THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF COMMENTS (PRAISE, SUGGESTION, AND CRITICISM) ON STUDENTS' WRITING ACHIEVEMENT

by Nanik Sri Rahayu

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Abstract:
Teacher's comments as a respond to the students' draft has an important effect on students writing motivation and achievement during the teaching and learning process in writing. These comments or the teacher reply for the students' draft are usually waited by the students as it is assumed as a two- way communication during completing the final draft. However, many students may have different responds in accommodating these comments. This study investigated whether praise, suggestion, and criticism as teacher' comments have significant effects on the students writing paragraph achievement. Through a quasi-experimental design using quantitative methods for students in the third semester of IAIN Tulungagung's English Department, the research shows that there are significant differences in writing paragraph scores between students taught before and after using different types of comments. In addition, among these three strategies, the suggestion gave more improvement than the other two types of comments.

Keywords: *Effect, Different types of comments, Students' writing achievement.*

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of teaching writing in university in Indonesia is to help students write good texts. A good text here means that students have the ability to write articles that meet all the characteristics of a good article, such as the unity of the topics discussed, the smooth organization of ideas, the appropriate use of wording suitable for the context, the correct use of language in grammar, and the correct use of punctuation. However, for most students, writing in English is not always easy, because writing in English is very different from writing in their mother tongue for Indonesian students. For example, English grammar rule has a tense system which does not exist in Indonesian. That is the reason why writing is still a problem for most students.

From the phenomena above, teaching writing becomes a challenging task for the lecturers in EFL setting. One way that should be carried out to help the students is giving feedback. It is expected that by receiving feedback the students will be more focused on what is being learned. In addition, it is also expected that by receiving feedback the students can realize their strength and weaknesses so that they can minimize the same errors and therefore can achieve the goal of writing that is to produce a good text. Feedback is one of the most powerful influences on learning, rated just below direct instruction and students' cognitive learning (Hattie and Timperley, 2007 in Hyland). In addition feedback is advantageous for both the students and the teacher (Lewis, 2002). For teachers, it provides information about individual and collective classroom progress, and indirectly is a form of evaluation of their own teaching. For learners, feedback is ongoing form of assessment which focuses more on students' learning information than marks or grades. It can be concluded that feedback is very helpful for the students' learning.

Feedback may be delivered in different forms. Feedback can be classified from various aspects; the source, the function, the strategy, the media, etc. Classified according to the source, feedback can be categorized into teacher, peer, and self feedback. Meanwhile classified according to the media, feedback can be categorized into written, oral, and electronic/

computer assisted feedback. In addition, based on its function feedback can be informative and corrective which can be presented with various strategies such as focused-unfocused, direct-indirect, metalinguistic, etc (Ellis, 2009). Among those kinds of feedback employed by the teachers, written feedback has been frequently practiced in EFL writing instruction since this mode will ease the students to recognize their weakness. Many studies on written corrective feedback (WCF) have revealed that WCF help the students improve their writing performance; different type of written feedback plus conference (Bitchener, 2005), coded uncoded (Sampson, 2011), focused unfocused (Frear and Chiu 2015), written corrective feedback (Diab, 2015), teacher and peer feedback (Ruegg, 2015). Providing feedback to students, whether in the form of written commentary, error correction, teacher-students conferencing, or peer discussion, has to be recognized as one of ESL writing teacher's most important tasks (Hyland, 2006).

In reference to the previous research findings, it is clear that equipping feedback can contribute to the students' development skill in writing. However, many people may curios on whether every writing teacher may have applied it well or whether the quality of the feedback has already been matched with the students' expectation, etc. This phenomenon has been the interest among many researchers since the role of the teacher is very important as the manager of the class.

One of the most challenges for student writers lie on linguistic competence since in L2 context students writer may face some difficulties due to their process of mastering the target language. It also happens to adult EFL learners. Although they are university students who have learned the target language since they were in primary school, they are frequently criticized by the teachers for the lack of accuracy when they are writing essays in English. Even, sometimes it sounds that it is not like the essays written by university students. Although mastering the target language rule is not the only key for successful writing, this aspect may discourage the students' willingness to practice writing and in the future it may hinder the students'

ability in writing a good text. To help the students coping this problem, the teacher needs to provide feedback on grammar (Ruegg, 2015). It can be concluded that feedback is a must session for the teacher in EFL instruction. The feedback itself can be in different aspects, not only the grammar, but also covers organization, content, vocabulary etc.

