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INSIGHT JOURNAL
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA CAWANGAN JOHOR

International, Refereed, Open Access, Online Journal

Volume 3
2019
eISSN : 2600-8564

INSIGHT JOURNAL (IJ)
UiTM Cawangan Johor Online Journal Vol. 3: 2019
eISSN :2600-8564
Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor
insightjournal.my

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eISSN 2600-8564

Insights of ESL Students' Peer Review in Writing Class

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Abstract

The practice of peer review as a method of evaluation is believed to be helpful in learning and is favoured especially by educators in higher education settings. Constraints resulting from examination-oriented subjects and the large number of students in each class limit the educators' ability to give personal feedback to each student, forcing them to opt for peer review as an alternative for evaluation. Thus, this study aims to better learn the students' views on the implementation of peer review in their writing class and also to recognise the strengths and weaknesses according to the perspectives raised by these students. Four interview questions were crafted to investigate the students' views on peer review activity in writing class. Semi-structured interviews were carried out, recorded, transcribed and analysed. Textual data, audio recordings and interviews from 18 individuals from the third semester of diploma students revealed that peer review activity made them to be aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their essays. However, some of them viewed peer review as a platform to critic or being criticised, rather than as a learning tool. The findings also revealed that despite the positive feedback of peer review to their writings, they preferred the lecturer's feedback more. A majority of these students suggested that lecturer's feedback is still important other than having the peer review activity for the class as a source of writing feedback.

Keywords: University students, Attitude, Peer assessment, Peer review, Writing, Essay, Second language learners.

1. Introduction

In teaching English as a second language, writing has become one of the main components to test the learner's ability and skill in the language apart from reading, grammar, speaking and listening. Compared to reading, speaking or listening, writing is perceived as more difficult as when writing the learners are not only tested on their language proficiency but also on their cognitive systems in synthesizing the memory and thinking. This demands metacognitive skills rather than just testing one's language ability (Kellog, 2008). As writing has been recognised as the key component in determining learner's success in a language and challenging

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Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

language task among language learners, many strategies have been developed by the educators to help the learners to excel in the language skill. One of the ways to help the learners to be better writers is by giving feedback on their writing (Paulus, 1999; Chandler, 2003; Kavitha & Rozita, 2014). From there, the learners can know what flaws that they have in the writing and how to improve it. Nevertheless, it is not easy for educators to give writing reviews or feedbacks individually for every student that they have. Because of this huge number of students per class, the nature of learning has turned from teacher-centred learning to independent learning which allows the students to have "a better sense of control for their own learning" (Richards & Renandya, 2002: 335), and become self-sufficient learners who are less dependent on their teachers (Penaflorida, 2002). Thus, this study aims to better learn the students' views on the implementation of peer review in their writing class and also to recognise the perspectives raised by these students. Are there more positive impacts or vice versa? This study focuses on data from semi structured interview and from the findings, it can be concluded that despite the positive feedback of peer review to their essays, they prefer the lecturer's feedback more. A majority of these students suggested that lecturer's feedback is still important other than having the peer review activity for the class as a source of writing feedback. This study contributes to existing feedback research by investigating student perceptions of peer review on their writing exercises. The following research questions were addressed in this study:

(i) What are the strengths and weaknesses of peer review in writing class?
(ii) What do students prefer in getting feedbacks for their writing?

2. Literature Review

2.1 The Practicality of Peer Review in Writing Class

Many researchers find peer review as a beneficial pedagogical activity in enhancing the learners' understanding of writing components and eventually improving their writings. A study done by Hui (2006) on 18 students who underwent 4-hour in-class demonstration and a 1-hour after-class reviewer-teacher conference revealed that with wide-ranging exercise inside and outside of class, peer review can give a significant effect to the EFL students' revision types and quality of texts. This is due to a significant number of reviewers' comments in the peer review exercises and the number of revisions with enhanced quality was significantly higher than that before peer review exercises. Trena's (1999) study on 11 ESL student essays analysis also discovered that the changes that the students made from the peer review and teacher's feedback were more meaningful than those revisions they made on their own. It is also discovered that the students' overall essays were also improved after writing multiple drafts based on the feedbacks from peers and teachers. Apart from that, Hanrahan and Issacs (2001) believe that peer review provides the students a platform where they can observe the teachers' role and learn the nature of assessment. Hence, when students make reviews of their classmates' essays analytically, they can notice on the strengths and weaknesses of their peers' essays (Kasper, 1998). From the activity, these students progressively are able to determine the do's and the don'ts in writing essays and subsequently making them to be more conscious of the similar errors that they make in their own writings and notice the important elements and rules of fluent and clear writing (Kasper, 1998). Other than that, an independent learning environment through peer and self-review techniques is claimed to help students in developing a sense of autonomy as they have a control in their own learning (Clifford, 1999). Rollinson (2005) also added that peer review functions on a more casual and understandable

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Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

level than the review provided by the teachers. The traditional one-way-teacher-student-interaction is transformed to interactive and collaborative manner. Hence, due to these considerable benefits of peer review to ESL learners, this teaching and learning method cannot be neglected as a choice to language educators namely English language educators as it helps to ease the educators' burden in improving the learners' essay writings.

