Improving Students' Writing Skill Using Online Feedback

Musfera Nara Vadia*
Graduate School
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
musferanara.2018@student.uny.ac.id

Dyah Setyowati Ciptaningrum
Graduate School
Universitas Negeri Yogyakarta
Yogyakarta, Indonesia
dyah_ciptaningrum@uny.ac.id

Abstract— **Writing is a complex process, which requires several stages to produce a good writing product. Improving students' writing skill can be done in many ways, including providing them with teacher's feedback as well as peers' feedback through online learning platform. This study aims to improve students' writing skill by providing online feedback using Edmodo. This research is action research study which consisted of two cycles or seven meetings in total. The participants of the study were a second-year of 18 female midwifery students of Aisyiyah University of Yogyakarta, who enrolled English for Academic Writing class. The quantitative data was collected through writing test of descriptive text and narrative texts, while the qualitative data was gathered from a semi-structured interview. The findings showed that the students' writing scores increased from pretest to posttest 1 and posttest 2. Additionally, the score of writing aspects, namely organization, language use, and mechanics also improved. From the interview, it is indicated that students preferred to teacher's feedback than peers' feedback. In conclusion, providing online feedback improves students' writing, especially in their linguistic competence. Online feedback also can enhance students' interest as well as their confidence in writing.**

Keywords— Writing, online peer's feedback, teacher's feedback, Edmodo.

I. INTRODUCTION

Writing is one of the basic language skills (Harmer, 2003) and it is as important as reading, listening, and speaking. As a productive skill, writing becomes one of the indicators of academic achievement as Harris and Graham (2016) state that writing can boost comprehension and achievement across all subject areas. In higher education level, ability to write in English is very important for students, not only for students who are majoring in English language but also for them who are from non-English majors. The ability to write in English is often needed for academic purposes such as for writing a thesis abstract or research article. Realizing the importance of academic writing ability for college students, however, non-English major students usually encounter some writing problems.

The second-year midwifery students who took English for Academic Writing class in academic year of 2018/2019 at Aisyiyah University of Yogyakarta were indicated to have a problem in writing. After conducting a pre-test where the students wrote a simple paragraph of descriptive text, it

revealed that the student's writing problem were in all the aspects of writing, such as organization, content, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. In addition, even though the class duration is 100 minutes for each meeting, the effective time for the learning process is only about 60 minutes. This circumstance caused by some classroom procedures from the university, such as scanning attendance QR code which have to be done by students themselves and reciting Al Quran before the lesson start. This time limitation became a burden for doing activities, such as presenting the materials, practicing to write, as well as giving feedback to their writing in a single meeting.

Not to mention that the writing process has four stages, such as planning, drafting, editing, and final version (Harmer, 2003). He also says that the writing process is like the process wheel where it is a circle around moves forward and goes backward until the final version is achieved. In other words, it requires a lot of feedbacks, revising, and editing throughout the process. Therefore, writing class usually cannot be done just in one meeting.

Regarding to those reasons, there must be a strategy that might be able to solve the problems. In this research, the researchers proposed to provide online feedback both from peers and teacher to improve students' writing by using Edmodo online platform. Providing online feedback allows teacher and students to communicate outside the classroom. It breaks the time limitation in the classroom and brings a virtual learning environment. In addition, both teachers' feedback and peers' feedback were indicated can improve students' writing ability, enhance students' motivation, and promoting collaborative work among the students (Gay & Sofyan, 2017; Zainuddin, 2004; Altstaedter & Doolittle, 2014; Hasanah & Purnawan, 2016).

Recognizing the benefits of online platform in writing class to address the students' writing problems, the researchers employed Edmodo as a tool to facilitate peers and teacher providing online feedback. To do this, the researchers collected the data by applying online peers' feedback followed by online teacher's feedback to see any improvement on students' writing. The writing improvement is seen from students' writing final scores and their writing elements' scores from cycle to cycle. In addition, the researchers also explored the students' perceptions toward the online feedback.

