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FOSTERING AUTONOMOUS LEARNING THROUGH PEER FEEDBACK

Ema Wilianti Dewia*, Siti Roki'ahb

- ^a Sharia Tourism Department, Faculty of Islamic Economics and Business, IAIN Syekh Nurjati, Indonesia
- ^b English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Sebelas Maret, Indonesia

*Corresponding author: Perjuangan Street, Kesambi, Cirebon City, West Java, 45132, Indonesia. E-mail addresses: <a href="mailto:emailt

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abstract

Peer assessment appeared in social constructionism theory since peer assessment activity involves the joint construction of knowledge through discourse. This study focuses on one product that arises from peer-assessment activity: feedback from peers. Besides, this study linked peer feedback from the peer-assessment activity and learners' autonomy in language learning. Autonomous learning is regarded as a desirable goal in an educational context. In exploring this issue, the study used the case study method. The first-semester students in an academic writing class in the English language teaching department at a university in Indonesia are the participants in this study. The researchers qualitatively analyze students' feedback from the peer-assessment process and conduct follow-up interviews to answer how peer feedback from peer-assessment activity fosters students' autonomous learning. The results show that peer assessment could engage the students with their peers in giving and receiving feedback. Furthermore, giving feedback to peers requires students to have prior and new knowledge that must be studied independently. In responding to peer feedback, the students believe that peer feedback is essential in fostering their autonomy. Educational practitioners may use this assessment for junior to higher education students to activate their autonomous learning.

INTRODUCTION

The initial definition of peer assessment is a set of assessment activities that allow learners to deliberate on the quality of learning of others of similar status or grades (Topping, 2017). Peer assessment facilitates the students to deal with criteria and standards that have a role as a guide for making quantitative and qualitative judgments or comments. Writing is one product that may be subject to peer assessment, as peer assessment plays an essential role in writing (Azarnoosh, 2013). Peer assessment becomes crucial in writing because it supports writing teachers and lecturers to provide their students to receive more feedback on their papers. Peer assessment could act as a supplementary or substitute for a teacher's assessment. However, in deciding the final grade for students, teacher assessment still becomes the main output that the teacher uses. As supplementary to the teacher's assessment, the critical output of peer assessment is peer feedback, formerly explained as media of learners to exchange their knowledge through assessing and giving feedback on their peer's work. This is how peer feedback becomes crucial in peer assessment.

Comments from peers are regarded as peer feedback in peer assessment activity. Peer feedback is going well when students can deliver comments on strengths, weaknesses, and suggestions to peers as material for improving a peer's project, in this case, academic writing (Su & Huang, 2022; Wu & Schunn, 2020; Yu & Hu, 2017). Peer feedback, a learner-centered

activity, requires students to assess their peers' work needs and provide feedback (Wu & Schunn, 2020). Thus, the teacher or lecturer acts as a facilitator for students during the activity. AI-powered assessment, which arises in the digital era, can provide reliable and accurate information in assessing students' work through formative and summative assessment (Nazari et al., 2021). However, students' social interaction can be reached through peer assessment activities by giving and receiving feedback. Peer feedback could support students in developing higher-order thinking skills by analyzing multiple perspectives from comparing one's writing with peers. In the 21st century, higher-order thinking skills are essential for learners (Su & Huang, 2022).

One of the highest-level subskills in Bloom's Taxonomy is an assessment that can analyze, evaluated, and created (J. Topping, 2017; Putra et al., 2019; Yusoff & Seman, 2018). Thus, peer feedback as a product of peer assessment activity is part of the highest subskill, which can foster students' higher-order thinking skills. Peer feedback is a form of comments and judgment that students need to fulfill during peer-assessment activity, which is based on criteria and standards given before the peer-assessment activity starts (Boud & Falchikov, 2006). In the peer-assessment process, students accept more feedback besides oral or written feedback from the teacher or lecturer. It facilitates students to interact with peers and have a broader perspective on the topic they have written. To make peer feedback meaningful, learners must be able to make their feedback make sense for their peers, and their peers can use peer feedback for improvement (Boud & Molloy, 2013; Hoo et al., 2022; Winstone & Charless, 2020)

Academic writing is known as writing with a rich information source. Academic writers must attach scientific literature supporting their writing (Hyland & Salager-Meyer, 2009). Challenges in writing academic texts could be problems for many students. The complexity of academic writing requires students to think critically to find precise information in writing their ideas. Moreover, academic writing fosters writers to give facts, frame arguments, and convey ideas to convince readers of the information in their writing (Hyland, n.d.; Hyland & Diani, 2009). Besides the idea and information, the complexity of academic writing is also related to the use of language. The specific language used in academic writing reflects how writers acknowledge, construct, and negotiate social relations. Thus, feedback from peer-assessment activity becomes essential in academic writing.