2.2 Drawbacks of Peer Review in Writing Class

Apart from the benefits highlighted on the usage of peer review as one of the learning activities in writing class, there are some findings that raise the complexities and challenges of applying this method of learning. Connor and Asenavage's (1994) study revealed that many revisions were made but few of these resulted from direct peer group response. The changes in the students' essays were mainly more text-based changes. Few changes were mostly on surface changes. This raises questions regarding the process of the peer group formation and types of modelling used in the study. A study done by Guardado and Ling (2007) on 22 ESL students' experiences of online peer feedback revealed that generally the students felt they had little confidence in giving comments to their peers. Some of them "shied away from the demand to express and clarify meaning", thus making the online peer feedback as ineffective as many comments were not addressed. Physical class discussion and teacher's guidance were suggested to maximize the efficacy of online peer feedback. Another study done by Liu and Carless (2006) discovered that students have doubts on their classmates' expertise as compared to their teachers in checking their works. Various studies also demonstrate students have a lack of self-confidence when reviewing their peers' work (Sullivan, Hithcock & Dunnington, 1999). These evidences lead to the existence of complexity in implementing peer review in writing class. This complexity leads to validity issues on peer review. Falchikov and Goldfinch (2000) pointed out the validity and reliability issues regarding peer review and stressed on the significance of a well-organized criterion or guideline when executing peer review in class. Some learners paid the most attention to almost all aspects of their writing, some paid more attention on form, and some paid more attention on content (Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Hyland, 1998; Leki, 1991). It is found that learners' responses on peer review activity differ greatly based on different types of feedback received for different purposes (Li, 2016). Thus, the effects may vary as each individual may interpret or respond the same errors differently.

2.3 Preference of Feedback: Peer's or Lecturer's

Research has found that both teachers and learners believed that teacher's feedback on student writing has a vital part in writing instruction and an enormous influence on student's writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Goldestin, 2004; Leki, 1990). Arafat (2011) discovered that both learners and teachers of English showed an inclination for teacher's feedback than peer review. Radecki and Swales (1988) also found that the majority of learners preferred their teacher's feedback than that of their peer's. Most of them assumed it was the teacher's job to identify and amend the errors. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996) found that learners were inclined to receive feedbacks on content, rhetorical soundness and also language accurateness. These types of feedbacks could hardly be given by their peers, hence, their preferences are inclined towards the teacher's feedback. Additionally, the learners' inclination for more comprehensive, detailed and clear feedback is parallel with the finding in Elwood and Bode's (2014) study. Li (2016) found that students believed that the teacher's corrections on their grammatical errors encourage them to avoid repeating the same errors in the future.

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Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

3. Methodology

Many research on identifying learners' and educators' view on peer review are done through surveys by using questionnaires. As this quantitative based research seeks the answers for the 'what' questions (Black, 1994), this study provides a deeper understanding which answers the 'why' questions as this qualitative-based research provides "a holistic perspective which preserves the complexities of human behaviour" (Strong, 1992). Data is collected through interviews, and observation is gathered and analysed to get a deeper insight of L2 learners' perspectives and their wariness on peer review implementation in writing class.

3.1 Sample

The students who were chosen for the interviews were 18 diploma students from two different English language classes in UiTM Perak. The students were all Malay and Bumiputera (Sabah and Sarawak) native speakers who learned English as a second language and had been studying English formally at school for over 11 years. The sample was from semester three students who were taking "Integrated Language Skills: Writing (ELC231)" which focuses mainly in essay writing and article review apart from reading comprehension. The focus of the class was on writing: the article review and expository essay. The majority of the participants were studying for Diploma in Quantity Surveying and Building Surveys. Male students constituted 7 of the total sample, and the remaining 11 were female students. This uneven distribution is due to the sampling procedure and uneven number of male and female students in both classes.

3.2 The Intervention

The class met four hours every week. In-class activities included instruction on the knowledge about the components and features of topical and argumentative essays, writing strategies (e.g., brainstorming, writing an outline, using hooks), writing exercises for individual and group work, peer response on classmate's and other classes' essay, presentation of peer group analysis in group and general oral teacher feedback activities. Even though peer review comprises various types of activities, the study focuses on peer review in writing class specifically on essay writing. After the students learnt the components in writing, they were taught to do self-review and peer-review of their own writing and their friends' writing. The flow of the activity is explained in the chart below.

