Character Building
in English Language Teaching

Editor
Fathor Rasyid
Character Building in English Language Teaching

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Foreword

This international proceeding is a compilation of papers written by the speakers of both speakers in the plenary session and parallel sessions. This international seminar is annually held by STAIN (State College for Islamic Studies) Kediri, and this year event is organized by Tadris Bahasa Inggris (English education). Furthermore, the topic of the seminar—Character Building in English Language Teaching—was intentionally selected for we—English teachers—would also like to contribute to the character building of the nation, since in the last few years Indonesia has encountered moral decadence particularly among youngsters.

It is true that relating character building to the English language teaching is not that easy. For that reason the three speakers in the plenary session were deliberately selected on the basis of their expertise. Caroline Bently, for instance, the director of Indonesia Australia Language Foundation (IALF) Bali has lots of experiences in teaching English as a foreign language in Indonesia. She once organized English Language Training for Islamic Schools (ELTIS) and coached its masters' trainers. In addition, Prof. Suwarnsih Madya, from Yogyakarta State University (used to be IKIP Yogyakarta) specializes on the teaching English as a foreign language. She is also one important key persons in TEFLIN (Teaching English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia). Finally, A. Effendi Kadarisman, from State University of Malang (used to be IKIP Malang) is a “Professor” who spent ages in USA. He has actively become a speaker in both national and international conference and his papers have been published in reputable journal, such as Linguistik Indonesia, TEFLIN Journal, Reflections in Southeast Asean Seas: Essays in Honor of Professor James T. Collins.
In addition, the speakers in the parallel sessions were carefully chosen by a team of reviewers, again, on the basis of their expertise. They are from all over Indonesia, and some of them living in Australia. They are from a variety of disciplines within the English language teaching. They are practitioners in the grassroots. Their experiences provide a breakthrough in inserting character building in English language teaching. Therefore, by the end of the seminars or through this international proceeding, we become aware and know how the integration between character building and English language teaching is like.

The participants of the international seminar are of three sorts. The first is invited participants. They senior high school English teaching in *kerasidenan* Kediri (Kediri, Blitar, Tulungagung, and Nganjuk). The second is non-invited participants. They are high school English teachers and English lecturers all over Indonesia. The last is decision makers, such as *Kadiknas*, school principals and so forth.

Eventually, I expect this international seminar proceeding is beneficial and therefore we do contribute to the character building of the nation through our profession as English teachers/lecturers. Moreover, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to any party, particularly to the organizing committee for the success of the seminar.

Kediri, October 5, 2013

Fathor Rasyid
Editor
To Give is Better than to Receive:

Islamic Charity Concept of Philanthropy Applied in EFL Writing

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Abstract

Islam encourages the sharing of wealth with others and helps people to stand on their own and become productive members of the society. The term ‘wealth’ does not only refer to financial matters but also to several other types of sustenance like knowledge and expertise. In English as Foreign Language (EFL) context, the provision of help can be done through peer review. Although peer review has been shown to be beneficial in many writing classrooms, the benefits of peer review to the reviewer, or the student giving feedback, has not been thoroughly investigated in EFL context. Hence, the benefit of giving contribution not only in the form of material but also ideas is rooted from Islamic charity concept of philanthropy. The study found that in improving student writing, giving peer feedback gives more benefit than receiving one. This demonstrates that to give is better than to receive as supported by Islamic principles. The study was conducted at English Department writing classes at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. An analysis on the gains in writing ability measured from writing essays collected at the beginning and end of the semester to see whether or not the reviewers made more significant gains in their own writing over the course of the semester.

Keywords: peer review, charity, EFL writing
Charity Concept in Writing Class

Charity as provision of help is not just recommended by Islam, it is required as part of Muslim character and as the realization of philanthropy in Islamic practice. Islam encourages the sharing of wealth with others and helps people to stand on their own and become productive members of the society. The term ‘wealth’ does not only refer to financial matters but also to several other types of sustenance like knowledge and expertise. Islam teaches that people should acquire wealth with the intention of spending it on their own needs and the needs of others (The Religion of Islam, 2013). In other words, acquiring knowledge and expertise also covers the spending and sharing for the needs of others.

The whole concept of wealth is considered in Islam as a gift from God. The Quran and Hadeeth (sayings and actions of the Prophet Muhammad, may the mercy and blessings of God be upon him) also stress sadaqah, or voluntary almsgiving, which is intended for the needy which is also applied through sharing knowledge.

No good is there in much of their private conversation, except for those who enjoin charity or that which is right or conciliation between people. And whoever does that seeking means to the approval of Allah - then We are going to give him a great reward (An-Nisa’: 114).

