

Improving Students' Writing Ability through Written Feedback at MA Ma'arif NU Kencong in the 2015-2016 Academic Year

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Abstract

This research was conducted to solve the problem face by second language learners (L2) especially in writing, since it has been a big problem which puts students into trouble as shown by errors made in both the organizing of the composition and the language, so students cannot write topics of their writing correctly. Therefore, the problem is "Can the implementation of Written Feedback significantly improve the tenth grade students' writing ability at MA Ma'arif NU Kencong in the 2015-2015 Academic Year?", and the objective of this research referring to the research problem is "To Find out Whether Written Feedback Can improve the Tenth Grade Students' Writing Ability at MA Ma'arif NU Kencong in the 2015-2015 Academic Year".

This research was done in a cycle using CAR (Classroom Action Research). The data was taken from observation and test, and the data was analyzed using formula $M = \frac{\sum x}{N}$.

The Written feedback improve the students' writing ability both the score and the active participation by giving valuable feedback in the form of symbols and abbreviations, then they can independently revise their writing from the feedback given by the teacher. It could help to remind the students' errors that had been made when they were writing. It was proven from the students' mean score in test, their mean score improved from 61.09 in the writing assignment to 76.12 in the test. In other hand, the percentage of the students' active participation improved from 45.16% in the first meeting to 70.96% in the second meeting.

Keywords: Writing ability, Written feedback, Symbol and abbreviation

I. Introduction

Writing is one of the most powerful communication tools we use today in our life. It is a process of transforming thoughts and ideas into written form. Writing skill is complex and difficult to teach, many students think that writing is complicated to be learnt. Therefore, it makes the assumption that writing may be considered as the most difficult among the language skills. Consequently, writing has become a big problem which put students into trouble as shown by errors made in both arranging the sentence structure and composing the language, thus students cannot write topics of their writing correctly, especially for second language or foreign language learner. During writing, they should firstly consider many things before putting their ideas into written text. Hyland (2003: 3) stated that learning to write in a foreign or second language mainly involves linguistic knowledge and the vocabulary choices, syntactic patterns, and cohesive devices that comprise the essential building blocks of texts.

Based on the preliminary study and observation at MA Ma'arif NU Kencong, it was found that the tenth grade student of MA Ma'arif NU Kencong had fair to poor writing abilities. It was proven that the mean writing score which was got by the students was 60 in which the minimum score for writing achievement set by the school is 70. This score was based on pre-test and

observation which was conducted for the tenth grade student of MA Ma'arif NU Kencong in March 22nd, 2016. Based on the errors made by the students, it can be seen that their problem was still classical, they still lack in sentence structure including grammar, mechanic, vocabulary and organization.

As the result of the preliminary study above, the researcher decided to use written feedback to improve students' writing ability. Feedback purposes to give valuable response in form of symbols and abbreviations to students' written product which has some or many errors. Ur (1991: 242) defines feedback as information that is given to the learners about their performance of the learning task, usually with the objective of improving their performance. Regarding on the students problems were still rely on grammar, mechanic, vocabulary, and organization, therefore the researcher assumes that written feedback can improve students' writing ability by giving appropriate symbols and abbreviations on their grammatical, mechanical, vocabulary, and organization errors then they will analyze and revise it by themselves. Therefore, they will be able to remember their errors and do not make the same error in the future writing. It can help to improve and remind their self-efficacy in writing as well. According to Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) there are two forms dealing with errors correction, direct and indirect correction. Direct correction is as a correction that not only calls attention to the error but also provides a specific solution to the problem (Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005). Meanwhile, indirect correction defined as indicating an error through circling, underlining, highlighting, or otherwise marking it at its location in a text, with or without a verbal rule reminder or an error code, and asking students to make corrections themselves (Ferris, 2012: 93).

In this research the researcher used indirect correction with symbols and abbreviations to give feedback to the students. The reason why the researcher uses indirect feedback with symbols and abbreviations, because it will forces the student to be more reflective and analytical on their error simply than just editing from the teachers' direct comments. Ferris (2012: 94) said that indirect feedback, especially if it is paired with required revision and/or analysis or reflection activities, it has greater potential to help students grow in autonomy in monitoring their own writing.

¶: start a new paragraph with indentation
sp.: spelling error
cap.: error in capitalization
p.: error in punctuation
v.: error in verb form or tense
↔: change the word order (“She lost her ~~key~~ car.”)
vocab.: wrong choice of word (~~remind~~ for **remember**)
form: wrong word form (~~efficient~~ for **efficiency**)
^: missing letter or word (“He [^]tall.”)
gr.: grammar error (“He [^]have gone.”)
SB: problem with sentence boundary: fragment or run-on sentence (“Because it was raining.”)
SS: error in sentence structure (“He wants that I go.”)