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Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

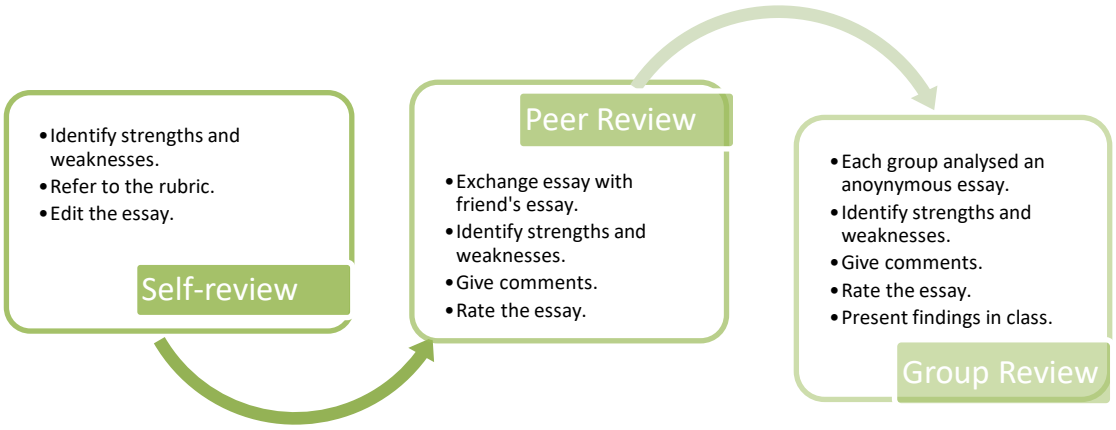

Figure 1: Peer Review Activity
Source: Developed for this study

3.3 Data Collection

After the students have done the three stages of essay reviewing process, they were chosen randomly based on their essay marks. Their final essay task was to classify the essays into the Best, the Intermediate and the Weak categories. From there, two students from each category in each class were chosen randomly for an interview session. To understand what university students, think about the use of peer review in improving their writing skills, four interview questions were developed.

RQ1: the strengths and weaknesses of peer review in writing class	RQ2: students' preferences of feedback of their essays
•Question 1 : Do you think that peer review is helpful in your writing? In what way? •Question 2 : What are the changes that you noticed in your essay from the peer review activity? •Question 4 : Is there any negative thing about peer review that you want to share or highlight?	•Question 3 : Which one do you prefer? Lecturer's feedback or peer review activity? Provide reasons.

The administration of the interviews was carried out after the students had received their final feedback from their classmates and completed their final essay task. The interviews were conducted in English with translated questions. The interviewees were allowed to answer the questions in Malay language, as the medium of communication is not the main concern. The semi-structured interviews were recorded by using an audio recorder and field notes were also taken.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic coding method was used to analyse the raw data from the interviews. Thematic coding is one of the common methods in analysing qualitative data. It involves recording or identifying passages of text or images that are linked by a communal code, category, or idea which allows researchers to catalogue the text into themes and hence establish a "framework of thematic ideas about it" (Gibbs, 2007). Before the analysis was done, the audio tracks were

transcribed. Then, the transcriptions were scrutinized to see similar occurrences or frequencies guided by the interview questions and research questions. These frequencies were then being coded and categorized. There are several steps involved in the coding process. Creswell (2008) stated that there is no definite procedure in coding a certain data. Nevertheless, Tesch (1990) and Creswell (2009) recommend these steps. The coding steps can be seen clearly in Figure 2.

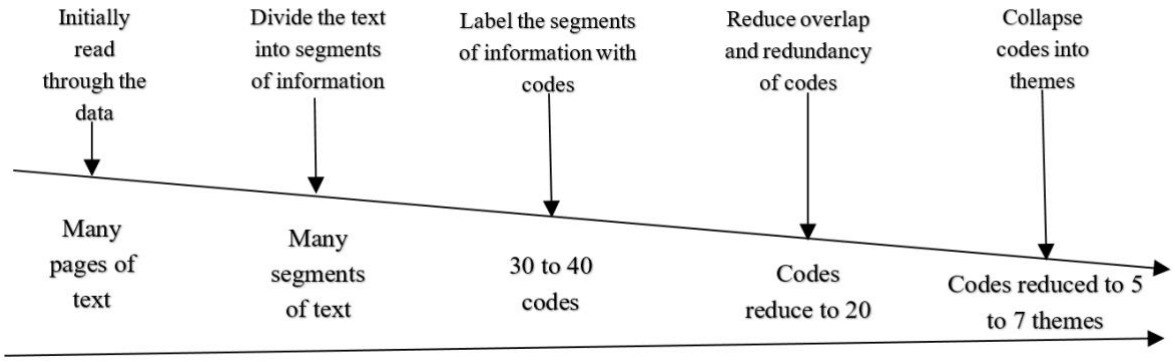

Figure 2: A Visual Model of the Coding Process (Cresswell, 2008)
Source: Creswell (2009)

These codes were listed, and redundant codes were aggregated together before they were categorized through several themes. The themes were then generated by looking at the similar occurrences of responses given by the participants.

4. Findings

The overall findings and data analysis is presented based on research questions. For each research question, relevant conclusions were coded and categorized according to the similar occurrences of the participants' responses. These themes were developed based on the thematic analysis method.

