



## APPLYING PEER FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING IN EFL CLASSROOM: A CLASSROOM ACTION RESEARCH AT ONE OF ISLAMIC SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN JAMBI

Khusnul Yatima  
*yatimakhusnul@yahoo.co.id*  
STIES Al-Mujaddid

Yulia Wiji Astika  
*yuliawijiastika@gmail.com*  
STIA Setih Setio

Sri Kadarsih  
*srikadarsih1@gmail.com*  
STIES Al-Mujaddid

**ABSTRACT:** This study deals with a classroom action research investigating teaching descriptive writing through peer feedback in EFL classroom at one of Islamic Senior High School in Jambi. Eleven male students were involved in this research. By doing field note, observation checklist, writing task, and documentation data were collected and analyzed descriptively. The findings indicated that peer feedback could improve students' descriptive writing seeing that the students were able to work collaboratively with the peer in giving either suggestion or advise during the discussion. As a result, applying peer feedback while teaching descriptive writing did not only provide students basic material for editing or revising, but also stimulate their imaginative power enabling them to have a concept in their mind about what they are going to write. Implications from this research evidently suggest that teachers should have a variety of teaching strategy in teaching English as a Foreign Language.

**Keywords:** *Peer Feedback, Descriptive Writing*

### Introduction

In recent years, peer feedback has been investigated by some researchers as one of the significant strategy affecting in teaching learning process proposed by Miao, Badger, Zhen, (2006); Gielen, Peeters, Dochy, Onghena, and Struyven, (2010); janssen Fernandes, (2012); Mubarro, (2012); Bijami, Kashef, Nejad, (2013); Rahmat, (2013). Giving feedback to peers will help students reconstructing the knowledge because they could share and exchange their opinion with peers. Juwah (2004) described in a recent study by Rahmat (2013) argues that peer feedback can potentially improve the students' learning process. In this case, there were some effects after applying peer feedback in class. First, Students' behaviors were changed, like; they became unselfish seeing from they had self awareness in giving and accepting of suggestion from their friends. Second, learning by peer feedback gave students more opportunity to work as a unit instead of working alone. Third, by sharing opinion with peers, students' confidence increased significantly. Fourth, peer feedback helped students to take more responsibilities in learning process.

According to Harmer (2001) there are two written feedback techniques in giving each other feedback to make the writing become successfully; the first is *Responding*: it is designed to response of each student feedback and to see how peer feedback could improve during subsequent draft instead of assessing what they have been studied by



giving them mark. The teacher has to consider the level of what they are going to evaluate before giving response to each other students. The second is *Coding*: to make the notes neater, students can give codes or symbols in the body of writing itself rather than only scribble on to their whole draft. The correction can be in such kind of issues like word order, spelling, verb tense and etc. Students can use a particular or a specific symbol to make their peers easier in correcting the mistakes. Students have truly understood about the draft. Teacher can tell the focus of correction like first, students only focus on verb tense rules then for the next. They will focus on word order and the last they move into spelling. Clark (2008) said that there are two categories in dividing the feedback; suggestions for global revision which is consisted of thesis or point, structure or organization, and development or evidence. While local revision related with diction, syntax, grammatical structure, punctuation and spelling.

The writer in this research became as a teacher whom handling every single activity in class. Students were asked to make descriptive writing before applying the feedback. Writing skill was chosen for this research because by writing Students can share their idea, feeling or anything that exist on their mind. While writing, students have more time to think in dept rather than when they do the oral activities. Students could consult to the teacher, dictionaries, grammar books, or other references material in which can help them to finish their writing activity. Writing also meant as a process that should be learned by stages where it is started from the simple to complex, and from a sentence to a composition.

