

THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DETAILED FEEDBACK ON THE IMPROVEMENT OF STUDENTS' COMPOSITION

Utik Kuntariati, Malikhatul Lailiyah

University of Merdeka Malang

Adnyana.tareeutik@gmail.com, malikhatul.lailiyah@unmer.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This study was aimed at knowing whether the final product of composition which is given detailed feedback (error correction) performs better than of that given global feedback. The accessible population of the study was the whole second year students of English Department of Islamic University of Malang, academic year 2005/2006. The study used quasi-experimental, nonrandomized control group, pretest-posttest design. This was so because the experiment was conducted in classroom setting in which the classes had been organized into classes D and E. The result of the study revealed that there was no significant difference of the two groups – experimental and control group. The result showed that the two groups had the same ability in writing paragraph. From the result concluded that the final product of composition written by students which is given detailed feedback (error correction) perform the same as of those given global feedback.

Key words: *Detailed Feedback (error correction), Composition.*

Writing is a form of communication between the person who writes and the person who reads the text (Byrne; 1979). The writer must be able to produce a piece of writing with a specific target reader in mind. Therefore there are always a minimum of two people involved, the writer and the reader. Susilowati (2001) argued that the act of writing is an act of thinking and learning. As we write, we

also learn to think at least to deliver our ideas smoothly in order that others might come to our intended messages.

Good writing skills are essentials for everyone, especially for college students. College students must be able to write well to be successful in all academic disciplines. And it will give great benefits to professionals in the workforce when they possess effective writing ability.

It is known that writing, as a skill of output, is considered as the most difficult of the four basic language skills to acquire, neither for L1 or L2 learners. According to Richards and Renandya (2008) the difficulty lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also in translating these ideas into readable texts. Further, they stated that the skills involved in writing are highly complex; L2 writers have to pay attention to higher level skills of planning and organizing as well as lower level skills of spelling, punctuation, word choice, and so on. The difficulty becomes even more pronounced if their language proficiency is weak. Therefore, writing should play a more prominent role in classroom-based studies of second language acquisition.

Considering that writing is the most difficult skill for L2 learners to master, it is usual for them to make errors on composing written texts, because their L1 will definitely interfering in their L2. Richards (1974) points out that an error was the result of interference in the learning of a second language from the habits of the first language. However, making errors is a part of learning. Dulay, Burt, and Krashen (1982; 138) argued that people cannot learn language without

first systematically committing errors, as a matter of fact making errors is a part of learning.

A large number of studies have shown the importance of corrective feedback in writing process. Fathman and Wally (1990) compared groups who received error feedback and those did not received feedback. They found out that the groups obtaining error feedback did much better in grammatical writing than those who did not received feedback. Further, Chandler (2003) has found that students who received error feedback and are asked to act on those corrections are less likely to repeat those same errors in subsequent assignment.

Heaton (1989) explained that there are two types of feedback, analytical or detailed feedback and global feedback. In detailed feedback the teacher gives the correction on the error make by students analytically which covers language use, mechanical skills, treatment of content, stylistic skills, and judgment skills, (Heaton, 1989; 135) by underlining, circling and giving arrows sign which placed near errors in words and sentences. Whereas, global feedback is the impression of the teacher for any error exist in students' composition, such as: fair, good, poor, without giving any error sign.

The researchers believe that the teacher plays an important role in treating students' composition. They considered that the teacher as the 'expert' and 'evaluator' on students' writing. It means that feedback from the teacher is crucial comparing with other kind of feedback, for example peer feedback. That's why the researchers are interested in analyzing the errors in writing composition written by the college students of Islamic University of Malang at the second

semester. They compared students' composition which is analytically corrected with those that is globally corrected. The researchers eager to know whether the analytical feedback will be given to students' composition affect the quality of composition written by the second semester students of Islamic University of Malang.

The purpose of the present study is to determine the degree of effectiveness of detailed feedback on the improvement of composition written by the second semester students of Islamic University of Malang.

The null hypothesis (Ho) of the research may be formulated as follows: "The final product of composition written by the students at the second semester of Islamic University of Malang which is given detailed feedback performs the same as of those given global feedback".

METHOD

The study used quasi-experimental, nonrandomized control group, pretest-posttest design. This was so because the experiment was conducted in classroom setting in which the classes had already been organized into classes of D and E. of these two classes, class D was used as the experimental group and class E as the control group. Therefore, it was not possible for the researcher to assign subjects randomly to groups (Ary, Jacobs, and Razavieh, 1979). Since randomization was not possible, every effort had to be made to employ groups that were as equivalent as possible at the beginning of the study. Here, pretests on recognizing parts of

paragraph were used as the covariate on the analysis of the data. Hence, the final result (posttest score) would be used to determine whether or not the two different treatments (detailed and global feedback) given to the two groups – the experimental and the control group – differed significantly.

There were some variables in this study, namely; the independent variable, the dependent variable, and the control variable. The independent variable was the treatment given to the experimental group in the form of error correction. The dependent variable was the students' achievement after the treatment shown by the posttest scores. The control variable was the students' achievement prior to treatment shown by the pretest scores.