Giving and receiving feedback from peer assessment activities in academic writing will affect the autonomous learning skills of students. One of the advantages of peer assessment is to help students to become autonomous (Topping, 2017). Indonesia has practiced learnercentered learning activities in the classroom. This is in line with peer-assessment activity that requires students to be active in the assessment process in the class. Learner-centered activity is closely related to autonomy, which is significant in education. Hyland & Diani (2009) highlighted peer assessment as a formative developmental process that provides feedback that allows writers to make discussion with their texts and learn another perspective of the texts' interpretation. It is also reported to develop learner autonomy because peer assessment transfers teacher responsibility to students. Students develop their writing skills and improve their performance by providing more detailed and helpful feedback. (Jin et al., 2022) By providing more detailed and helpful feedback, students can improve their writing skills and performance. (Jin et al., 2022). In other words, we need more support to improve the usefulness of the peer feedback provided. Educators should emphasize the benefits of active and meaningful participation in peer assessment activities, help students understand the potential for mutual feedback in improving academic writing skills, and encourage learning autonomy. As a result, autonomy empowers evaluators, promotes ownership of their peers' feedback experiences, and

motivates students to revise their essays proactively. Autonomy is the ability of learners to control their learning (Benson, 2013).

Learners' autonomy was born from the agency. From a socio-cultural perspective, agency as a critical component refers to the ability of individuals to act, make decisions, and reflect on their behavior concerning themselves and their social environment (Yang et al., 2006). The agency is closely related to self-efficacy (an individual's belief in his or her ability to perform a particular task), control, and self-regulation. In a broad sense, autonomous learning means that learners can think critically, make decisions and act independently. The most crucial aspects of succeeding in autonomous learning are compensation and social and metacognitive techniques (Habeb Al-Obaydi et al., 2023).

The study carried out by Iraji, et.al (2016) showed that the experimental group in the study saw significant changes in the use of peer assessment. Therefore, the results will help EFL teacher who enjoys helping students develop learning strategies, identify their strengths and weaknesses and help them become more autonomous. Additionally, the self-assessment checklist gives teachers complete information on their student's progress and failures in the learning process. Whereas a study revealed by (Jin et al., 2022) showed that student engagement in peer feedback support learners' autonomy by reflecting the feedback from peer to revise their work. This study confirmed that student participation in peer feedback significantly impacted their writing performance. Feedback from peers indicated that the usefulness of comments, suggestions, syntheses, and positive emotional engagement provided were reliable predictors of writing performance. These empirical findings provide a new understanding of how peer feedback improves writing performance. Investigating a dynamic system of student participation in peer feedback that equalizes the gender distribution within the sample will be an important future direction. The two previous research has yet to explore students' perspectives on how peer feedback could lead the students to foster autonomous learning when peer feedback results from the peer assessment process. This research will focus on (1) how peer assessment facilitates students in giving and receiving feedback. (2) how peer feedback fosters learners' autonomous learning in an academic writing class.

METHOD

This study involved case study research since the case study focuses on a contemporary phenomenon within a real-life context (Hollweck, 2016). The research was done qualitatively in an academic writing class of the English language teaching department graduate program at a university where peer assessment is involved as an assessment technique. The researchers are concerned about how peer assessment could provide peer feedback that will be a significant source for activating students' autonomous learning. Twenty-four graduate students become the participants in this research. The participants consist of seventeen female and seven male students. Questionnaires, observation, and follow-up interviews were carried out to seek the data to answer two research problems in this study. A research questionnaire will be conducted to examine initial information on the involvement of peer feedback from peer assessment activity in academic writing class. This information will be split into several parts later.

The observations were conducted in five academic writing class meetings written in researchers' field notes. The objective of conveying the observation in this research was to get a complete description of how peer assessment in academic writing class supports students in giving and receiving peer feedback. The researchers took several steps, including (1) playing the role of a participant and observer who participates in classroom activities but is not involved in class activities; (2) observing a lecturer peer-reviewing academic papers; (3) observing students' reactions, engagement, attitudes, and behaviors as they participate in the classroom

observational peer assessment practice process; (4) taking notes of all situations in the classroom observation; Collate and code the requirements to apply (5) Consult to experts and (6) conclude. The peer assessment activity is guided by a review form provided by the lecturer at the beginning of the meeting.

Four selected graduate students, seen from peer assessment activity and the final results of their writing which follow the assessment process well, were selected to be interviewed to seek more information and experience regarding the issue of this research. The interview is one of the most crucial sources of case study evidence (Hollweck, 2016). The targeted questions acted as guides to solicit clarifications and ideas from students. While students answered questions, researchers also wrote responses and recorded interviews. After the interviews, the results were documented as informative narratives for application to scientific research and peer evaluation. Therefore, the data obtained in this research are qualitative data helpful in solving research problems. The detailed description of the interviewed students is as follows:

Table 1. Descriptions of Interviewee

Table 10 2 decipations of interview				
Participant	Code	Gender	Age	Experience in English
1	R1	Female	25	>10 years
2	R2	Female	24	>10 years
3	R3	Male	23	>10 years
4	R4	Male	24	>10 years

Since this study is grounded in qualitative data, the validity and reliability of instruments are reflected in trustworthiness. From the explanation of the data collection method above, researchers conduct triangulation by interviewing four students, observing the classroom, and gaining the data from the students' written documents. In theoretical triangulation, the researchers will examine the research findings from more than one perspective of the same data and some theoretical reviews by seeing some experts' books or journals in analyzing the data.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first section shows the findings on how peer assessment facilitates students in giving and receiving feedback, and the second section discusses how peer feedback fosters learners' autonomous learning in an academic writing class.

