

# Advantages and Disadvantages of Peer Feedback on EFL Students Essay Writing at Tertiary Level

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## ABSTRACT

Peer feedback is an important learning strategy in essay writing. The objective of this study was to describe the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback. The subject of this study were twenty-five essay-writing students in third semester. The instruments to collect data, were observation, open-ended questionnaire, and interview. All the data were analysed qualitatively. The findings of this study revealed that the advantages of peer feedback covered cognitive, affective, and psychomotor aspects. On the other hand, the disadvantages of peer feedback were the students not confidence in giving feedback, they were dissatisfied and distrust with their friends' feedback, and also felt not confident with their own work. As a result, these findings confirm the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback for EFL writing students.

**Keywords:** peer feedback, essay writing, EFL learners

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Writing is a process of transforming ideas to paper or readable form. In other words, writing is a process of putting thoughts into words and sentences. Since writing is process of expressing ideas, thought, feelings, and arguments, so it is not an easy skill [1].

Toba et.al [2] have conducted research about the current issues of Indonesian EFL students' writing skills in writing comparison and contrast essay. The finding of the research showed that some of EFL students have encountered problems in writing aspects such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. The other research was from Muamaroh et.al [3], who explained that the problem of students English writing covered content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic. It can be shown that writing is difficult even for English students since they still find the problems in writing. According to Mastan & Maarof [4], writing is a difficult skill to learn by the students. To help them to know their mistakes, the teacher should give feedback to their writing. It means that to improve the students' writing skill, the teacher may employ feedback in the teaching-learning process. Because by doing the feedback, it can decrease students' mistakes in writing.

Feedback is an activity, which is purposed to correct others' writing work. This statement is in

line with research from Kusumaningrum [5], who described that feedback is an important part in writing process since it can lead the students have better writing skill. In addition, Kurniawati [6] defined that there were two types of feedback, namely peer feedback and teacher feedback. Peer feedback means that the feedback given is from their peer who are in the same age and education. While, teacher feedback is feedback that given by the teacher by conferencing or collective. In line with this idea, Nguyen [7] underlined peer feedback as an activity that can be used by teacher in stimulating students' participation in writing, which also has the beneficial in improving student's writing skill.

Nowadays, because of pandemic covid 19, the teaching-learning process is online using some digital platforms. Before online class, the feedback is done directly face-to-face in the classroom. For instance, in doing the peer feedback, students are asked to exchange their work to others, they give feedback to the work, and after giving the feedback, they must give the work back to the owner. Different from offline class, practicing peer feedback in online class can be done by some digital platforms. It is supported with research from Saeed et.al [8] who found that in Malaysia, Facebook, one of digital platforms is an interactive learning environment that facilitate students in doing peer feedback on writing class.

Studies on peer feedback in writing have been conducted in Indonesia and other countries. Abri [9] conducted a study that tried out to explore the EFL learners' comments on web-based peer feedback among 50 undergraduate student at an Oman university. The study revealed that the students more active and motivated in providing comment synchronously than asynchronously and they improved their grammar range and accuracy in writing essay than content and organization. Nugroho [10] conducted a pre-test-post-test design among 35 students in senior high school students in Indonesia to investigate whether peer feedback effected the students' writing quality in writing a narrative text. The finding of the study stated that peer feedback had significant impact on students' writing quality. Then, Kurniawati [6] conducted a study to investigate an Indonesian students' perceptions and challenges on peer feedback. The results of the study concluded that Indonesian gave positive perceptions toward peer feedback implementation since it helped them to improve their writing' performance. Also Latifi et.al [11] found that students in Kharazmi who were in the scripted online peer feedback condition outperform the unscripted and guided conditions in terms of argumentative essay writing, argumentative feedback quality, and domain-specific knowledge acquisition. Bolourchi & Soleimani [12] carried out a comparative study that implicated an experimental group and a control group in investigating the students' writing performance and writing anxiety. The study revealed that peer feedback increased the students' writing performance and reduced their writing anxiety. However, the experimental group outperformed the control group.

Furthermore, Noorozi et.al [13] discovered that female students in an Iranian university provided higher-quality argumentative feedback than male students. Lasminiar [14] revealed that in Malang, the implementation teacher and peer feedback improved the students' ability in writing. Saptanno & Souisa [15] conducted a study to explore the implementation of peer feedback and the students' perception of peer feedback. The study revealed that the peer feedback was not properly applied, because the students only focused on the local revision, such as grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Besides that, an Indonesian students had negative perspective on peer feedback.

In addition, based on research conducted by Kuyyogsuy [16], it found that in Thailand, peer feedback was a beneficial experience for social interaction, as it helped people understand the writing process, develop affective strategies, and support critical thinking. According to Fithriani [17], in Indonesia, written feedback has been found to help students improve their writing quality and skill, encourage critical reasoning, and encourage learners' autonomy. Herwiana [18] conducted a study to investigate the strengths and weaknesses of peer feedback on students' writing and reading classroom at an Indonesian university. The study found that the strengths of peer feedback were the students could share ideas, it also help the students to improve their grammar and vocabulary and build their self-confident. While, the weakness of peer feedback was it may not give an effect on the students' ability if the students were not mastering English. It is also supported research from Pham et.al [19] who described that Vietnamese improved their quality of global and local writing aspects with electronic peer feedback.