The Quran emphasizes helping those who are in need, and the more one helps, the more God helps the person, and the more one gives, the more God gives the person. One feels he is taking care of others and God is taking care of him.
The sharing of knowledge in EFL (English as Foreign Language) setting can be done through peer review activity. Peer review which also means peer editing, peer evaluation, or peer response, frequently used in EFL writing classrooms, especially in post intermediate level. It is an important activity which allows writing teachers to help their students receive more feedback on their essays. Teachers can incorporate it as a way to create student centered classroom. This activity also results in making students to be not only better writers but also self-reviewers. Accordingly, this study seeks the relation between peer reviewing and the improvement of argumentative writing quality. It tries to see whether peer reviewing plays a role in student’s writing especially to the reviewer’s essays.

**Peer-reviewing Task in EFL Critical Writing Course**

Writing course is a part of the teaching of critical thinking skill which involves generating ideas by using problem-solving process employing a range of cognitive and linguistic skills. A successful writing class should end with the development of critical thinking which is initiated by finding the learner’s interest or expertise (Indah, 2009) and is geared from collaborative writing activities (Indah, 2010). These are involved in peer reviewing as part of writing process.

Writing as a process is seen as a recursive rather than linear, meaning that it includes prewriting, drafting and revising activities. During the process, fluency is considered more important than accuracy by helping learners understand well their own composing process (Brown, 2001). In the context of academic writing, this process requires learners critical thinking in treating the information related to the issue to be developed into an essay. Learners need to stimulate the recall of
information for the purpose of reproducing knowledge (Crasswell, 2005). Such a process is needed to formulate a solid and well-developed argument that can be strengthened through peer reviewing activity.

Writing leads to learner’s skill to identify a purpose, to produce and shape ideas and refine expression as well (White, 1995). This means that learners are generating ideas by using problem-solving process employing a range of cognitive and linguistic skills to produce a good argument. Accordingly, the teaching of reading and writing critically is significant especially for tertiary students. It aims at developing skills of critical thinking in both writing and reviewing the argument.

Argumentative writing is inseparable from reading critically. In order to write a good analysis and evaluation on a topic, careful critical reading of sources is essential to strengthen the argument. The judgments and interpretations made based on the texts are the first steps towards formulating the writer’s own approach (Knott, 2009). By reading and reviewing critically, learners can develop reflective skill before they actually start to write critically.

Therefore, it can be stated that critical thinking plays an important role in the writing and reviewing skills. In addition, such a development is also affected by the ability to read critically. This process generates the dynamic of critical thinking and both reading and writing critically. Indeed, this process is not always followed by the consistency of rhetorical skill meaning that there might occur errors in learner’s writing. This is due to the fact that writing in second or foreign language requires not only the idea development but also ability to review the
writing itself. This issue has become the starting point of this study in which the peer reviewing activity is aimed to reduce such difficulty.

In assessing argumentative writing, there are some aspects to consider such as the assessment purpose, type, and aids. On the purpose of assessing writing, it is important to note that assessment is the gathering of information for the goal of guiding instruction. A good assessment uses specific and appropriate language to describe the data gathered and the patterns that are observed (Peha, 2003). Yet, in general, the focus of writing assessment is on the language used, not on the fulfillment of the task per se. In other words, students need to have the opportunity to prepare the content in advance of the writing because of the difficulties to manage the linguistic demands as second language writers (Weigle, 2002). Therefore, in overcoming the difficulties students should also be given opportunity to learn from each other through peer reviewing activity.

In doing the assessment, the rater position should regard the purpose of assessing critical writing. The rater is not only teacher but also another student analyzing the thinking and reasoning involving equally hermeneutic and rhetorical performances (Petrucci, 2008). More interpretation toward the text is required to figure out what is actually happening in the learner’s thought.

Concerning the type of assessment, there are some reasons underlying the choice between timed and non-timed writing assessment. The later type may include strategies such as discussing a topic in class, allowing students to write an outline and do drafting in class, followed by revising it out of class based on teacher or peer feedback for a separate grade (Weigle, 2007). The choice must be made based on the instructional objective of the critical writing course.
Regarding the use of assessment aids, models of writing assessment are proposed by some researches which involve the use of rubric. The rubric criteria were identified as ideas and content, organization, voice or tone, word choice, sentence fluency, and conventions. This model has strong support from teachers regarding their perception of the assessment in supporting teaching practices and student success (Dappen et al., 2008). The rubric facilitates the raters to assess writing based on the targeted competence of the course.