A. Teachers' Written Feedback

Teacher's feedback plays an important role in most writing classes. Many students see teacher's feedback is crucial to

improve their writing. The teacher can give direct or indirect feedback to the students' writing. The feedback can be in the form of comments, suggestions, error corrections, or questions that can be used by the students to revise their writing. There are two types of teacher's written feedback, namely, form feedback and content feedback. Form feedback deals with structures and grammar correction. As the most obvious problems, grammatical errors often get commented on by the teacher. Form feedback helps students reducing their grammar errors. Many studies revealed that teacher's form feedback improved students' accuracy (Salleh & Stappa, 2004; Zareil & Rahnama, 2013). Moreover, students more responded to form feedback rather than content feedback (Ismail, Maulan, & Haniza, 2008). It perhaps teacher often gives form feedback along with its correction. So, the students are just simply retyping the correction got form the teacher.

On the other hand, content feedback focuses on the subject matter or information being discussed in writing. Giving a facilitative comment on content improves students' organization and content development in writing (Vengadasamy, 1994). The teacher comments on how the idea is presented not on its form. However, in real practice, it is impossible to separate form and content feedback; rather, it should combine respectively. Studies revealed that the combination of form and content feedback help students to improve them as writers (Hedgecock & Lefkowitz, 1994). In addition, a combination of form and content feedback helps students revise their draft effectively (Ismail et al., 2008).

Teacher written feedback should cover all aspects of writing, such as organization, content, grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Those five criteria are in line with Brown's (2004) writing rubric assessment. Specifically, the organization contains the introduction, body, and conclusion or the generic structure of the text. Meanwhile, contents cover the logical development of ideas, and mechanics covers the punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Besides referring to Brown's (2004) writing rubric, it also suggests to provide a flexible approach of giving feedback, which includes praise, criticism, and suggestions (Hynland, 2003). Some teachers believe that giving too much praise at the early stage of writing can discourage students from revising. However, the lack of praise in the comment also can affect students' attitude in writing. Therefore, the teacher should provide a balance of constructive feedback.

B. Peers' Feedback

Peers' feedback becomes one of the alternatives to improve students' writing besides the teacher's feedback. Like its name, the feedback is provided by peers, not the teacher. The students might feel anxiety when the teacher corrected their writing. However, when their peers provide feedback, they might feel more comfortable and become more motivated instead (Ferris, 2003). Peers' feedback is more efficient than the teacher's feedback in term of time (Eksi, 2012). If the class is big, it is quite difficult for the teacher to give feedback to all students' works on time. Consequently, only some of the students got feedback from the teacher, or the teacher might just skip the feedback session.

However, by doing peers' feedback, not only does teacher work easier, but also the students learn how to work collaboratively. Peers feedback enhances community building as the students actively cooperate by commenting on their peers' writing and sharing ideas. It is important to note that before conducting peer feedback in writing class, the teacher needs to make sure that the students already know about the concept of peer feedback and how to comment on their peers' work. By doing this, the teacher needs to train the students by doing a workshop on how to give feedback on peers' writing based on the writing assessment criteria. As Altstaedter & Doolittle (2014) revealed that guidelines help students to focus on comments and avoid a singular focus to certain aspect of writing.

Peer feedback offers many benefits for both provider and writer. Providers are the ones who give feedback to their peer writing; whereas, the writer is the one who writes or receives the feedback. As a provider, the students learn a lot from their peers' writing. They become aware of making a mistake and reflect on their learning. Cognitive process online peer feedback allows the providers to compare and questions ideas, evaluate and suggest for modifications and reflect, plan and regulate own thinking, think critically, connect to new knowledge, explain and take different perspectives to their peers' writing. It helps them to develop higher-order thinking skill as they have to compare, making a judgment, and evaluate other's works. In addition, online peer feedback also helps them to improve their writing by meaning-making, and knowledge building learned from their peers' writing. In addition, they learn how to appreciate other works by making evaluative judgments.