The observation was done on July, 26<sup>th</sup> and August, 25<sup>th</sup> 2016. It was in Al-Azhar Islamic Senior High School Sungai Kambang Jambi. An educational institution that still used *Kurikulum Tingkat Satuan Pendidikan (KTSP)* which refered to UU no. 20, 2003 in (Mulyana, 2007). The curriculum was designed for every school which could develop their own teaching and learning materials. Teachers also had an autonomy in developing their own methods, strategies and teaching techniques to increase students' competencies. The students' competencies will be achieved whe the school fulfilled of all those factors. The observation showed from both the students and the teacher during learning activity in the classroom like students only sat and listened to the teacher's explanation only few chances for students of giving responses or feedback related to the material. There was almost no group work in the classroom. Where as known that group work can give an opportunity to each student sharing their ideas, knowledge, and also experiences. While students doing writing activity, the writer found the inappropriate vocabulary, incoherence of sentence structures, incorrect of spelling, unable of constracting their own sentences, and often missed the period and comma. The teacher also did not implement various strategies which could build students' attention and foster the students' writing abilities.

From all the sources, the writer tried to implement peer feedback technique in her research hopefully can stimulate of each student in giving honesty about their peer work. Students can give and receive any questions about anything related to the discussion topic which they still curious about their peer's work. The benefit of this strategy also the students are able to work collaboratively with peer including critiquing, providing to each other feedback and improving of writing competence itself. Beside that, the students felt more enthusiastic and more interesting of learning english when the materials had correlations to the students' real life as a reason to make easier for students visualizing the material. They had big desire to write in details about thing, person, animal or other when they got an illustration of it. It meant that, when the teacher added the details about something or anything clearer, it would make the students easier to imagine what exactly the thing looked like.



## Method

This study was a classroom action research. Where as known that action research is the study of the way teacher explores the teaching approach in the classroom by reflecting directly to the participant which consist of planning, action, observation and reflection for every cycle Burns (2010). There were two main reasons for doing this action research collaboratively. The first one was to find out a clear description about the technique of teaching writing descriptive using peer feedback to the tenth grades students of Al-Azhar Islamic Senior High School Jambi. The second was the writer wanted to involve in the research process from the beginning until the end of the action.

The subjects were taken from the tenth grade students of Al-Azhar Islamic senior high school Jambi which were consisted 11 male students. This research held into three cycles. Each cycle consisted two up to three meetings. Every meeting had four phases. They are planning, action, observation and reflection according to (Kemmis and Mc Taggart's 2010). The research started from November 03 up to November 25, 2016. It was conducted twice a week. Those were on Thursday at 08.50 up to 10.10 a.m. and on Friday at 09.30 up to 10.50 a.m. which had 2X40 minutes in every meeting. The writer was as a teacher who taught in classroom applying peer feedback and the english teacher was as a collaborator who evaluated the writer's teaching process. During implementing this peer feedback technique, the writer and the collaborator shared experiences, learnt each other and worked together to solve the teaching learning problems in class.

The writer also prepared the teaching tools such as; syllabus, lesson plan, students' text book, attendance list, camera for documenting the classroom activity, observation checklist, field note, writing task and an evaluation sheet. Syllabus and lesson plan were designed as guidelines of the teaching learning process. Students' text book was prepared to know the topic discussion of their grade. Camera was designed as a tool to document every single students' activity in the classroom. Observation checklist, field note and writing task were designed as the instruments to determine the significances of the strategy that had been applied by the writer. The writer gathered through multiple data sources. The primary data which collected or observed directly from the first-hand experience or it could be said the person or the subject who was a part of the study and the secondary data was from another person's view.

The writer analysed the data by selecting, simplifying, focusing, abstracting and organizing the data according to the aim of this study. The data analysis is developed by Miles and Huberman (1994) in Creswell. Basically, data analysis are done through three stages namely; *reduction of data*. This data begun by analyzing the whole data which collected during the research from observation checklist, field note, writing task and documentation. Those steps are concerned with selection. So, the writer more focused on the process of selecting the level of relevance and connection with each group of data during the process of the research. *Data display*. Collecting information which enable the writer to make the conclusion. *Conclusion*. The data is reduced and displayed to make the conclusion.



## Results

The writer whom acted as a teacher planned all the action of each cycle by preparing all instruments. The instruments were designed to determine the significances of the strategy that has been applied by the writer. This reseach result took from field note, observation checklist and writing task in every cycle;

### 1. Cycle one

The students did in cycle one were; the first meeting of cycle one, the writer gave twenty questions about self identity. The students were asked to answer the questions based on the real information then continued for making descriptive writing from it. Then, in the second meeting was implementing peer feedback strategy. The writer divided students into groups and asked them to discuss with their partner. The last meeting was evaluation discussing about the common mistakes that students faced in cycle one.