Bijami et.al [20] conducted a research in exploring advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback in learning English writing. Their study revealed that the advantages of peer feedback improved the students' knowledge through giving opportunities to think critically and improved the students' autonomy. While, the disadvantages was the students only focused on their product than the process of writing. In addition, Carless [21] described that students and teacher in Hong Kong perceived the lack of peer feedback. They believed that teachers' feedback was more useful than peer feedback.

Therefore, to get more information in detail, the researchers conducted a research about the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback.

## **2. METHODS**

This study took place at the Department of English Education in one of the universities in Central Java. The participants were twenty-five students who took essay writing in the third semester which consist of twenty females and five males with average of their age were 18 to 20 years old. The instruments to collect the data, were observation, open-ended questionnaire, and interview. The data were collected online since it is

still in pandemic Covid-19. Classroom observation was done in order to get information around the process of peer feedback in essay writing. The open-ended questionnaire was distributed to the students at the end of the meeting using Google Form to find out the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback. All the items in questionnaire had been tried out for the students who were not included in this study to know students' understanding of the items. While, the online interview done outside of the classroom to get the data about the advantages and disadvantages of peer feedback. The open-ended questionnaire and interview used Indonesia to get more detail data. All the data from interview were transcribed and translated into English for the purpose of data analysis in the finding. All the data were analysed qualitatively.

### 3. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Based on the online class observations using Google Meet synchronously, it was found that seventeen out of twenty-three students gave feedback on local aspects only such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, while six others gave feedback on global aspects such as content, organization, ideas, and style. It might be because the students had not experiences in giving feedback on their friends' essay writing and they had not yet given the explanation about peer feedback. In the next meeting, teacher gave explaining about peer feedback, and the result was the students had focused giving feedback on global aspects.

The process of peer feedback gave advantages and disadvantages for students in improving their essay writing. The followings are the detail results of the study.

#### 3.1 The Advantages of Peer Feedback

Based on the open-ended questionnaires, it was found that the advantage of peer feedback covers cognitive, affective, and psychomotor.

##### 3.1.1 Cognitive Aspect

Based on the open-ended questionnaire, it was found that students knew what were incorrect and they learned from their mistakes in writing essay. They understood the mistakes that they made such as in using grammar and punctuation, and creating sentence building clearly.

*Peer feedback makes me aware more about my mistakes, such as I know how to write sentences clearly, how to avoid using words or phrases several times, and how to write essay interestingly. (SF15)*

*I can identify the mistakes that I made in writing and improve my writing (SF1)*

This finding is also supported from the results of interview as following:

*"Because peer feedback help me to know what the mistakes that I made and I learn to write an essay better". (SM2)*

*"For the advantage, it makes us know which the incorrect sentences that we made, so we can correct them". (SF16)*

*"I am happy mom, because I can know which sentences are wrong, then I can correct them". (SF14)*

*"Sure, there is a progress mom. After getting feedback, now I can correct the mistake that I made". (SF10)*

*"In this essay, maybe I get a little bit information about the correct grammar which is used in essay writing". (SM1)*

##### 3.1.2 Affective Aspect

Based on questionnaires, peer feedback could improve their affective aspect such as feeling of confident with their essay, it was also challenging for them, they felt happy with it, and they were more careful in writing an essay.

*Peer feedback increases my confidence in writing essay. (SM2)*

*Peer feedback makes me more careful in writing, so that I can minimize errors in writing. (SF6)*

*Peer feedback makes us learn to be more careful in writing. (SF17)*

*Peer feedback is very challenging for me. (SF19)*

It is supported the result of the interview below:

*"In the first time, I was not careful in writing mom, such as the use of punctuation, capitalization, and etc, but now, after doing peer feedback, I am more careful in writing mom". (SF9)*

*"My feeling when I get feedback from friends is happy. Because with peer feedback, I get correction for my mistakes,*

*and this allows me to learn even more". (SM4)*

### 3.1.3 Psychomotor Aspect

Based on the result of open-ended questionnaire, peer feedback could help the students in improving their writing skill since they got the comment to make their work be better than before. It also made the students understand more about how to make correct essay.

*Peer feedback makes me understand more about how to make a correct essay. (SF20)*

*The advantage of peer feedback is, it can help me to improve my writing skill. (SM1)*

*The advantage of peer feedback is, of course, it improves knowledge and skills in essay writing. (SF15)*

This finding is supported by the interview as following:

*"Yes, I tend to write many ideas in one paragraph. After getting feedback, I have corrected it, so I will not repeat the same mistakes. I also can write good conclusion paragraph". (SM2)*

*"After doing peer feedback, I can make a thesis statement correctly. So it helps me to know what I will write systematically". (SF8)*

Besides peer feedback give advantages, it also has disadvantages as the following.