Figure 1. The example of symbols and abbreviations, taken from Raimes (1983: 152)

Related to the background and the preliminary study, the problem of the research is formulated as follows: “Can the implementation of Written Feedback significantly improve students’ writing ability?”, and the objective of this research referring to the research problem is “To find out whether written feedback can improve the tenth grade students’ writing ability at MA Ma’arif NU Kencong in the 2015-2015 academic year”.

II. Method

Based on the result of preliminary study which was done by the researcher, the researcher chooses Classroom Action Research to overcome the writing problem that arose in the class. Classroom Action Research itself is a research conducted by teacher to an activity that is intentionally planned, applied in a class and accurately observed the result (Arikunto, 2013: 130). Moreover, the design of the research which was research design which is explained by Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988: 68 in Arikunto 2013: 137), the actions of the research are implemented in four stages, they are planning, implementation, observation, and reflection.

In order to obtain the primary data, the instruments used were test and observation checklist. The test was used to measure the students’ writing achievement. A test is a set of questions, exercises or other instruments which are used to measure skill, knowledge, intelligence owned by the individual person or groups (Arikunto, 2013: 193). According to Hughes (1996: 9) there are four types of test, namely proficiency test, achievement test, diagnostic test, and placement test. However, in this research, the researcher used achievement test to measure the tenth grade students’ writing achievement after they are taught writing descriptive text by giving written feedback to the students’ writing. In order to make sure the reliability of the instrument,

the test was tried out in other class, after calculating the try out using alpha formula, it was found that the reliability of the test was 0.62.

Finally, the primary data would be analyzed by using mean score as contrast with criteria of success determined in this research was ≥ 70 .

III. Result and Discussion

After implementing a cycle in the research, it can be seen that their writing has significantly improved. The mean score shown the improvement compared to the assignment score, the mean score significantly had improved from 61.09 to 76.12. Meanwhile, the students' active participant improved from 45.16% in the first meeting to 70.96% in the second meeting.

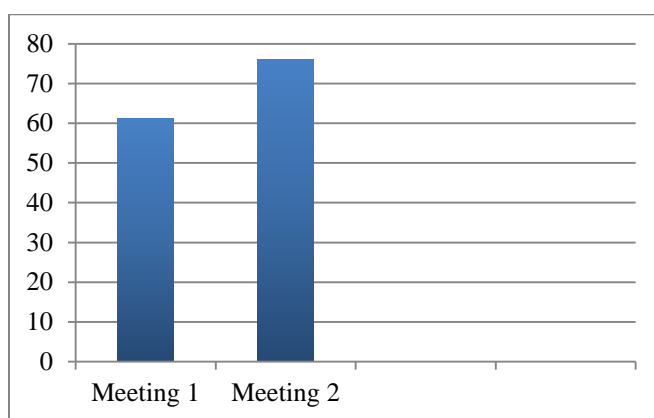


Figure 2. The students mean score improvement

Based on the students' writing assignment and test, it was found that they still had many errors in constructing sentence structure including the use of grammar, the use of pronoun, word misspelling, and mechanics.

Grammar	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of pronoun (he, his, or him) • The use of compound adjectives • Possessive errors (have or has) • The use of verbs in present tense (singular or plural)
Vocabulary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Vocabulary miss-use (huge or large, small or tiny, good, kind or nice)
Mechanics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Punctuation • Capitalization

Table 1. Common errors which were made by the students

Form the errors made by the students, then the researcher gave indirect written feedback in the form of symbols and abbreviations to the errors. By getting indirect feedback from the teacher, the students rethink the errors that have been made by them, and then they were able to identify their weaknesses and revise by themselves based on the feedback given. Thus, they will write more carefully in the future writing, and those reasons the students' writing improves significantly. Ferris (2012: 94) said that indirect feedback, especially if it is paired with required revision and/or analysis or reflection activities, it has greater potential to help students grow in autonomy in monitoring their own writing. In addition, Keh (1990: 294) says that feedback has the function as an input from the reader to the writer with the effect of providing information to the reader as a revision. This feedback-revision process helps the students remember their previous weaknesses and errors in their future writing to not make errors as their previous writing. However, the students see the teachers' feedback as crucial thing to improve their writing. It is similarly stated by Hyland (2003: 178), he states that many students see their teacher's feedback as crucial to their improvement as a writer.

IV. Conclusion

This research conducted to see whether giving indirect written feedback in the form of symbols and abbreviations to the students influenced and improved their ability in writing or not. Based on the result and discussion which has been clearly explained previously, it can be concluded that the use of written feedback can improve the tenth grade students' writing ability at MA Ma'arif NU Kencong in the 2015-2016 academic year by giving valuable indirect written feedback in the form of symbols and abbreviations to their errors such as grammatical, vocabulary, and mechanics errors for then conducting self-revision. The process from giving indirect written feedback, revision, and evaluation help the students remember their previous weaknesses and errors in their future writing. This result showed the improvement of sentence structure that leads to the writing quality which can be proved from the score of the student test. The score increased from 61.09 to 76.12 after written feedback was applied to the students.

V. References

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