The obstacles while teaching and learning process of cycle one were written on teacher's field notes like; classroom situation and classroom atmosphere were not good enough. It can be seen from the writer's and the collaborator's notes. Some students still chatted with their friends while the lesson just started. The students were still shy with the writer. The writer language was hard to understand. The writer still focused only for few students not to all students. The students were getting bored, so they disturbed their friend who had not done doing the task yet.

The observation checklist had four qualifications that should be revealed while the learning process still on going. Those were started from very good, good, fair and poor. The percentage of students' response from the first, the second and the third meeting of cycle one were not satisfied because some weaknesses still found at this cycle; for example the classroom management was not too good, the instruction was not easy to understand and the students had low motivation of studying english.

From writing task showed that the students' score was still under the criteria standard minimum because not more than 75% of students could pass the KKM. The students' score average for the first meeting of cycle one was 67, the second meeting was 64, and the third meeting was 72. If it is compared with the criteria of school standard from the first up to the third meeting was not fulfilled the KKM. It meant the writer needed to revise and evaluate again then planned for the next meeting. The low score students were affected by some questions which not understandable by the students.

Seeing from the three kinds of data sources above indicated that students' writing activity needed to be revised by reflecting of second cycle. The revision focused on ineffective activities during the teaching and learning process. Perhaps, the writer revision would be stated as follows; 1) students' attention and Classroom management needed to be enhanced to make students no longer monotonous and getting bored quickly while the learning process still on going. 2) While explaining the lesson, the writer had to mix the language either in Bahasa Indonesia or English. The purpose was students who had belonging to the low ability were easier to understand. 3) Prepared an interesting topic for students in order to make the students became more active while studying English. 4) The writer had to motivate the students not too shy expressing their idea. 5) The writer had more attractive and flexible to build communication with students. 6) the grammatical structures still used in inappropriate ways 7) showed students' mistakes in order to avoid the same mistakes in the future.



## 2. Cycle two

In cycle two, the writer focused on ineffective activities during the teaching and learning process of cycle one. Students' activity in this cycle was describing animal. A "Panda" was chosen as a topic description. Some vocabularies were given to students and instructed to find some difficult words in the dictionaries. After that, the students asked to describe into paragraph using those vocabularies. The next day, the writer divided the students into five groups and gave the previous task so they discussed it together. After they finished checking, they can rewrite the revision that had been corrected by their peers.

The result of cycle two showed that there were improvements in students' behaviours and students' writing activities in class even though sometimes they still repeated the same previous mistakes. The writer could overcome all those students' problems the writer like enhancing students' attention by giving motivation to students. The writer focused on to the whole students not just a view. Prepared an interesting topic in order to avoid students' bored.

From students' writing task, students sometimes chatted while the writer giving the instructor. Many students still hard to convey their opinion into English because they did not master some vocabularies. cycle would be; 1) Students' attention should be enhance by making a good communication to every student so the situation would be becoming relaxed. 2) Reminding the students to always bring the dictionaries in every meeting so they will not use their friends' dictionaries by turn and not wasted too much time. 3) making a good communication between students and students, and students and writer. 4) explained more about grammatical rules such as part of pronoun etc.

## 3. Cycle three

In this cycle, the writer showed an actor picture of "Muhammad Ali Syarif" which has given some simple information behind the picture. It was chosen because most of students liked him and he is multitalented young actor too. The students instructed to describe into paragraph the physical appearances of the actor. Then, the writer divided the students into groups and asked students to discuss and check their writing with peers. After that, they can rewrite the revision that had been corrected by their peers.

After conducting all actions from cycle one up to cycle three, the result of the research showed that the students could follow the whole activities in the classroom, their scores were improved. The students' situation had already actived doing discussion. None of students mocked each other. When the teacher asked them to check the result of his friend worksheet they could fix it. They could differ between object pronoun and subject pronoun, they could use plural and singular word. The students did not feel worried anymore.

Based on the implementation of this research, it could be concluded that the use of peer feedback strategy in teaching descriptive writing is very useful and effective to solve students' writing difficulties. The result showed that the learning process using this strategy not only improves students' descriptive writing but also students' response, behavior and their effectiveness during the learning process too.