The target population of the study was the whole second year students of English Department of Islamic University of Malang, academic year 2005/2006. These second year students were selected as the population of the study under the consideration that at that time of the study the students were taking writing II course which provided them with the ability to write a paragraph. The total samples were 49 students who took Writing II course from class D and E, each of which having 23 students and 26 students respectively. To select one out of the two sample classes as the experimental group, a coin was flipped. And it turned out that class D was to be the experimental group.

This treatment given to the subjects (students) was in the form of providing error correction on students' composition. Therefore, each student was required to write and identify part of paragraph of his or her own in the first session of the experiment, the assignment of writing were given immediately after

the teaching and learning process in the classroom had been completed. The topics of these assignments which were emphasized on writing a paragraph are free. In the following session, however, the tasks of composing a paragraph were given in the form of homework assignments. In either case, the students were encouraged to use self-help resources such as their textbooks, dictionaries, and grammar books as they write.

In this study, the effective learning weeks were categorized into two periods of time. The first period was the weeks before the administration of midterm test (the first week up to the seventh week of the semester); and the second period was the weeks after the administration of the mid-term test until immediately before the administration of final test (the ninth week up to the fifteen week of the semester).

As far as the administration of the treatment of this study was concerned, the second period of the effective learning weeks (the ninth week up to the fifteenth week) was taken. This means that the experiment – i.e. the administration of error correction treatment – was started immediately after mid-term test and was ended before the period of final test. This was done under a certain circumstances.

In addition to this, the material and other facilities used by both groups were taken from the same source and based upon the same syllabus. The main textbook used for both groups in this study was “Introduction to Academic Writing” by Oshima (1988). And the objective of Writing II course was focused on providing the students with the ability to write paragraph. Oth groups were

taught within seven weeks or 7 sessions in the same time schedule since this course is 2 (two) credits course.

In treating the students' composition of the experimental group, especially the errors that might be found in their work, the researcher took the following steps (1) underlying incorrect orthographic and morphological forms; (2) circling an inappropriate word; (3) inserting an arrow [Λ] to indicate the missing word; (4) placing a question mark alongside a confusing phrase or structure; and/or (5) underlying a word and providing a written tip; (6) bracketing a misplaced word or phrase and indicating its proper place in a sentence; (7) crossing out a superfluous word; and (8) providing a correct form or structure of an incorrect word or phrase.

For the control group experienced the same teaching and learning process in that they used the same materials, got the same number and kind of composition assignment, and the same time allotment. What differed of the two groups was the treatment of their possible composition errors. In this case, the researchers applied the technique of treating the students' composition whereby she merely gave general comments and scores on the students' works. In other words, the experimenters neither show the presence nor the location of the students' error in their composition papers. The researchers only made their own notes on the students' most commonly and frequently errors and discussed in class.

The attempt at investigating the effectiveness of error correction technique employed in the teaching of composition reached after finishing the course (or treatment). However, since this study employed quasi-experimental, nonrandomized control group, pretest-posttest design, then the analysis of the

students' achievement of both experimental and control groups prior to the treatment was first of all employed. This was done to determine whether or not the students of experimental group had different achievement from those of the control group after the treatment.

The final result (posttest) of experimental group (class D) was compared with the final result (posttest) of control group (class E) with eliminating the influence of one extraneous variable as covariance. ANCOVA was implied in this research, since the design of the research was quasi-experimental without randomization. ANCOVA is combination between Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and correlation.

There are four steps analysis of ANCOVA. Step I is comparing dependent variable data with ANOVA to get the value of SS_t (sum of squares deviation of each scores from the grand mean), SS_w (sum of squares within groups), SS_b (sum of squares between groups), MS_w (mean squares within groups), and MS_b (mean squares between groups). Step II is correlation analysis between covariate variable data and dependent variable data to entire subject (r_t) and to each group (r_k). Step III is adjusting the value of SS_t , SS_w , SS_b , MS_w , and MS_b from ANOVA (step I) with outing the influence of covariate variable toward dependent variable. Step IV is hypothesis testing, if F value is lower than F critic ($F \text{ value} < F \text{ critic}$) H_0 is accepted, if F value is higher than f critic ($F \text{ value} > F \text{ critic}$) H_0 is rejected. $H_0 \rightarrow \mu_1 = \mu_2 = \mu_3 \dots$, $H_1 \rightarrow \mu_1 \neq \mu_2 \neq \mu_3 \dots$