C. Edmodo as an Online Learning Platform

Nowadays, giving feedback has been increasingly facilitated online by various online learning platforms. It not only saves time and distance but also offers flexibility and convenience for both teacher and students. Edmodo is one of the popular free social education networks. As a virtual class, Edmodo allows teachers to create and manage the account, and only their students can join the class after registering by using the unique code. In addition, Edmodo offers several features for both teacher and students. The teacher can post materials, worksheets, give the announcement, share links, create polling, comment on students' post, grade students' work, and so on.

Numerous studies had been done related to the use of Edmodo as an online learning platform. Researchers discovered that the students were more motivated to write and post their writing, more enthusiastic and active, willingly to do collaborative work and share work with others (Noviana, Rufinus, & Bunae, 2015; Hasanah & Purnawan, 2016). In addition, Edmodo significantly improves student' writing performance, and they showed positive perception toward the use of Edmodo in language learning (Al-Naibi, Al-Jabri, & Al-Kalbani, 2018). Related to giving feedback in writing classes, Edmodo successfully facilitates students' participation in online discussion and task (Gay & Sofyan, 2017).

II. METHOD

This research employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) developed by Kemmis and McTaggart as in Burns (2010) that consists of four phases in each cycle, namely planning, action, observation, and reflection. This action research consisted of two cycles, with seven meetings in total including the pre-test and post-test. The course duration was 2

x 50 minutes per meeting in a week. The study was conducted on March 1st to April 30th 2019. Eighteen midwifery students of 'Aisiyah University of Yogyakarta participated in this study. They were currently in fourth semester and enrolled English for Academic Writing Course. The students' average age was 19 years old. The data of this research were collected by using two instruments: interview guideline and writing test. The writing test is assessed by using Brown's (2004) writing rubric. Meanwhile, the qualitative data gathered form semi-structured interview were analyzed descriptively.

A. Action Plan

The action plan of this study referred to Kemmis and McTaggart's model, which consists of four phases. In the planning phase, the researchers conducted a pre-test where the students were asked to write a simple paragraph of descriptive text. The findings were used to see the students' proficiency level in writing and to identify the problems in the classroom. In this phase, the researcher prepared all the materials and assessment tools based on the syllabus.

Furthermore, the teacher who was also as the researcher explained the feedback criteria and trained the students how to give feedback to their peers' writing. To perform an online peer feedback, the teacher divided the class into six groups which consist of three students for each group. The teacher created a class and small groups in Edmodo and asked the students enroll into the groups. Moreover, the teacher explained how to use the features of Edmodo in giving feedback to the students.

Then, in the action phase of the first cycle, the teacher taught a descriptive text. After explaining its features, the students were asked to write a descriptive text about place, and uploaded their writing into Edmodo. The students gave the comments to their group mates writing, and revised their writing based on the comments. These activities were done outside the classroom. In the next meeting, the teachers reviewed students' work and gave feedback on them. At the last meeting of each cycle, the teacher conducted assessment or posttest to see the students' writing improvement. Moreover, as referred to the syllabus the teacher taught a narrative text at the second cycle. The activities were basically the same, but in the second cycle the teacher changed the action from peers' feedback to teacher's feedback.

Furthermore, the observation phase occurred along with action phase. The teacher observed and assessed the learning process both activities inside the classroom and interaction in Edmodo. Lastly, in the reflection phase the teacher reflected the whole process of learning and assessment in each cycle. The teacher discovered that peers' feedback did not really help the students' writing due to their level of proficiency. As a result, the students did not consider their peers' comments and suggestions to revise their writing. Therefore, at the second cycle, the teacher changed the action from online peers' to online teacher's feedback.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study examined the use of online feedback whether from peers' or teacher's via Edmodo to improve students' writing skill in general and specific writing aspects as well. As the response to the first research question, the students' writing scores from pretest to posttest 1 and posttest 2 were compared. Table 1 presents the comparison of students'

writing score using online feedback from pretest to posttest 1 and posttest 2. The table shows that there was a significant increase on students' writing scores from pretest (M= 60, SD= 6, 426) to posttest 1 (M= 65,39, SD= 10,798) t= -2, 608, p < .005 (2-tailed) and to posttest 2 1 (M= 71,61, SD= 11,014) t= -2, 724, p < .0005 (2-tailed).The results revealed that the online feedback strategies improve students' writing performance. The results are in line with Ismail et al., (2008) study that form, content, or end-note feedback can improve students' writing especially in their form (grammar). They also discovered that even a minimal feedback given to the students was helpful for the student to do self-revision. Similarly, Liu & Zhou (2018) found that both online peer feedback and online teacher feedback have effect on students' revision in writing. Online feedback, in fact, gives students the opportunity to revise their writing before being graded by the teacher.