4.1 RQ1: What Are the Strengths and Weaknesses of Peer Review in Writing Class?

Research question 1 (one) seeks to investigate the students' thoughts about peer review; whether peer review activity had any strengths or weaknesses. Based on the interview session, results show that majority of the students thought peer review to have more strengths than weaknesses. Reasoning for students' comments on the strengths and weaknesses were then categorized into different themes which was developed based on the thematic analysis method. Eight themes were developed under strengths: (i) able to identify the significant elements of writing and essay structure in general, (ii) able to compare the similar errors/mistakes that students make, (iii) facilitate students in improving essay content (iv) able to identify the errors/mistakes that other students make, (v) able to improve grammar, vocabulary or the English language in general, (vi) facilitate students on the awareness of irrelevant ideas or supporting details, (vii) facilitate students in writing faster, and (viii) able to feel less tense. While another five themes were developed under weaknesses: (i) concerns on feelings of shyness, shame or humiliation among students, (ii) concerns on irrelevant and less helpful comments/reviews, (iii) concerns on low-quality reviews from peers, (iv) concerns on stressful feedbacks, and (v) concerns of confidentiality matters. Based on the results, it can be concluded that among all of the themes developed, the most popular themes under

INSIGHT JOURNAL Volume 3
Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

strengths were (i) able to identify the significant elements of writing and essay structure in general, and (ii) able to compare the similar errors/mistakes that students make, with a total number of 11 similar comments for each theme, while the most popular theme under weaknesses was (i) concerns on feelings of shyness, shame or humiliation among students with a total number of six similar comments. The results of students' feedback and comments are shown according to their sequence as presented below.

4.1.1 Strengths

i. Able to identify the significant elements of writing and essay structures in general

There were 11 students who claimed that peer review activity helped them to identify the significant elements of writing and essay structures as taught by their lecturer. Students 1, 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 12, 13, 14 and 17 agreed that when they reviewed their friends' essays, they could see what their friends include in their essays.

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 1: We can see that person's main idea, topic sentence, and also his explanation and after that we can see how he does his example."	Student 1 stated that he could see the main idea, topic sentence, the elaboration and the examples clearly, thus he would manage to follow the same way in his writings too.
"Student 2: analyse in detail of the essay, so when reading it, we can see, ok this is the bad essay, ok this is the good essay and it helps students to do more better in essay."	Students 2, 5, 7, 8 and 14 claimed that their friends' essays helped them in writing essay generally. For instance, student 2 mentioned that peer review helps him to distinguish between well-written essays with the bad ones, hence it helps him to write a better essay.
"Student 13: Like.. have to conclude every..ermm.. passage.. mm the paragraph.. then, ermm..must have topic sentence and all that.."	Meanwhile, students 9, 12 and 13 stated that when reviewing the others' essays, they were able to know the crucial elements that should be included in an essay so they won't lose marks.

From this finding, it can be seen that these students realized that when reviewing others' writings, they are more aware of the essay structure (Kasper,1998), as they needed to look for the important elements of the essay (e.g. thesis statement, topic sentence, transition signals, concluding sentence, etc.) when reviewing their friends' essays. They might be less conscious of this essay structure before doing the peer review activity.

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Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

ii. Able to compare the similar errors/mistakes that students make

11 students claimed that peer review enabled them to compare similar errors that their friends' made with their own mistakes.

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 10: I think it's good because I can see the similarities, the problem that he do has similar in my writing. So, I can see the wrong.. The errors. Based from the errors. I can improve my writing."	For instance, students 3, 10, 12, 17 and 18 stated that when they identified their friend's errors in the essay, they also noticed the same errors in their essays. The excerpt is taken from the transcription.
"Student 6: We can compare our friends' essays that are okay and our other friends' essays that are not okay. We can know what problem that is not okay and how we can make it okay just like the others' essays that are okay."	Student 6 said, when reviewing other's writing, it allows her to compare the well-written essays with the poorly written ones, hence helping her to realize on how to improve the latter to make it better.

It seems like when they did the peer review, it was also like a reflection of their writings too. This is parallel with Kasper's (1998) claim on students' awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of their friends' essays in which enables them to progressively determine the do's and the don'ts in writing essays and subsequently making them to be more conscious of the similar errors that they make in their own writings. Thus, based from the errors, they would not repeat the same mistake and thus, improving their essays.

Other than that, student 4 believed that he could see his mistakes from other person's point of view, as he himself might not realize them if he reviews his own writings. Students 7, 9, 11 and 13 believed that they could improve their essays when reading their friends' comments on their essays as the comments do give a certain impact to them. It makes them realized where they did wrong and how to correct the mistakes. Student 11 stated that the errors that have been detected are made as a guideline for him not to do the same mistakes again in the future.

iii. Facilitate students in improving essay content

Seven students believed that peer review helped them to improve their essay content. By reading their peers' essays, they were able to see a different way of developing the main ideas as not thought by them before.

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 7: There are many ideas that I get, when know, see, my friends like.. my friends' ideas are	For instance, student 7 stated that by reading essays from different peers, he was able to know various ways in explaining the same ideas.

INSIGHT JOURNAL Volume 3
Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

like this my other friends use a different kind of ideas"	
"Student 4: topic sentence and then we learn how to put more supporting details to support more about the topic on what we want to talk about in the paragraph."	Student 4 claimed that she could write longer by adding more relevant supporting details in her essay after reading her peers' essays.
"Student 10: I think it's improved because from the previous writing, I missed a lot of content that must have in the writing."	Students 5, 10, 15, 16 and 18 agreed that they could write longer essay with more elaboration after doing the peer review activity. For an illustration, student 10 said that he could write better essay after peer review activity as he realized that he missed a lot of possible elaborations or supporting details in the previous essay when reading how his peers explained the same ideas in their essays.