The formulas of the steps are:

$$\text{Step I: 1) } SS_t = \sum x^2 - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{N}$$

$$2) SSb = \frac{(\sum x_1)^2}{n_1} + \frac{(\sum x_2)^2}{n_2} - \frac{(\sum x)^2}{N}$$

$$3) SSw = SS_t - SSb$$

$$4) MSb = \frac{SSb}{K-1}$$

$$5) MSW = \frac{SSw}{N-k}$$

$$\text{Step II: 1) } r_1 = \frac{\frac{\sum x_1 y_1 - \bar{x}_1 \bar{y}_1}{n_1}}{SX_1 SY_1} \quad \text{where; } SX_1 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x_1^2}{n_1} - \bar{x}_1^2}$$

$$SY_1 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum y_1^2}{n_1} - \bar{y}_1^2}$$

$$2) r_2 = \frac{\frac{\sum x_2 y_2 - \bar{x}_2 \bar{y}_2}{n_2}}{SX_2 SY_2} \quad \text{where; } SX_2 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x_2^2}{n_2} - \bar{x}_2^2}$$

$$SY_2 = \sqrt{\frac{\sum y_2^2}{n_2} - \bar{y}_2^2}$$

$$3) r_t = \frac{\frac{\sum xy - \bar{x}\bar{y}}{N}}{SX SY} \quad \text{where; } SX = \sqrt{\frac{\sum x^2}{N} - \bar{x}^2}$$

$$SY = \sqrt{\frac{\sum y^2}{N} - \bar{y}^2}$$

$$\text{Step III: 1) } SS't = SS_t(1 - r_t^2)$$

$$2) SS'w = SSw(1 - r_w^2); r_w = \frac{r_1 + r_2 + r_3 + \dots}{k}$$

$$3) SS'b = SS't - SS'w$$

$$4) MS'b = \frac{SS'b}{k-1}$$

$$5) MS'w = \frac{SS'w}{N-K-1}$$

$$6) F = \frac{MS'b}{MS'w}$$

FINDINGS

In the first place, the study was concerning the effectiveness of detailed feedback (error correction) on the improvement of students' composition. As stated before, this research conducted quasi-experimental design. The pretest score was not used to check the balance of the two groups – experimental and control group instead of as the covariate, since the two groups were not comparable at the beginning of the research. In other words, the classes had already been organized without the process of randomization.

After the data was analyzed, it was found out that the average level of the pretest score of experimental class was 55.78. the pretest score of control class was 54.80. An analysis of data to describe the students' level of composition at the end of the error correction treatment was intended to provide the evidences to answer the research question and to test the hypothesis. They were all related to composition level – a level indicating the students' ability in writing paragraph in English.

The result of the posttest was used to find out the significant difference in the application of different scoring technique; namely detailed and global feedback (error correction and no error correction treatment). From the result of the analysis, it was found that the average score of those who got error correction or experimental class was 63.15, and the average score of those who did not get error correction or control class was 63.69. ANCOVA was employed in this research, because the study employed quasi-experimental design, non-randomized control group, pretest – posttest design.

Table 1 Summary of Analysis of Covariance with pretest as Covariate

Source of variance	SS'	df	MS'	F	Remark
Between groups	68.2	1	68.2	0.87	Not Significant
Within groups	3616.08	47	78.61		
Total	3684.28				

From the data above, it clearly shows that H_0 was accepted. In conclusion, the writing ability of the students who got error correction treatment (detailed feedback) was the same as the ability of those who did not get any error correction treatment (global feedback).

DISCUSSION

The previous part stated that the study has found out that the final product of students' composition which was given detailed feedback (error correction) perform the same as of those which was given global feedback (no error correction). The interpretative reasons might be as the following.

First of all, it seemed that the control group was highly motivated. As we all know, motivation plays a big role on students' success in education. Without any motivation they would not be able to manage themselves the learning process. Melton (in Skinner, 1984: 450) said that motivation is essential condition of

learning. Learning will proceed best if motivated, Anderson (in Skinner, 1984: 450).

Secondly, the students of the control group might have desire in the fulfillment of their need. As students and part of society they possessed the need to comprehend English language. One of the signs that they comprehend it they should be able to compose a good paragraph.

The last, from the different treatment of the two groups it seemed that the control group had big interest in the mastery of English language. It can be viewed from their attitude toward the material given in the class during the activities. They were all interested in every topics offered, further more they showed curiosity.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study is concerning the effectiveness of detailed feedback (error correction) on the improvement of students' composition. The researcher conducted this research for considerations that there is ambiguity in treating students' work on composition. This study was aimed at knowing whether the final product of composition which is given detailed feedback (error correction) performs better than of those given global feedback.

From the result of the statistic analysis result can be concluded that the final product of composition written by students which is given detailed feedback (error correction) perform the same as of those given global feedback.

The following suggestions are offered in relation with the finding of the study. The process of teaching and learning should continuously be evaluated to find out whether what has been done is effective and efficient. The effectiveness and efficiency will eventually determine the success of the teaching and learning.

In conclusion, the two techniques are optional. Meaning that the existed way on treating students' composition did not need to revise and refine. Since the result of the study found that the application of detailed feedback on students' composition, remain the same as of those who got global feedback. Therefore, teachers can use both detailed and global feedback on treating students' composition in the teaching and learning process.

Additionally, the present study studied the short-term effect of providing detailed feedback on the improvement of students' composition. Future researcher could survey the long-term effect of the providing detailed feedback on students' writing.

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