TABLE 1. PAIRED SAMPLE T-TEST OF PRE-TEST TO POSTTEST 1 AND POSTTEST 2 SCORES

Paired Samples Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Pretest	60,00	18	6,426	1,515			
	Posttest1	65,39	18	10,798	2,545	-2,608	17	,018
Pair 2	Posttest2	71,61	18	11,014	2,596	-2,724	17	,014

Then, the researchers also looked at to the specific writing aspects whether there was an improvement or not on text organization, language use, and mechanics. Fig. 2 presents the score improvement by aspect of writing. The findings showed that there was a significant increase in the text organization aspect at the cycle 1. Approximately the average score of organization aspect was 38,81 out of 50, which increased by 4,53 points from the pre-test. Regarding language use and mechanics, the average score was 16,5 out of 30 and 10,06 out of 20 respectively. It means that the students' average score in terms of language use only increased by 0,17 points from pre-test; meanwhile, in terms of mechanics, it only increased by 0,67 points from the pre-test. As the conclusion, peer feedback tended to give a better contribution into the students' writing in terms of organization rather than language use and mechanics.

However, after cycle 2, all the aspects showed a better improvement. Even though in terms of organization the average score only went up 1,19 points opposed to the scores of the post-test of cycle 1, the average score in terms of language use and mechanics increased better which were 2,44 points and 2,61 points respectively. Based on this result, teacher feedback seemed to be contributing to improve

students' writing in all aspects. These findings support Parthasarathy's (2014) findings that feedback strategies improve aspects of students' writing skill.

Students' Writing Score by Aspects

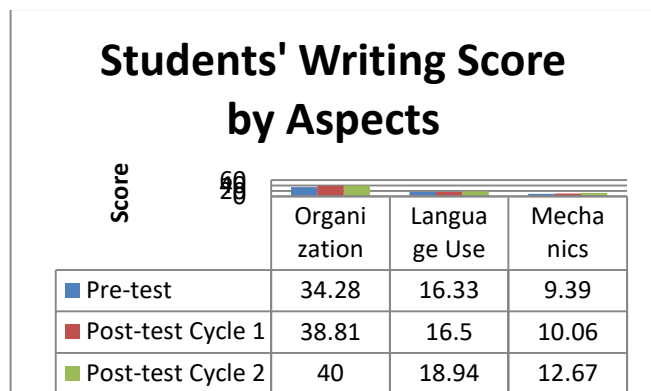|	Organization	Language Use	Mechanics
Pre-test	34.28	16.33	9.39
Post-test Cycle 1	38.81	16.5	10.06
Post-test Cycle 2	40	18.94	12.67

Fig. 2. Students' writing score by aspects.

Furthermore, to answer the second research question, the researcher conducted a semi-structured interview to find out the students' perceptions about the online feedback. The interviewed was carried out after conducting posttest at the cycle 2. Five students voluntarily participated in the interview. Firstly, the students were asked about their opinion towards peer feedback. The findings showed that peer feedback help students to detect their writing mistakes by comparing theirs to others'. It can be seen from the student's answer, "*It was fun (doing peer feedback). We can look at friends' writing and compared to ours. It helps us to find our mistakes in writing*" (S1). It supports the idea that peers' feedback enables the students to monitor their own performance and correct themselves so that they become an independent student (Wen, 2013). In addition, by comparing their own work to their peers', they were more aware of their mistakes in writing.