This finding reveals that reviewing others' essays helps students to improve their essay content without depending on too much help from the lecturer (Penaflorida, 2002). This shows that the students are able to learn independently as they can control their own learning (Richards & Renandya, 2002).

iv. Able to identify the errors/mistakes that other students make

Four students realized that when they did the peer review activity, they could recognise the mistakes that their friends did and know how to make the essay better.

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 11: *Actually for me, it is helpful because for me we can know where the person did wrongly and then we can improve his weaknesses."*	Students 1, 11, and 17 stated that they learnt on how to write essay better when they were able to detect the errors in their friends' essays and correct them.

Student 16 said when she was able to detect the errors in others' writings, she also realized the mistakes that shouldn't be done in writing essay, hence making her to be more conscious when producing her own essay. Hence, the students can produce better work after doing the peer review (Kasper, 1998).

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Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
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v. Able to improve grammar, vocabulary or the English language in general

Four students claimed that when they were reviewing their friends' writings, they were also able to improve their grammar and enhance their vocabulary.

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 17: Read people's comment on our essay. Because when we read it, we know. What is wrong right? Grammar error.. sentence position. So from there we can correct our own essay."	Students 17 and 18 claimed that when they read their friends' comments of their essays, they could see a better way of explaining certain ideas rather than what they usually do.
"Student 14: I can see that my essay do improve. The first essay that I wrote, I got a C+. and then the second one I got A. So, I do think it's like improving in my grammar, vocabulary and structural writing."	Student 14 stated that she could see improvements in all of her essays throughout the peer review activity.
"Student 4: example if someone is really good in English it's also a way to help others to improve more on their essay."	Apart from that, student 4 stated that reading other's essay enables him to produce a better essay. This probably due to the accurate sentence structure and the right choice of words in explaining certain ideas of the essays among the competent students.

From the findings, it can be seen that the students' overall essays can be improved after writing multiple drafts based on feedbacks given by their peers (Trena, 1999). This finding confirms what Hui (2006) and Trena (1999) had found out on significant effects of peer review on students' writing quality after peer review exercises compared to the writings before the activity. In short, peer review helps some students to improve the quality of their language in their writings as they could see variations of sentence structures and choice of words used by their peers in their essays.

vi. Facilitate students on the awareness of irrelevant ideas or supporting details

Students 3, 16 and 17 echoed the same notion that peer review facilitates their awareness of irrelevant ideas or supporting details either in their peers' writings.

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 16: I think it change my writing because it make help me to.. what.. like.. help.. like when we want to do.. if there is irrelevant idea we can toss it out."	Due to this, as claimed by student 16, peer review has helped her in editing her own writings by detecting the irrelevant ideas and taking them out of the essay.

If students are able to detect irrelevant ideas in their essay, they can avoid themselves of losing marks for having essay content that is out of topic. This shows that these students are

INSIGHT JOURNAL Volume 3
Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

able to determine the do's and the don'ts in writing essays and thus are more conscious of the errors in the writings (Kasper, 1998).

vii. Facilitate students in writing faster

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 18: After I doing peer review.. I can do the essay faster and can do essay more word than before. Idea come to me fast. I can doing essay just like that."	One student noted that after the peer review activity, she could finish writing her essay faster compared to before.

As claimed, she could think of the ideas of her essay easily. This endorses Hui's (2006) finding that peer review can give a significant effect to students' revision types and quality of texts.

viii. Able to feel less tense

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 9: I think it's helpful when I review other people's work. Because I don't feel tense whenever I'm doing it."	There was only one student who believed that peer review made him to be less tensed.

As claimed by student 9, reviewing other's work may not be as intimidating as being reviewed by others for the reviews from the peers are more casual and understandable than the teachers' (Rollinson, 2005).

4.1.2 Weaknesses

i. Concerns on feelings of shyness, shame or humiliation among students

Six students agreed that the peer review activity triggers the feelings of shyness and humiliation among them.

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 9: If the students do the peer evaluation I think that it brings shame to the students."	Student 1 reasoned out that some of them were afraid that their friends would notice the errors made in their essays due to low self-confidence in their ability in writing essay. Students 2, 6 and 9 agreed that due to this low self-esteem, they embarrassed of the errors identified by their peers.

	Student 11 however felt that, when his own friend reviewed his essay, there's a tendency that the person was sabotaging him to humiliate him in front of the other classmates.
"Student 11: Because our own friends check it.. Maybe he wants to sabotage us. Want to humiliate us in front of people.. haa.. for me it's like that.. But for me the review is actually gives many benefits to us."	Student 14 echoed the same concern as she said that when their peers who are about the same age reviewed the essay, it is as if they were made fun of.
"Student 14: In my opinion, err.. aaa.. okay la. Okay.. for certain. For me it's okay. For me personally is okay. But for some of my classmates.. err.. they feel like.. aa.. what do you call that.. people are making fun of them when people who are at the same age other than lecturer themselves give comments."	