In EFL writing instruction, a teacher has an important role who controls most activities conducted during the teaching learning process. He/she has a very strategic position in assisting the students to achieve the instructional objectives.

The success or failure the students will get depends much on the teacher's practice in teaching. It means that teacher may have their own way of teaching in achieving their goal. Here, teachers are closely linked to teacher's strategies for coping with challenges in their daily professional life to shape students' learning environment and influence students' motivation. Furthermore they can be expected to mediate the effect of changes from society, especially the changes of curricula. Here, teachers and teachers' strategies to cope with the challenges of daily professional life are closely related to shape the learning environment of students and affect their learning motivation. In addition, they are expected to mediate the impact of social changes, especially curriculum changes. Here, teachers and teachers' strategies to cope with the challenges of daily professional life are closely related to shape the learning environment of students and affect their learning motivation. In addition, they are expected to mediate the impact of social changes, especially curriculum changes.

Lee conducted several studies about instructors' feedback practices and found mismatch between teachers' expressed philosophies toward feedback and their actual responding practices (Lee, 2009b). Lee found that teachers' practices are not always consistent with best practices or even their own beliefs. They are relatively open to change responses, but feel restricted by a series of external factors-class size, heavy teaching burden, parents' Expectations and lack of training on how to effectively implement change Lee

found that teachers' practices are not always consistent with best practices or even their own beliefs. They are relatively open to change responses, but feel restricted by a series of external factors-class size, heavy teaching burden, parents' Expectations and lack of training on how to effectively implement change

To help the students improve their quality of writing, teachers can employ many types of comments feedbacks. In this study the writer will employ praise, criticism, and suggestion feedback proposed by Ellis. Providing feedback in the writing process is very beneficial to help them to revise their draft to final draft. It can increase the students' motivation during the teaching learning process since the students' are still in the process of developing the target language rule in which they sometimes lack of confidence in expressing their ideas in writing. Schunn (2009) states that there is a significant relationship between the feedback features, levels of mediating variables, and implementation rates. When the students are in doubt, they need feedback as a source of confirmation on what they have learned about the target language. In this context, it can reduce the students' barrier in writing class.

When teacher feedback is proved to be effective and strongly needed during the writing process, it can be ineffective when it is delivered in appropriately in the teaching learning process. Their great concern will be such a wasting time when it is done randomly in the classroom. Teacher comment should be clear and easily understood so that the students can catch its message and respond it appropriately. Goldstein conducted a study and revealed that students had difficulty with comment that did not directly state that a revision was needed, and students either did not attempt revision or revised unsuccessfully in respond to such comment (Hyland, 2006). Besides having clear instruction, teacher feedback should be about the teaching material itself and delivered appropriately. Hyland revealed that teacher comments are always related to specific pedagogic and interpersonal goals that both help to construct and are influenced by the teaching context.

Commentary is always situated in an ongoing dialog between teachers and students, and we respond not just to text but also to our knowledge of our learner's personalities and our experience of the entire situation (Hyland, 2006).

Therefore, this study is trying to investigate the effect of different types of comment feedback employed by teacher to the students' revision in writing. By knowing the best type comment that should be given by the teacher when he/she gives feedback, hopefully it can make the students comfort in writing and automatically it can improve their writing achievement. In addition, hopefully this present study would provide some insight in employing the feedback in EFL writing setting. Therefore the present study is going to concern the following research question "Do different kinds of feedback comments (praise, suggestion, and criticism) make the quality of the students writing significantly different?"

METHODS

The subjects of this study was the third semester students of English Department of IAIN Tulungagung chosen purposively. There were three experimental classes, Class A, Class B, and Class C and they were given different treatment. The treatment was done three times for each class. Before employing the treatment, the students were given a pre test that is to write a descriptive paragraph about their favorite place. Then the researcher gave praise treatment in class A. It means that class A got treatment of praise three times in two weeks because the class meets twice in a week. The researcher read thoroughly the students' paragraph and then gave written comment for each student in the form of praise. For example "the writing is catching and when I started reading the introduction, I just want to read just even more. Therefore the introduction is good because it sets the tone of the whole paper making it very insightful and attention getting". After getting the first treatment, the students revised their draft and submitted again to the researcher to get the second written comment in the form of praise.