On the other hand, some students felt uncomfortable to give feedback to their friends' writing. "*I feel uncomfortable to comment my friends' writing. But I tried my best since I was required to*" (S2). Because of the burden feeling, the students only provided general comments, such as "*Hallo [student's name], your writing is great. The generic structure is correct, which is identification at the first paragraph followed by description at the second paragraph. The content is interesting. Grammar is good. The mechanics are good…*" (S8, comment via Edmodo). As a result, their peers could not receive enough suggestions or critics related to the writing. Even if they tried to do so, they might provide a wrong suggestion especially when correcting peers' grammar. This is one of disadvantages of peer feedback when the peers have low capability as a feedback provider.

Another question was about the students' perception towards teacher feedback. They mostly responded that they preferred to teacher feedback since it provided details explanation. It can be seen from their answer "*It was very helpful (teacher feedback). The teacher showed us which parts were error and he gave us explanation to correct them*" (S2). The other also stated that "*I understand better when the teacher gave the comments*" (S4). This finding is in line with Thi & Thao's (2017) study that students viewed corrections and comments from teacher were a great help for their writing.

Teacher feedback is seen more profitable than peer feedback because peers have limited knowledge, less experience and limited language ability to give comments compared to the teacher (Saito & Fujita, 2004).

Moreover, it also discovered that some students did not consider their peers' suggestion and comment to revise their writing. Zhang in (Popta, Kral, Camp, Martens, & Simons, 2016) also found that in some contexts students tend to trust teacher's feedback rather than peers' feedback. In this case, the students were confused whether the suggestion given by the peers is correct or not. This findings contradict with Ellman in (Lu & Law, 2012) who argued that peer feedback is less threatening and perhaps more willing to accept by the students.

Then, the students were asked about their perception on writing after the feedback strategies were applied. They mostly answered that they were more confident since they can see how their peers are performing. In addition, they can identify the mistakes and revise them before collecting it to the teacher. It can be seen from the statements "*I feel more confident because I know my mistakes and know how to correct them. Thanks to the comments and suggestions*" (S3); and "*I learn a lot from my friends' writing. I can tell their mistakes although I also do the same.*" (S5)

IV. CONCLUSION

Providing online feedback on students' writing offers many benefits. Online feedback breaks the classroom limitation and creates virtual classroom to facilitate writing class. Based on the research findings, online feedback significantly improves students' writing score. Both peers' feedback and teacher's feedback contribute to the improvement of the students' writing performance. This finding is in line with Demİrel & Engİnarlar's (2016) study that a combination of peer and teacher feedbacks contributes positively to students' writing. By applying online feedback, the students were given a chance to revise their work before being graded by the teacher. Moreover, they can reflect their own writing by reading their peers' writing. Regarding to the aspect of writing, there was a significant improvement in student' text organization after peer online feedback was implemented at the cycle 1. However, language use and mechanics aspects showed no significant improvement. Meanwhile, at the cycle 2 when the teacher's feedback was implemented, there was a significant improvement in all three aspects of writing being assessed, namely organization, language use, and mechanics. It suggests that teachers' online feedback improves students' linguistic competences.

On the other hand, the findings showed that teacher's feedback seems more useful than peer feedback. It is supported by the interview data that the students more preferred to teacher's feedback rather than peers' feedback. On the other hand, online feedback also can improve students' interest in writing and boost their level of confidence in writing. Furthermore, it is important to highlight that in order to successfully conduct online peer feedback teachers should consider the size of the peer feedback group and the form of training. In some researches, group of three or four is suggested, and various training approaches such as demonstrating or watching a training feedback video are encouraged. Thus, this study has many limitations in terms of time constrain to conduct the research; and also the amounts

of participant by which the results cannot be generalize into the whole population. On the basis of data interpretation, further studies are still needed. The student preference to the teacher feedback can be explored through a case study or a survey. In addition, a similar study also can be conducted using other research designs.

REFERENCES

Al-Naibi, I., Al-Jabri, M., & Al-Kalbani, I. (2018). Promoting students' paragraph writing using Edmod: An action research. *Turkish Online Journal of Educational Technology - TOJET*, *17*(1), 130–143.