Basically, the assessment model makes strong connections with emerging conceptions of writing, literacy and critical thinking suggesting an assessment approach in which writing is viewed as calling upon a broader construct than is usually tested in assessments that focus on relatively simple, on-demand writing tasks (Deane et al., 2008). Any model employed should be oriented to assessing not only the development of the student’s critical writing skills but also on the progress made in terms of critical thinking cognitive domain which can be done in peer reviewing activity.

Another aid for assessing student’s critical writing is by peer-evaluation assignment which encouraged students to think critically, synthesize information and write about a sound argument rather than incorporate surface information into written assignments. Because peer reviewers can improve the grades on their final papers by offering concrete suggestions to the original authors, the peer-evaluation process is helpful to improve both their writing skills and critical thinking ability (Todd & Hudson, 2007).

The use of peer-evaluation in critical writing assessment does not only benefit the writer whose essay is reviewed. With the aid of reviewing peers’
writing, significant gains can be seen in the reviewer’s own writing than did the receivers, who focused solely on how to use peer feedback. Results also indicated that givers at the lower proficiency level made more gains than those at higher proficiency levels (Lundstorm & Baker, 2009). This model is certainly employed to support the assessment done by the teacher.

Methodology

Participants

The participants of this study are students of writing class in English Department of UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Thirty students as the experimental group reported the result of the peer-review as they become the ‘givers’ of the suggestion to improve the quality of their friend’s essay. While the other thirty students as the control group only received the comment from their friends.

Procedure

As a quasi-experiment study, the peer reviewing activities were given in some meetings following the writing process of brainstorming, planning, outlining, presenting in class conference and drafting. Students in the experiment group reported the review of their friend’s essay using the following rubric:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Aspects</th>
<th>Absolutely yes</th>
<th>Maybe yes</th>
<th>Maybe not</th>
<th>Absolutely not</th>
<th>Not present</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Claim of fact is clearly stated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Clear meaning, no remaining ambiguous term without explanation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The data used are sufficient, accurate, recent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The evidences used are arranged to emphasize what is most important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The issue is crucial</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Clear explanation on the good result of taking the value</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Clear examples or illustrations are given</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The testimony used is effective</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>The proposed policy is clearly stated</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>There is explanation on the need for a change from the current condition</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>There is response to opposing argument</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>The proposed policy is supported by data</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No remaining spelling errors</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>No error on punctuation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>No error on capitalization</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>The word choice is good</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>The grammar errors are not found</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>The grammar error does not influence reader’s understanding</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The rating is done by obtaining the average score given by the students as reviewer and the teacher as well.**

**Results**

The following table summarizes the difference scores of the control group (the receivers) and the experimental group (the givers).
### Paired Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>SE</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Df</th>
<th>Mean diff.</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pretest</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>62.0000</td>
<td>11.03287</td>
<td>2.01432</td>
<td>.164</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>-.5000</td>
<td>.871</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>62.5000</td>
<td>12.57735</td>
<td>2.29630</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post test</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Receivers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>69.0000</td>
<td>5.14446</td>
<td>.93925</td>
<td>-2.675</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>-6.5000</td>
<td>.010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Givers</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>76.0000</td>
<td>12.27557</td>
<td>2.24120</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above statistical computation shows significant difference between receivers and givers in the post test with the givers outperform the receivers. To test whether this was indeed the case, a similar analysis was performed on the intermediate giver and receiver participants’ pre-test and post-test scores. This analysis revealed a main effect of treatment (p < .05), suggesting that for those students who were new to peer review, the intermediate giver students made greater gains than did the students in the receiver group. Post-hoc analyses revealed this was the case for the overall, organization, and development aspects of each type of claim (claim of fact, value and policy).

The above analyses addressed the impact that exposure to reviewing or revising papers had on whether students’ writing improved significantly from pre-test to post-test. It is possible that the gains found for the giver group over the receiver group were the result of factors other than differences in treatment, such as quality of autonomous learning, individual student differences or different experience from pretest to post-test. The finding also indicates that students in all the giver group classes made significantly greater gains than those in the receiver group classes.
Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that in the context of L2 writing students can improve their own writing by transferring abilities they learn when reviewing peer texts. In addition, these findings also suggest that students taught to give peer feedback improve in their own writing abilities more than students receiving peer feedback. These results seem to support earlier finding on writing research (Lundstorm & Baker, 2009).

Givers or reviewers often determine what aspects of writing that the peer review will focus on and most likely provide suggestions for the writers or the receivers. The suggestion given must fall within their (the reviewer’s) zone proximal development (Zaretskii, 2009).