As Liu and Carless (2006) discovered that students have doubts on their classmates' expertise, this makes some of the students were not convinced with their peers' review and they trust the lecturer's feedback more.

ii. *Concerns on irrelevant and less helpful comments/reviews*

Four students felt that some of the reviews made by their peers were inappropriate in a sense of irrelevant to the errors made. Students 13, 14 and 15 agreed that some of their peers' comments were irrelevant and not helpful, thus making them to be useless in improving their essays.

Students' Responses	**Findings**
"Student 14: For instance.. there is.. err.. err.. some of them are like arguing with the colours of err… the spelling of the words colours. Some wrote O, and the other wrote U. So, small matters like that they highlight it more. So, it really important other than the writing itself."	As an illustration, student 14 gave an example of irrelevant comment which she believed is not helpful.
"Student 17: but when friends are critic our essay.. they tend.. aa.. how to say this.. They wrote more.. like kinder words or sentences because we're friends. He wrote it nicely."	Another instance of less helpful reviews is on dishonest comments given in the peer review. For an instance, student 17 believed that some of the comments were dishonest as some of the

Student 14: I think it's better for my lecturer to give comments and err.. to give their opinion rather than my classmates because some of my classmates maybe lost.. (chuckled).. in like giving comments and err.. sometimes there are comments that are useless.. (chuckled)	peers seemed to sugar coat their reviews so they would not hurt their peers' feelings. Student 14 suggested that it is better to leave the reviewing task to the lecturer as the peers' reviews are useless.

From the findings, it can be seen that certain kind of review as illustrated by student 14 makes the peer review to be less effective in helping the students to improve their writings. Thus, making the actual errors being ignored and can't be corrected as they are not highlighted by their peers. Some learners paid the most attention to almost all aspects of their writing, some paid more attention on form, and some paid more attention on content (Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996; Hyland, 1998; Leki, 1991). Despite the differences of aspects in reviewing, some students may not feel the review is relevant or useful in improving their work.

To conclude, a clear guideline in reviewing is crucial to avoid any validity and reliability issues being raised (Falchikov & Goldfinch, 2000). Hence, by making sure the quality of the reviews made is standardized, the reviews are going to be helpful for the receivers in improving the quality of the writings made.

iii. Concerns on low-quality reviews from peers

Three students agreed that some of the reviews received from their peers were not good enough as they lack knowledge either in reviewing or the language. Students 5, 7 and 13 expressed their lack of confidence on their peers' reviews. They believed their peers did not even know what they were doing when checking the essays.

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 5: The weakness... maybe the person who is checking. Maybe the person gives less comments.. Because he doesn't know what is he checking."	Student 5 indicated that lack of comments given for his essay reflected that the person reviewing did not know what to be reviewed.
"Student 13: Tak.. Tak.. Tak rasa.. Tak confident yang benda tu betul. Sebab kita pun kurang jugak."	Students 7 and 13 admitted that they felt that way on their peers' ability because they themselves were also not confident with their ability to review other's essay.

This finding echoes with Sullivan et al. (1999) that students have a lack of self-confidence when reviewing their peers' work. Furthermore, student 7 believed that the lecturer knows better in detecting errors compared to himself and his peers. This reflects the inability of some incompetent students who could not detect errors in their peers' writings especially on grammatical errors.

iv. Concerns on stressful feedbacks

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 9: Because I tend to feel stress whenever I hear comments because I keep on regretting the mistake that I made. I think it's better I'm doing the review."	There was one student who claimed that he would feel stressed whenever he heard comments from his friends in the peer review activity as the comments made him resented the errors made. However, he would not mind to review others' works.

Even though there was only one student who felt this way, it still signifies that some students might feel intimidated of reading or receiving comments on their writing work. This shows that the students have doubts on their classmates' expertise as compared to their teachers in checking their works (Liu & Carless, 2006).

v. Concerns of confidentiality matters

Students' Responses	Findings
"Student 9: There's one negativity I can see because I think the essay should be between the lecturers and students."	One student felt that the written work should only be read or viewed by the lecturer and not anyone else. She further explained that the review activity should only be between the lecturer and the students.

As Radecki and Swales (1988) found that the majority of learners preferred their teacher's feedback than their peer's, and assumed it was the teacher's job to identify and amend the errors, they could not accept their work being reviewed by their peers. Thus, if the lecturer wants to conduct peer review activity in class, the students should be briefed so that no confidentiality matter occurs.

4.2 RQ2: Who Do Students Prefer Most in Receiving Feedbacks for Their Essays?

Lastly is research question 2 (two) which investigates on students' preferences in receiving feedbacks and comments for their essay writing. For this research question, results on students' comments were divided into three classes namely; lecturer, peers and both, where each of the classes were then categorized into different themes. Based on the findings, it can be seen that from the total number of 18 students, 50% (9) of them which is also the highest percentage voted for Lecturer's Feedback. The least percentage with only 6% (1) voted for Peers' Feedback. Meanwhile, eight students preferred to have both lecturers' and peers' feedbacks for their essay writing. Nevertheless, there is not much difference of percentage between the Lecturer's Feedback and the percentage of Both Feedbacks as 44% (8) of the students preferred to have feedbacks from both lecturer and their peers. This insignificant difference explains that lecturer's feedback is still favoured by the students even the peer review activity does help them in improving their essay writing. This can be clearly seen in Figure 3.