Having been finished revising the second draft, the researcher gave the third comment in the form of written comment of praise. Finally the students have to submit the final draft after they got written comment in the form of praise three times and this final draft would be served as the post test. The procedure above was also applied for class B for suggestion. The following is the example of teacher's written comment in the form of suggestion. "I clearly understand your argument but I had some trouble. To improve this problem try to introduce the topic you are going to discuss your introduction for the reader to connect each point and understand the significant for each point". In class C the researcher applied criticism and the following was the example of the researcher's written comment. "The intro leave me wondering what the paper is going to be about. At first the grammatical errors overwhelm in the paper, but after putting the pieces together it is hard to tell if the paper is talking about proper education in rural areas".

Having finished with the treatment, the post test were administered to the the students. They were not asked to write a descriptive paragraph anymore instead they had to submit the fourth draft as the post test after they got three times of teacher's written comment during the treatments. After the pre test and post test were finished, the researcher use SPSS 17 version to calculate one way anova.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From the result of the study, it can be concluded that the different types of teacher's comments gave significant effect on the students' writing paragraph achievement. The result of processing from SPSS 17. 0 version softwware shows that the alternative hypothesis(Ha) is accepted and the null hypothesis(H0) is rejected. The significant value of this research is 0. 000, standard significant level is 0. 050. It can be drawn as 0. 000< 0. 050 or the significant value is smaller than significant level. Therefore, it means that the different types of teacher's comments strategy can give positive impact on students' writing paragraph achievement. In other words, we can find a

significant different on the students' writing paragraph ability between the students taught before and after using different types of comment in the form of praise, suggestion, and criticism. In addition among these three strategies, the suggestion one gave more improvement although praise gave much influence on class A.

In this part, the researcher presents the discussion of the findings which has shown in the previous sub chapter. In this part, the researcher presents the discussion of the findings which has shown in the previous sub chapter. It is divided into discussion about the explanation of the analysis which it intended to find out the effectiveness of different types of teacher's comments on the students' writing paragraph achievement which can be identified through the result of pre- test and post- test among these three experimental groups. Based on the analysis, the Sig.(2- tailed) was 0. 000. It means that the significance level was less than 0. 05(0. 000<0. 05). Thus, the alternative hypothesis(Ha) was accepted and the null hypothesis(Ho) was rejected. Therefore there was significant difference in students' writing paragraph achievement before and after taught by using different types of comments. In other word, different types of comments(praise, suggestion, and criticism) technique give significant effect to the students' writing paragraph achievement. It is divided into discussion about the explanation of the analysis which it intended to find out the effectiveness of different types of teacher's comments on the students' writing paragraph achievement which can be identified through the result of pre- test and post- test among these three experimental groups. Based on the analysis, the Sig.(2- tailed) was 0. 000. It means that the significance level was less than 0. 05(0. 000<0. 05). Thus, the alternative hypothesis(Ha) was accepted and the null hypothesis(Ho) was rejected. Therefore there was significant difference in students' writing paragraph achievement before and after taught by using different types of comments. In other word, different types of comments (praise, suggestion, and criticism) technique give significant effect to the students' writing paragraph achievement.

Although these three teacher's comments gave significant effects on students' paragraph writing, suggestion gave more significant effect among the other two that are praise and criticism. Praise is only help the students' motivation and it less helpful in indicating what should be done for the improvement of the text. Meanwhile the criticism is also helpful after the praise strategy for the students because in criticism the student can recognize what should be improved in the paragraph. Although there is no clue provided, the students can identified what should be done in the text. In this case they try to search it individually or in groups. This activity can help the students' progress in revision. In short they need more time to revise because they still search the proper answer for the problem. Therefore, the result of the study indicated that students still need a clue as a guidance for them for their revision. For EFL context, especially for Indonesian students it is very common that writing is a very challenging skill to master compared to the other three skill that is listening, speaking, and reading because most of the students still face three major problems. First, Indonesian students have limited background knowledge on the topic that they are writing for. This is due to their low habit in reading. Secondly, they are still completing to master English in which it is very possible for them to commit the errors. Finally, they sometimes do not aware of the organization of the text. They are still in the process of mastering how to produce a good paragraph in English.

