

Students' Revision Behavior in EFL Writing Project Assignment

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Abstract—Writing is a result of a process involving idea development and language competence. This study reports the investigation of the pattern of students' effort of revising a writing project. This qualitative study used in-depth interviews to collect the data from two classes of advanced level students in the English Education Department. Before the interview, students completed a writing assignment in the form of a one-semester project. They were then interviewed on how they did the writing project assignment. The findings reveal that the completion of the project, which undergoes the process, requires revision several times depending upon the allotted time. This revision process portrays students' tendency to revising their writing projects such as social media grouping, technology application dependence, in-group dynamics, and learning model preference. These findings seem to be a pivotal contribution for teachers to design students' projects for language learning purposes.

Keywords: *revision behavior, writing project, qualitative, grounded theory*

I. INTRODUCTION

Revising step is a vital part of the writing process. The quality of writing product essay or paper gains its improvement from doing the revision process. The elaboration of the idea as the formulation in the topic, main idea and synthesis can only be deepened and extended as well as improved through revising [1]. Although writing skill is not new in the language class, the demand of the era of revolution industry 4.0 cannot be denied to color the practice of writing including the act of revising. Putting this notion into a context, the current rapid development of technology has defined new frontiers for language teaching [2]. This suggests that revising as a part of writing skills in language teaching undergoes fast change and new challenges. The existing revising practice still applies a common or conventional practice [3,4] This highlights "the need to dynamically review and research language teaching process and challenge becomes is imperative" [2]. This implies the urgency of having research on the issue of writing skills in English language teaching (ELT). The research aims at improving and correcting the process of writing which further results in increasing the quality of language teaching process and knowledge assessment considering the current academic phenomena that college assignment is mostly viewed from the

essay writing on certain knowledge in a certain discipline [5,6] In other words, the improvement of the writing process including the revising activity contributes not only to improve of student skill but also for improving students' achievement. The revising behavior, in other words, defines the quality of the writing result [7]. It then leads to the assumption that the right practice of revising will determine the quality of writing. Thus the quality of writing products reflects the quality of knowledge. However, current models of the writing process have directed attention away from revision [8]. That underlines the need to figure out students' revising behavior to have inputs on designing a better practice of language especially writing. Within this study, such revision behavior is traced by the working a writing project. The choice of the working project as the object of the study relates to the view that writing project educates "students in terms of using a cognitive skill (reading, researching, planning), social skills (cooperating and making a decision) and independent learning (taking responsibility)" [9]. This highlights that seeing a writing project may involve various activities and practices including the frequency of revisions. Thus, it is challenging to reveal the revision behavior performed by students in completing their project assignments.

II. METHODS

This study is qualitative in design. The data were collected using in-depth interviews with the college students of advance writing classes who are assigned with a one-semester writing project. There were thirty students involved in the class and distributed into a group of five students. The interviews take place during and after finishing the project. The students are required to answer the main question; "how do you revise your essay assignment". The follow-up questions are appropriated and adjusted to elaborated and deepen the students' responses. The result of the interview in the form of transcripts is analyzed by employing the frame of the perspective of Strauss [10–13] grounded theory which prescribes the synthesizing of the data obtained as emic into findings by following open, selective and axial coding. The citations presented in the analysis are those regarded to be the most relevant and supportive data for finding arguments. For the ethical reason, the names of the respondents are hidden and marked the initial and number of the attendance list.

III. RESULTS

The writing project includes working as individuals and groups to brainstorm, draft, revise until a final product was produced [9]. This portrays students' activity in the completion of the project is remarkably dynamic. Students interact with their peers in responding to the given project. The interactions come in the form of grouping, discussing and arguing, not to mention disagreeing. The intention to meet the standard required for the output of the writing project that is the collection of essays of different genres such as narrative, descriptive and persuasive colors students' interactions. Since this study focuses on the revising phase of a writing process, the practices related to the attempts to revise the writing product of the project are seen as the pivotal elements in tracing the students' behavioral tendencies. They are detected through students' stories, confessions, and experiences as they are interviewed. Having methodologically analyzed those data, it is found that students tend to implement the following behaviors tendencies in revising their writing product.