## Discussion

From all the descriptions above, it can be reported that peer feedback has an important role in improving the ability of students both scientifically and mentally. From scientific approach; *first*, the students were able to describe an object in detail like in describing animals, they were able to mention the characteristics of the animal in terms of the color of the feathers, the shape of the body, the color of the eyes, the shape of the feet, and the live of the animal's itself. From those descriptions in line with the theory that has been proposed by Kane (2000) that description is part of a text which tells how the students able to describe about objects such as shape, sound, and tastes. Second, the students could also convey their idea without shy and afraid anymore. Third, the students were able to arrange the words into a sentence. Fourth, the students were able to distinguish the singular and plural forms. The last, the students' sentence structure began better so they could check and give simple correction to their peer. In the process of forming a group, the students paired not based on the same capability but formed based on a different level of intelligence in order to occur good communication and can give each other solutions. Eventhought emotional closeness is also an important factor in group selection process.

Viewed from a mental approach, the students were able to work well with their group, they had good self-confidence, students' interest and students' behavior were developed and they could motivate their friend too. This has similarity which has been done by Krashen (1983) in a recent study by Lin and Chien (2009) peer feedback itself is able to reduce students' anxiety from the motivation which given by teachers regularly. Peer feedback also provides an opportunity for students in giving opinions to their partners and more emphasis on giving advice, and identify where their friend may revise to clarify meaning rather than criticize it without any proper solution. Hammer (2001) added that peer feedback can improve cooperation among students in understanding the lesson itself because discussing will enrich the students' understanding of the material that has been taught by the teacher in the classroom.

The teacher implemented peer feedback technique as followed below; first, teacher explained the steps of writing procedure for every cycle. Each cycle provided some difference tasks. The tasks given before the students made a descriptive writing. Thus given was as brainstorming to students before writing begun. In the first cycle, the teacher gave 20 questions in which students might answer based on students' own self information. The next cycle, the students were asked to translate vocabulary into bahasa Indonesia and the last was giving an actor picture of Aliando Syarif so then the students describe about his physical appearance. Those tasks were given by considering to the level of their age, ability and looking from their text book. The next step was the students started writing descriptive paragraph. After they finished making descriptive writing, the teacher explained how to implement peer feedback. Then, divide students into five groups. Each group consisted of two students. After that, students instructed to read their friend writing task. After reading, they did discussion about their writing respectively by checking and correcting their peer works. At the end, they collected their work to the teacher.

Based on the observation checklist and the field note during the learning activity, the students were more active doing discussion from cycle to cycle like when the writer asked students to check of his friend worksheet they could fix it. Students were not embarrassed in asking the question anymore. The classroom situation and classroom atmosphere was controllable. The students were not chatted anymore while teacher



explaining the material. So they could concentrate and the classroom become conducive. The classroom management was better, because the teacher had more focused to the whole students not just few of them. The students were not getting bored so they would disturb their friend again. The students' improvement through descriptive writing was to the students writing achievement. The students were more focused in their writing task.

The writer also considering of students' successfulness indicators according to the reason below; first, the students had enthusiasm in learning process. Second, the classroom management was controllable. Third, the students could response from the teacher's questions. Fourth, the students involved in the discussion actively. Fifth, the students were brave to ask questions. Sixth, the students had improvement per meeting. Seventh, the students were able to write descriptive paragraph. Eighth, the students could check and give simple advise to their peers. Those considerations above were made based on the students' condition in the classroom. So it can be concluded that the strategy showed that peer feedback could develop / overcome students writing difficulties like after the implementation of this peer feedback strategy the students can minimize the mistakes, so common mistakes which usually did by them can be avoided.

## Conclusion

Peer feedback is used in writing classes of both first language and second language to provide students more opportunities to learn from each other. Peer feedback can be in form of corrections, opinions, suggestions, and ideas to each other. Applying this peer feedback technique in teaching descriptive writing was affected into some significant result during the teaching and learning process like it did not only improve students' descriptive writing but also enhance students' response, behaviour and students' effectiveness during the teaching and learning process.

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