prentice Hall Inc.
- Harmer, J. (2004). *Research on peer review* Journal of Second Language Writing. UK: Harlow, Essex.
- Hyland, K. & Hyland, F. (2006). Contexts and issues in feedback on L2 writing: An introduction. In K. Hyland & F. Hyland. *Feedback in second language writing: Context and issues* (pp. 1-19), Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Moffett, J. (1983). *Assessment and Evaluation*. Clearinghouse Universidad Nacional de Colombia, Ciudad Universitaria, Departamento de Lenguas extranjeras.
- O'Muircheartaigh, S. (1990). *Given Feedback on Students' Written Work*. ELTJ ,44, 1-12.

- Raimes, A. (1993). Out of the woods: Emerging traditions in the teaching of writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 25, 407- 430.
- Sengupta, S. (2000). An investigation into the effects of revision strategy instruction on L2 secondary school learners. *System*, 28(1), 97- 113.
- Yugandhar, K. (2015). Practicing Teacher Organized Peer Review to Advance EFL Students' Writing Skills. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature (IJSELL)*, Volume 3, PP 25-29.