One benefit of peer review was the interaction between the two students. Future research should also examine how the interaction during the peer review helps students who give peer review improve their writing and most likely would demonstrate even greater benefits for these students than occurred in this study. As this study was conducted in one semester using experimental design, more exploration is needed to see whether the same case happens for different level. It is expected that by using another research design such as ethnographic study, there will be more significant finding showing the aspects of the peer review which contributes more of the benefits of the reviewers.

The result from this study indicated that those students who revised student papers improved in specific areas of writing more so than those who only learned to use student feedback. Since the main focus in this study was on
whether or not students improved in global aspects of writing, it is predicted that the givers would improve more on these aspects than the receivers. The improvement is more obvious in those of low achievers compared to higher ones in all global writing aspects (content, organization, language use, vocabulary and mechanics). More findings are needed to confirm whether the improvement occurs in each writing aspect to see the pattern of the improvement across different writing levels and writing performance.

It should be noted that the students in the receiver group also improved in both overall and in specific areas over the course of the semester. This suggests, as previous research has shown (e.g., Hyland, 2000), that revising is also a beneficial activity and when combined with reviewing in a peer review session, students may gain even greater benefits than those found in the control group in this study. Thus, in a typical peer review session, students would ideally develop the thinking skills necessary to effectively evaluate a paper, as well as practice using feedback they receive from their peers. Therefore, although effective peer review activities take time and training to make them work, they can be very effective in developing student writers, particularly at lower proficiency levels or with those who have had little experience with peer review writing.

In accomplishing the peer reviewing tasks, L2 writers operate their critical thinking skills to make some evaluative judgment on the quality of the text to review. This process required two kinds of information: a representation of the task environment, which consisted of the writing assignment and the text produced; and knowledge stored in long-term memory, which consisted of topic knowledge, a model of the audience, the writing plan, rules for grammar
production and knowledge of text standards (Flower & Hayes, 1980). On this basis it can be inferred that by reviewing writing students operate their critical thinking skills more especially using the higher order of critical thinking skills. This is why the students of the reviewer group benefits more than the other one.

In reviewing text, at least there are five knowledge which should be acquired by L2 writers or reviewers. They are content knowledge, system knowledge, process knowledge, genre knowledge, and context knowledge. Content knowledge consists of the ideas and concepts in the topic area the text will address. System knowledge is related to syntax, lexis, appropriate formal conventions needed in creating the texts. Process knowledge deals with the ways to prepare and carry out a writing task. Genre knowledge is about the communicative purposes of the genre and its value in particular context. And context knowledge is linked to the readers’ expectations, cultural preferences, and related texts (Hyland, 2003). By acquiring the knowledge, L2 writers can evaluate their peers more effectively. Therefore, the reviewer group practices the knowledge indirectly as another outcome of the peer review process. It explains another benefit taken by the reviewer which in turn contributes to their own writing product.

**Concluding Remark**

Peer review activity in writing class involved the sharing of knowledge in EFL setting. This activity has been proven to be effective not only in helping L2 writing students to receive more benefits by giving feedback to their friends’ essays but also to learn and to internalize the concept of charity. Writing teachers
can incorporate it as a way to shape students character. The benefit of peer review demonstrates that to give is better than to receive as supported by Islamic principles of philanthropy.

By giving constructive suggestion to their friends, sharing knowledge and practicing evaluative judgment, learners shape their critical thinking skills. Therefore they can gain better result compared to those who only receive feedback from others.

*It is well to give when asked, but it is better to give unasked, through understanding;
And to the open-handed the search for one who shall receive is joy greater than giving.
And is there aught you would withhold?
All you have shall some day be given;
Therefore give now, that the season of giving may be yours and not your inheritors’.*

--Kahlil Gibran on Giving
References


Biographical data

Rohmani Nur Indah is a lecturer of the Faculty of Humanities and Culture at UIN Maulana Malik Ibrahim, Malang and a member of the editorial board of Lingua journal. She earned her Master degree in ELT from State University of Malang (2002) and participated in Twinning Program Training Expert on University Management in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (2006) as well as online summer course on “Critical Thinking” managed by American English Institute Distant Education of the University of Oregon, USA (2012). She also took some online courses such as “Critical Thinking in Global Challenge” managed by the University of Edinburgh, UK, course on “English Composition Achieving Expertise” managed by Duke University, North Carolina, USA, course on “First Year Writing” managed by Georgia University, USA and on “Attention Deficit Hiperactive Disorder across Lifespan” managed by University of Pennsylvania (2013). Her books are “Second Language Research and Pedagogy” (2012), Gangguan Berbahasa (2011), and Psikolinguistik: Konsep & Isu Umum (2008). Her dissertation was entitled “Patterns of Relationship among Critical Thinking Skills, Topic Familiarity and Writing Proficiency”.