## 3.2 Disadvantages of Peer Feedback

### 3.2.1 Not confidence in giving feedback

Based on the results of questionnaires, it is found that students were not confident in giving feedback for their friends. They were afraid whether their feedback was right and acceptable or not. They also unsure what kind of comments should give to their peers since they still did not understand the material. Because of this feeling, they were not able to give feedback on their peers' work maximally.

*On the other hand, the drawback is may be less willing to share our opinions on the essay since we are still afraid on 'is what we corrected correct and the feedback we have given correct?'. (SF15)*

It is also supported from the interview as following:

*"When my work is corrected, I am happy mom, but when I corrected my peers' work, I am not confident because I am afraid that I am wrong, I am afraid that when I corrected, it turns out that I am wrong". (SF1)*

*"Yes, the shortcomings maybe if we do not understand the material, it will be difficult for us to give feedback". (SM3)*

*"The disadvantages are same as SM3, if I do not understand the material, so I am still confused in giving feedback, I am afraid if I give the feedback it is still wrong, mom". (SF16)*

### 3.2.2 The students were dissatisfied and distrust with their friends' feedback

Based on the questionnaires, the students did not satisfy if their peer gave feedback for their essay. They believed that their peers were not doing best in giving feedback. They also perceived that feedback was given by their peers was a bit unclear explanation and sometimes it made the students felt doubt whether their work was really incorrect or not.

*I am not satisfied if my work is corrected by a friend, because I feel that the feedback given is not optimal and they are not doing at their best. (SF8)*

*In my opinion, the drawback of peer feedback is that the feedback given by friends is sometimes unclear and a little confusing, so I do not understand what the feedback is. (SF9)*

*When I get feedback from friends, sometimes, I doubt with their feedback whether it is correct or not, and it makes me not believe in it (SF13)*

### 3.2.3 Students felt not confident with their own work

Peer feedback made the students feel not confident with their own work. After getting feedback and getting many comments from their peers, they felt that their essay was not good. Therefore, they are afraid of writing essay in English. It is based on result of questionnaire below:

*After getting peer feedback, I feel not confidence with my own work. (SF16)*

The finding of this research revealed that the advantages of peer feedback covered in three aspect, namely, cognitive, affective, and

psychomotor. This finding is in line with the theoretical discovery from Harutyunyan & Poveda [22] that the advantages of peer feedback include in three things: critical thinking, collaborative work, and composition.

The cognitive aspect means that students knew what were incorrect and they learned from their mistakes in writing essay. They also understood the mistakes that they made such as in using grammar and punctuation, and creating sentence building clearly. In line with this idea, Herwiana [18] described that peer feedback help students to improve their grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, Kurniawati [6] explained that the EFL students in Indonesia perceived that the implementation of peer feedback could raise awareness of students' writing performance.

The affective aspect is related to students' feelings towards peer feedback. After doing peer feedback, they were happy, they also felt challenged, and they were more confident in their essay writing [18]. This finding in line with research from Kuyyogsuy [16] that in Thailand, peer feedback was a worthwhile experience for social interaction, and provided them with perceiving the writing process, developing affective strategies, supporting critical thinking skill. Liu et.al [23] found that doctoral students in China increased their writing self-efficacy and proactive help-seeking by peer feedback.

The psychomotor aspect means that peer feedback could improve the students' writing skill since they got the comment to make their work be better than before. It was supported by Tusino [24] who found that peer feedback was an effective strategy in improving students' essay writing skill. Besides that, peer feedback also made the students understand more about how to make correct essay ([17]; [5]; [10]). Pham et.al [19] who explained that written feedback can help Vietnamese students to improve their writing quality and skill, encouraging them in critical reasoning, and promoting learner autonomy. Wahyudin [25] described that students in Indonesia perceived online peer feedback using Facebook as an effective media in improving students' writing performance.

Furthermore, this finding of advantages of peer feedback has a different with research from Astrid et.al [26] who described that peer feedback through asynchronous online interaction gave more beneficial than synchronously online interaction.

On the other hand, the finding of this study showed that peer feedback has its drawbacks. The disadvantages of peer feedback were students not confidence in giving feedback, they dissatisfied and distrust with their friends' feedback, and they also felt not confident with their own work.

This finding was supported by Tahir [27] who described that the students at Malaysia university were less confident in giving feedback to their friends. In addition, Eksi [28] in Turkey and Carless [21] in Hong Kong found that the students were dissatisfied with the peer feedback.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The researchers found that the implementation of peer feedback is properly applied. Because the students gave feedback not only in local aspects such as grammar, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization, but also in global aspects such as content, organization, ideas, and style.

Furthermore, in this study found that peer feedback has an advantages and disadvantages in the writing. The advantages of peer feedback covered in three aspects, namely cognitive, affective, and psychomotor. While, the disadvantages of peer feedback were the lack of students' self-confidence in giving and receiving feedback. They were also dissatisfied and distrust with their friends' feedback.

This confirms that regardless of the drawbacks, peer feedback is one of strategies which can help the students in improving their writing performance. It is suggested that English teachers use peer feedback as one of activities in the teaching of writing.

#### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTION**

USP wrote the manuscript, provided data observation and open-ended questionnaires, and conducted analysis. MM conducted the patient interviews and review the final manuscript.

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