A. *Relying Upon Social Media Grouping*

Realizing the importance of revising, students initiate and anticipate the demand for intense contact and discussion to revise including grammar accuracy, idea elaboration, and technicality aspects. Having the draft finished means the revision required. Since this assignment is given as a group project for a semester time, it suggests that the groups gain more time to carry out the writing process. Each phase is significant. Yet the revising part, besides, determines the quality of the product, it specifically characterizes the need for more discussions. That implies that, as a group project, the working of the assignment requires more discussions than merely an individual task [14]. This need gives place to the advantages of technology development. The most used one is social media grouping. It is detected in the following comments; "As the assignment determined, Nia took the role to set up WA group for further discussion. We used the group for doing and revising the writing project, sometimes we did late at night" (S11, G3). Students manage themselves to involve in revising their writing product by setting up a social media group particularly WhatsApp (WA). The use of WA is due to the reason for its flexibility of interaction and conversation [15], and, easiness of attaching files.

The demand for a quick response toward teacher feedbacks also defines the intense WA group discussion. The student respondent clarified' "After teacher's feedback, we usually revised the project by WA discussion, we didn't like to do it in canteen or library, although sometimes we had a misunderstanding in arguing the revised part" (S29 G6). The exchange of ideas through the WA group seems to facilitate as online discussion beyond the limits of merely a meeting in the canteen or library. The group overcomes the hindrance of time and place limitation. The data indicate that the advantage of revising via the WA group is the efficiency factor. The feedback can be discussed and responded immediately after having been given. The members do not require to find and decide a meeting point to settle the issue of the feedbacks. The works become more efficient. Every one of the group just

needs to activate and be active within the group. Participation in the discussion occurs through sharing ideas and replying to others' opinions. Such activities have already fulfilled the need to listen to the suggestions of other members and to agree on the solution for the received feedbacks.

However, it may pose a potential of shortcomings in terms of the possibility of arguing among students, in this case, the group members. Communication through texting is likely to open for the potential misunderstanding messages and points of revision. Written communication requires more words to clarify ideas due to the lack of gestures, intonation, and context consistency [16]. Despite this potential, students tend to revise their writing products using WA group.

B. *Depending Upon Technology Application*

The requirement for good writing drives students to be aware of using existing technology applications. The rise of various language applications offered online to assist the betterment of writing including revision processes as identified in the next citations; "Frankly sir, we were still lack of grammatical knowledge. So we tried the online application, Grammarly, Grace was good at finding such application, she taught us "(S2, G1) The emergence and offer of application have changed the face of students' behavior of doing and revise their writing. The expressions above indicate that students turn their dependence upon making use of the writing-related online applications [17], for instance, Grammarly. The students appear to find an exit tunnel from mastering a linguistic skill for the complete their assignment. For instance, the rise of grammatical correction applications promises the easiness of revising the accuracy of grammar use and choice of words. Hence, it is not surprising if students do not longer fully count upon consulting with grammar books and references. The application has already tackled students' language obstacles in revising the linguistic mistakes in the writing.

Further, students in accomplishing the project are also assisted by applications related to creative works. It is recorded in as follows; "In its revision, our project needed illustration, none of us was able to draw, we browsed for painting application and used it" (S8 G3). The statements reveal that students can also equip their writing project with an illustration as long as they have and install the application; drawing application. It confirms that students' behavior in revising their writing is not only connected with technical accuracy but also with content attributes. This advocates the synthesis of the students' current dependence upon application technology. Almost all of the revising activities can be carried out by applying linguistic and attributive applications. The technology progress has added more flexible behavior for doing a writing revision. The anxiety of the lack of grammatical and technical competencies in performing the revision in writing has been minimized.

Responding toward the target of the writing project has urged students to revise their work within which they experience the need for relevant technology applications. Their limited or even poor language knowledge is anticipated by technological sophistication. The application creates

dependence and promise accuracy [18]. It seems to be an advantage in terms of helping to finish the revision, yet it might also be a disadvantage in terms of encouraging students to develop their language skills continuously. Further, it can be synthesized that writing-related application has brought a new frontier for revision behavior among students.

C. Undergoing In-Group Dynamic

Each member of the group is a unique individual; an aspect that influences the enactment of their writing revision. Following the choice of interactive media through WhatsApp (WA) instead of the frequent face to face discussion leads to another revision behavior namely the experience of intense in-group dynamics. It refers to the activity of revising the writing project that allows and requires intensively internal contacts and discussions among members. Amidst this circumstance, students undergo dynamic of relationship as admitted by student respondent as follow; “Revising our assignment, sometimes, made us upset, some group member were slow to respond the distributed task, difficult to argue, I needed to be patient” (S3, G1). The dynamic may begin from the attitude toward task distribution among members. The distinct response stimulates the emergence of conflict potential. The target of the project defines the proper response to the given task to each member of the group. Therefore, the failure or slowness to react and reply particularly to dealing with answering teachers’ feedbacks may cause inconvenience and anger. It “made them upset”. This indicates that the tension exists whenever the expectation to cope with the group task is not met. Every individual within a group hopes a maximum role of others. It easily lights the fire among the group member. The intention to complete the project by a quick revision may drive dispute. Fortunately, as asserted by the respondents, they finally realized that they “needed to be patient”. That means that the revision process within a group may recall the appearance of the other behavior that is patience