INSIGHT JOURNAL Volume 3
Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

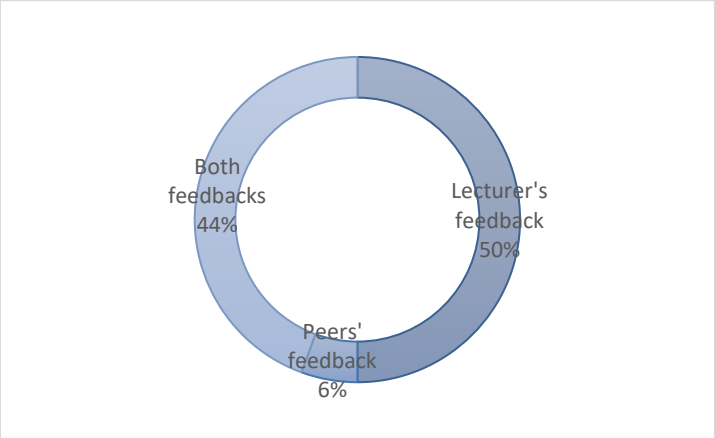

Figure 3: Students' Preferences on Essay Writing Feedback
Source: Developed for this study

4.2.1 Lecturer's Feedback

Based on the findings, it can be seen that from the total number of 18 students, 50% (9) of them which is also the highest percentage voted for Lecturer's Feedback. Data were analysed and three themes were developed from the respondents who opted for Lecturer's Feedback which are (i) have more knowledge/experience and credibility as a lecturer, (ii) provide detailed/better explanations and comments as well as (iii) direct feedback from lecturers to students.

i. Have more knowledge/experience and credibility as a lecturer

One of their reasons was that the perception students had on lecturers' credibility which is reflected through the amount of knowledge and experience lecturers have in teaching essay writing.

Students' Responses	Findings
Student 5: If that's the case, of course lecturer...because if friends, they dont know that much compared to lecturer...a lot of comments can be given by the lecturer in the writing.	For example, student 5 compared between students' knowledge and lecturer's knowledge in giving comments, while student 6 commented that lecturers would see better in what was lacking in the essays.

This resembles with findings from the past researches that found both teachers and learners believed that teacher's feedback on student writing has a vital part in writing instruction and an enormous influence on student's writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014; Goldestin, 2004; Leki, 1990). As apparent as it is, it can be concluded that students in this 21st century still need and want lecturers to be their main provider for education as they depend much on lecturers' credibility.

ii. Provide detailed/better explanations and comments

Other reasons students gave was that lecturers provided more detailed or better explanation and comments than peer review. Again, there is a sense of comparison between students' feedback and lecturers' feedback where students thought that their friends' comments were

INSIGHT JOURNAL Volume 3
Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

less reliable compared to the lecturers. For example, student 15 commented that as a peer-reviewer herself, she didn't really know what was lacking. Another example can be seen from student 14's response.

Students' Responses	Findings
Student 14: I think it's better for my lecturer to give comments and err.. to give their own comments rather than my classmates because some of my classmates maybe lost.. (chuckled).. in like giving comments and err.. sometimes there are comments that cannot be reliable..(chuckled).	Student 14 clearly expressed her lack of confidence towards her classmates being unreliable in terms of giving feedback.

Student 14's comment on the factor of reliability could also be regarded as one of the weaknesses of peer-review as comments and feedback from students depend much on their seriousness as well as ability of checking their friends' work. Since most students have doubts on their classmates' expertise as compared to their lecturer's in checking their works (Liu & Carless, 2006), it is believed that lecturer is known to be the best person who is able to guide the writing process effectively.

iii. Direct feedback from lecturer to students

Once again, students show the trust and confidence they have for lecturers.

Students' Responses	Findings
Student 15: I prefer teacher's comment because it is direct encounter teacher and me to comment my essay, to improve my writing.	Student 15 stated that direct feedback from lecturers will provide better help in improving his essay writing skills.

This strongly explains that lecturers are still seen as a reliable source for students to count on. They are clearly inclined for more comprehensive, detailed and clear feedback rather than that od their peer's. This reaffirms other research such as Elwood and Bode (2014).

4.2.2 Peer's Feedback

Under the Peers' Feedback category, one theme was developed which is (i) become more aware in avoidance of errors and repentance of mistakes. According to the findings, there was only one student who chose to have only peer review as the feedback for his writing. It is the least percentage with 6% compared to lecturer's feedback and both lecturer's and peer's feedback which have a bigger portion of the pie.

i. Become more aware in avoidance of errors and repentance of mistakes

Students' Responses	Findings
Student 7: Example like ahhhh like…what is that….from peer review, we can see other peoples' mistakes. Meaning to say, we can see the common mistakes that students always make. Because we reviewed question by question. If we review only on ours, means we	Student 7 claimed that peer review certainly helps him to be in charge of his own learning and make him more aware of the common mistakes.

only get to see the mistakes that we make not others. *Student 7: "Because the one that lecturer marked, because when I received it, I was so lazy to look at it again. Because I could see there were so many red markings.."*	He further added that he did not benefit from the comments made by the lecturer on his essay as he rarely read it. Student 7 might felt intimidated or demotivated of the markings made on his essay. Hence, he believed peer review activity helped him to learn on how to improve his essay better.