This study is in line with a study of Summer Smith (1997) who conduct a study to code instructor accompanied by comments on the first year undergraduate composition course. He found that instructor typically alternated between praise and criticism, with certain topics (such as efforts or interest) more likely to be praised. Further he suggests that evaluative comments such as praise and criticism to which writers may well respond differently. Beyond easy complimenting and fault finding, evaluative comments take a positive and negative connotation depending on how they are stated. Comments that are mitigated with qualifiers and reasons are more likely to be seen as positive. Further he suggests that evaluative comments

such as praise and criticism to which writers may well respond differently. Beyond easy complimenting and fault finding, evaluative comments take a positive and negative connotation depending on how they are stated. Comments that are mitigated with qualifiers and reasons are more likely to be seen as positive. Count from the year, this study was conducted in long long time ago and the result of this present study supports this old finding. It is because the students' condition of the present study has the same context of the previous research in which teacher's comments are still very helpful for the students to revise their draft. The students still need guidance from the teacher in the form of clue so that they can continue the rest. By reading this comments, the students are also very happy and feel the teacher present while they are doing their revision. These comments are usually being waited for long. When the students see it appeared on their paper, it can be assumed as a reply from the teacher. As we know that the writing class in Indonesian context can be a burden or the instructor and the learners. For the instructor, the big class may trigger them to be reluctant to write the comment because it is a time consuming and need extra energy. In other hand, for the students receiving the teachers' comment is something very valuable for them and can trigger their motivation in the teaching learning process of writing. For example, the students are happy and enthusiastic to follow the comments. This means that students who actually don't like writing, or students in writing classes, change their writing behavior from dislike to liking during the course of this research, but the researcher does not know whether this change will last for a long time or for a short time.

The result of this study also revealed that the second study was conducted by Fiona and Ken Hyland (2001) who investigated the use of praise, suggestion and criticism as teacher written feedback in writing class. Through a detailed analysis of the text, they found that praise is the most frequently used function of teachers in feedback, which can soften criticism and suggestions instead of simply responding to good work. Many criticisms and suggestions have also been alleviated, but also through the use

of hedging methods, problem tables and personal attribution. They found that the importance of mitigation strategies as Indirectness carries benefits to cope the students' misunderstanding and misinformation. In addition, they also revealed that they recognize the importance of mitigation strategies as a means to reduce criticism and strengthen effective teacher-student relations.

Another study was also verified by study was conducted by Martyn Steward (2015). He conducted a survey on higher education to evaluate the teaching at national level. He found that praise is often directed at the lecturer, while criticism often objectifies teaching as a behavior. When teachers make comments in the form of suggestions, students try to guess and find out their understanding of this aspect by activating background knowledge, and predict the upcoming information in this aspect. These conditions increase their self confidence that they are going to find the solution of the problem. It can be seen in this study that the students are enthusiastic during the revision process. In addition, when the students get the teacher comments, this can help some silent or passive students in the class became confident enough to revise their writing. It can be seen in this study, when the students are enthusiastic during the revision process. In addition, when the students get the teacher comments, this can help some silent or passive students in the class became confident enough to revise their writing This decreases the typical of Indonesian students especially those from Javanese culture that believe that being silent is considered to be polite or gold behavior. This comment really help them to survive in saving their face. In addition, this also confirms that instructor comments can indicate their attention which can increase the learners' achievement and classroom interaction.

However, the finding of this research is in contrast to a research investigated by Tang and Ting Liu (2018). He wanted to know if indirect coded correction feedback and short affective comments were more effective than indirect coded correction feedback alone in enhancing L2 learners writing performance, uptake, and motivation after receiving aforementioned feedback modes and completed three writing tasks at a successive times.

The result of the study revealed that the higher score the students was not affected by the type of feedback they got from the peers. In other words, indirect codded corrective feedback accompanied by affective comments did not influence students' writing score; in contrast, the questionnaire data indicated that positive mindset was resulted from additional comments. This condition may trigger their motivation their writing achievement and the students' ability to produce coded corrective feedback and short affective comments seems to be only an complementary.s In EFL context, especially in Indonesian class short comments seems to be the most important part compared to the code. The code is only a symbol which many students often confused of because the students still need time to guess the symbol refer to. In contrast, the comments are clearer because it is direct and explicit so that the students can find the solution more accurately.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Teacher's comments for students' works can give influential effect during the writing process. Providing many types of comments, especially suggestion one can contribute to a better revision since the students can directly know what they should do to improve their draft. It is very important since the students may still in the progress to master English so that it is difficult for them to find the solution of their own problem in writing. In addition, suggestion can motivate them during the revision stage. Finally, the researcher suggests that the future researchers to conduct a longer term effect on these strategies due to the treatment of the present study was only in three weeks. It is very possible that the result of the study may not last in a long time.

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