Revision needs patience. In other words, the pursuit of the optimum result of the group project points out the demand for patience for performing the revision. Such behavior helps the member to overcome disagreement as it occurs. This is justified by one of the students who responded as follows; “Once we didn't talk for a week because of revision disagreement, but finally we reconciled for the sake of friendship and grade.” (S15 G3). The disagreement toward points of revision takes place anytime. Members of the group come with distinct reactions toward feedbacks or instructions. It is most likely one of the sources for tension or disagreement within the group. The group dynamic tests students’ intellectual maturity in reacting to distinguished opinion. This marks that the revision process may develop to overcome anger and conflict by prioritizing to the attainment of the purpose of working as a group. It is meant by “reconciled for the sake of friendship and grade.” The patience leads to the willingness to reconcile and to forgive, then to finish the project. Hence, it can be inferred that the group dynamic proves to encourage maturity in the revising process.

D. Implementing Independence Learning

The demand to revise for the perfection of the writing product as the output of the given project has also shaped the learning preference among students. As the writing project is not one night or week assignment, it provides students with more time of improving the quality of their writing. Revising can be done several times as long as it obtains feedback from teachers or peers and the time has been due. This situation characterizes the advantage of assigning students with doing a project. The project engages students with more opportunities to develop and grow their interest in certain learning preferences [19]. The students adopt and adapt a learning preference to deal with the description and criteria of the project product. They recognize the suitable learning mode for them. It is detected in the following assertions; “I like this project, it gave us the freedom to be creative from the beginning, revision, and completion, we can revise several times in free time and ways. it’s independence or autonomous” (S3, G1). These expressions show students’ fondness of the learning mode implemented to complete the writing project including the revision stage. As a project, the writing assignment allows more independent learning. Students in their group enjoy responding to the feedbacks and following the intention to have a qualified writing product. Iosif and Tsiplakides point out, “Because students engage in purposeful communication to complete authentic activities, they have the opportunity to use language in a relatively natural context” [19]. It seems that during the process of working the project students view the opportunity to revise their works as the chance to generate not only their language competence but also, due to the independence of learning, develop their creativity. Further, the combination of the availability of time with freedom in learning as a group serves to be a wide arena for students to experience critical thinking that bridges their creativity to learn and solve a problem. In other words, revising practices can be multidimensional practices in the writing project. It encourages students to find their learning mode.

Such circumstance points out the vitality of revising of the writing process. Being independent, not to neglect teachers’ feedback and peer’ role, students see the revisions as the time for exploring their creativity. The student respondent admits, “Since we are mostly independent in revising our project becomes a battle of creative ideas, creative way of browsing resources, and creative way to cope with a writing problem” (S 17, G4). It is obvious here that revising encourages students to develop and dig out students’ sense of creativity. It occurs since students are given more independence and time. This marks the behavior applied within the group interaction for the completion of the project. It indicates that students define independent learning as the one that meets their needs. Further, it signifies the independent learning provides more spots to critical thinking and creativity. This bridges Iakovos; “argument; to stimulate creative thinking, teachers should create the classroom conditions necessary to encourage students to make inferences, to encourage them to think intuitively and spontaneously and use inquiry-discovery teaching techniques” [20]. Viewing this argument, it seems to

be relevant to the practice of writing project assignments within which students experience such conditions. Students independently learn to infer, to critically think and to solve the problem in the process of accomplishing their writing project.

IV. CONCLUSION

Good writing is a result of a process. Within it, a revision stage is pivotal. Doing a writing project which is marked by potentially frequent revisions, students implement several revising behavioral tendencies such as relying upon social media grouping, depending upon technology application, undergoing In-Group Dynamic and Implementing independent learning. These tendencies do not only reveal the contribution of revision toward the quality of writing product but also confirm the emergence of a particular revision behavior among students especially dealing with a group work of a project. It further emphasizes the vitality of revising and suggests the possibility to maintain and even encourage more project works in the curriculum.

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