He also agreed that the strengths and weaknesses of their peers' essay would be more noticeable if peer feedback is carried out analytically, subsequently making them to be more conscious of the similar errors that they make in their own writings and notice the important elements and rules of fluent and clear writing (Kasper, 1998).

4.2.3 Both Feedbacks

Two themes were discovered under Both Lecturer's and Peers' Feedback which are (i) different views and opinions from both parties and also (ii) reviewing through imitation from the lecturer's review. The themes were generated from 44% of the 18 respondents in the semi-structured interviews.

i. Different views and opinions from both parties

A great deal of preferences from both peers and lecturers signifies a vital role of these feedbacks which contribute to an enormous influence on student's writing (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014, p. 237; Goldestin, 2004; Leki, 1990, p. 58).

Students' Responses	Findings
Student 4: like if the lecturer gives comments about the essay, so that's okay,..I know I need to improve on thi.., but when there is a peer review, we can also see from other student's point of view. Like, "Oh okay, if we write something you also need to put this and that into our review". So, both of the.. from like lecturer and from students, I like to see la.	Student 4 showed an inclination for both instructors and peers' feedbacks which offer her benefits compared to receiving feedback solely from one side.

Thus, this allows them to have greater extension of improvement which paves way to a much clear and concise writing.

INSIGHT JOURNAL Volume 3
Published by UiTM Cawangan Johor, Malaysia
eISSN 2600-8564

ii. Reviewing through imitation from the lecturer's review

Students' Responses	Findings
Student 16: For me, when I analyse and then the teacher can tell what is wrong with the essay and I can improve my writing by applying the same technique.	Student 16 reiterated the same notion that both feedbacks are equally important as the students can imitate the same reviewing techniques used by the lecturers when they are reviewing their peers' work.

The comments from the lecturer's markings could guide the students in their review of the others' writings. This echoes with the notion that peer review provides the students a platform where they can observe the teachers' role and learn the process of evaluating one's work (Hanrahan & Issacs, 2001).

5. Limitation

The findings from the study are only from 18 respondents, thus data from a bigger sample should be analysed so generalization can be made. Apart from that, the study was done among the Malay students in UiTM Seri Iskandar; hence, future research should cover the other races from other universities. The whole findings are just retrieved from the students as no interview was made to the lecturer. Thus, the responses from the lecturer should be collected for future study and subsequently gives a better insight to the implementation of peer review in writing class. Finally, majority of respondents believed that lecturer's feedback is more helpful than their peers' feedback, while the rest preferred peer review. However, there is no evidence that their work has improved solely by either one of these feedbacks. Hence, future research should be done by including the analysis of the students' work before and after peer review implementation.

6. Conclusion

The purpose of the study was to explore the students' insight on the strengths and weaknesses of peer review in writing classes and the students' preferences between peers' and lecturer's feedbacks for their essay. The analysis from the students' responses revealed that majority of students echoed the same idea that peer review aids them in achieving a relatively good piece of writing. Eight themes of strengths were extracted as compared to only five themes of weaknesses. These students echoed the same notion that when reviewing others' writings, they were more conscious of the important elements of an essay, aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their friends' essays in which enables them to progressively determine the do's and the don'ts in writing essays and subsequently making them to be more conscious of the similar errors that they make in their own writings (Kasper, 1998). Due to this, there were significant effects of peer review on their writing quality after doing the peer review exercises compared to before the activity (Hui, 2006 & Trena, 1999).

Despite the perks, several students claimed that peer review activity triggers the feelings of shyness and humiliation among them. They also believed that some students have a lack of self-confidence when reviewing their peers' work (Sullivan et al., 1999), thus producing low quality reviews which are less helpful. From the analysis as well the students' preferences over their lecturer or peers' feedback can be identified. A majority of the students agreed that lecturers are still seen as a reliable source for students to count on which they are clearly

inclined for more comprehensive, detailed and clear feedback rather than peers (Elwood & Bode, 2014). As the sample of this study comprises only 18 participants and as the study is qualitative in nature, no generalization can be made for the study sample was not a large one. Hence, future study can be conducted with a large and different sample which can provide enough data so generalization can be made. Moreover, perhaps future study can be done by taking the perspective of a lecturer so that the feedbacks from both parties can be drawn to fill in the gap in the knowledge.

Despite this drawback, it can be argued that the findings of this study have shed some light on students' perceptions of peer review in writing class. Therefore, language educators are encouraged to assimilate classroom discussions on error correction, feedback and writing in their classes to help the students to learn how feedback can positively affect their writing. It can also be escalated to the teaching of other language skills or foreign language classroom as it provides students a platform where they can understand the nature of assessment and evaluation (Hanrahan & Issacs, 2001) and consequently improves their own work.

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INSIGHT JOURNAL

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA CAWANGAN JOHOR

International, Refereed, Open Access, Online Journal

Volume 3

2019

eISSN : 2600-8564