Altstaedter, L. L., & Doolittle, P. (2014). Students' perceptions of peer feedback. *Argentinian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, *2*(2), 60–76.

Brown, H. D. (2004). *Language assessment: Principles and classroom practices*. San Fransisco: Longman.

Burns, A. (2010). *Doing action research in English language teaching: A guide for practitioners*. New York, NY: Routledge.

Demİrel, E., & Engİnarlar, H. (2016). Effects of combined peer-teacher feedback on second language. *H.U. Journal of Education*, *31*(4), 657–675. https://doi.org/10.16986/HUJE.2016015701

Eksi, G. (2012). Peer review versus teacher feedback in process writing : How Effective ? *IJAES*, *13*(December), 33–48.

Gay, E., & Sofyan, N. (2017). The effectiveness of using Edmodo in enhancing students' outcomes inadvance writing course of the fifth semester at FIP - UMMU. *Journal of English Education*, *2*(1), 1–11.

Harmer, J. (2003). *The practice of English language teaching, 3rd Ed.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Harris, K. R., & Graham, S. (2016). Self-regulated strategy development in writing: Policy implications of an evidence-based practice. *Policy Insight from Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, vol. 3, pp. 77-84.

Hasanah, A., & Purnawan, A. (2016). Improving students' productive skills through Edmodo site in Grade XIA at SMA N 2 Yogyakarta in the academic year of 2015/2016. *English Language Teaching Journal*, *5*, 1–5.

Hedgecock, J., Lefkowitz, N. (1994). Feedback on feedback: Assessing learner receptivity in second language writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing,* pp. 141-163.

Hynland, K. (2003). *Second language writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ismail, N., Maulan, S., & Haniza, H. N. (2008). The impact of teacher feedback on ESL students' writing performance. *Academic Journal of Social Studies*, *8*(June 2008), 45–58.

Liu, X., & Zhou, C. (2018). The effect of online feedback types on foreign language writing. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, *8*(7), 733–741.

Lu, J., & Law, N. (2012). Online peer assessment: effects of cognitive and affective feedback. *Instructional Science*, *40*, 257–275. https://doi.org/10.1007/s11251-011-9177-2

Noviana, O., Rufinus, A., and Bunae, E. (2015). The effectiveness use of Edmodo in writing a narrative text in senior high school. *Journal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*, vol. 4, pp. 3-16.

Parthasarathy, R. (2014). Peer feedback in the ESL writing classroom. *A Journal of Teaching English Language and Literature*, (29).

Popta, E. Van, Kral, M., Camp, G., Martens, R. L., & Simons, P. R. (2016). Exploring the value of peer feedback in online learning for the provider. *Educational Research Review*, *20*, 24–34.

Saito, H., & Fujita, T. (2004). Characteristics and user acceptance of peer rating in EFL writing classroom. *Language Teaching Research*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp.31-54.

Salleh, S. M., & Stappa, S. H. (2004). Refine ideas and correct grammar: the value of revision in ESL writing. *ELT Matters 1: Issues in English Language Learning and Teaching*, pp. 313-323.

Thi, N., & Thao, T. (2017). Teachers' corrective feedback on english students' writing. *European Journal of English Language Teaching*,

2(1), 177–197. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.437760

Vengadasamy, R. (2002). Responding to students writing: motivate, not critise. *GEMA Online Journal of Language Studies*, vo. 2, no.1, pp. 140-149.

Wen, Y. (2013). Teacher written feedback on L2 student writings. *Journal of Language Teaching and Research*, *4*(2), 427–431. https://doi.org/10.4304/jltr.4.2.427-431

Zainuddin, M. (2004). The effect of giving feedback to the students' writing. *TEFLIN Journal*, vol. 15, pp.117-128.

Zareil, A. A., & Rahnama, M. (2013). The effect of written corrective feedback modes on EFL learners' grammatical and lexical writing accuracy: from perceptions to facts. *International Journal on Studies in English Language and Literature*, vol. 1, pp. 1-14.