Giving and Receiving Feedback in Peer-assessment Activity

All participants attended academic writing class with their academic writing draft. The lecturer required them to write an article that must be submitted and published in a journal or presented at a conference. Each student write the article based on their research interest. In the peer assessment activity, the lecturer prepared a rubric to guide students in assessing their peer's work. The lecturer also ordered students to give written and oral feedback regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their peer's articles. In the end, they also had to give suggestions to their peer to help them revise their writing. Students were given chances to validate their peer feedback to the lecturer, whether to confirm the peer's feedback or to ask for more clarity.

The lecturer of Writing Class first introduces that the class needs to deal with academic writing as their task. Before introducing the peer-assessment activity, the lecturer shows how to write a scientific article that a peer will assess later. In introducing and explaining peer assessment, the lecturer presents and explains it in detail. The graduate students need to

understand clearly the peer-assessment system to give constructive feedback to the peer. The graduate students are given time to ask questions regarding the peer-assessment policy that will be conducted in the Academic Writing class.

"The other graduate students were given peer-assessment pre-determined criteria to assess their friend's work. Peer-assessment pre-determined criteria were first introduced in this meeting; the lecturer explained the criteria that are written in the pre-determined criteria, and the graduate students were free to ask anything related to the peer-assessment pre-determined criteria" (Field Note 1)

The feedback forms into two types, namely written and oral feedback. The lecturer then gives graduate students time to discuss the feedback given in the peer assessment activity. The discussion of the feedback given by the peer also occurs with the lecturer. The lecturer asks some graduate students individually to deliver the feedback they gave to their peers and discuss it in class. After reviewing the feedback from the peer-assessment activity, the graduate students collect the draft with peer feedback and later have one-to-one conferencing with the lecturer. Findings on how peer assessment facilitates students to provide peer feedback are shown in the table below:

 Table 2. Type of Peer Assessment Used in Academic Writing Class

No	Туре
1	Formative evaluation
2	Qualitative feedback
3	Single product
4	Students are involved
5	Criteria are used

- 6 Training is given to peers
- 7 Feedback is positive
- 8 Feedback leads to improvement
- 9 Product is rework
- 10 Peer is in pair
- 11 Reciprocal communication
- 12 The same year of study
- 13 Same class
- 14 Same ability
- 15 Previous experience
- 16 Positive experience
- 17 Gender imbalance
- 18 Information technology
- 19 In class
- 20 Justification for peer
- 21 Process is monitored
- 22 Task is complex
- 23 Feedback is expected
- 24 Feedback is objective
- 25 Revision is many or few
- 26 Non-anonymous peer

This study's type of peer assessment provides peer feedback, seen in Table 2, numbers two, seven, eight, twenty-three, and twenty-four. The data was taken from participant observation by researchers. Providing peer feedback in peer assessment activity is also supported by interviews with selected participants. The researchers ask about what kind of activity the students do in academic writing class,

"I give the objective correction." (R2)

The meaning of correction that R2 said was objective feedback, which means the feedback for their peer. Peer feedback in peer assessment activity is regarded as constructive feedback by the students. The questionnaire showed that the lecturer's peer assessment activity facilitated students in giving and receiving feedback. Peer assessment activities in academic writing classes facilitate students to give and receive peer feedback. Thus, there are two points of view from students when they become feedback givers and receivers. In giving feedback, the students need to comprehend their peer's writing to give constructive feedback that is beneficial for their peer to revise their paper. The researchers asked participants how they felt when the lecturer asked them to give feedback to their peers.

"I feel a bit nervous because I need to assess and give feedback to my peer's paper, I am afraid that I will give the wrong feedback, but this is my chance to test my ability and seek more knowledge from reading my peer's work. For example, if I have difficulty comprehending some terms in my peer's paper, I can find explanations from many pieces of literature." (R1)

"In the beginning, I do not feel comfortable giving feedback to my peer, but this is the way I help my peer in revising his/her paper" (R4)

Although R1 and R4 feel nervous and reluctant to give feedback, peer assessment practice allows them to give feedback on their peer's paper and lets them explore more regarding the topic their peer brings to the class. The students need to activate their critical reading and thinking skills to solve the problem of reluctance to give feedback to their peers. Students' reluctance happens because they need to deal with their friends' work and write or convey feedback on whether their friends' work is good or not (Falchikov, 2003). Besides giving feedback, students will receive feedback from their peers. In receiving feedback, they might have minor or significant revisions according to the feedback received from peers. Students tend to perceive feedback from their peers better than from their teachers. This is mainly because peer feedback discussions are more interactive than teacher feedback. (Zhao, 2010). It reflected in the interview with R2 and R3.

Feedback from my peer helps me to scan or analyze something wrong with my writing. I can discuss comfortably with my peer during receiving feedback (R2).

I received detailed feedback from my peer. He gave me notes on tenses, ideas, clarity, etc. The lecturer may give additional feedback since my peer only focused on my paper so that he could pay attention to every detail (R3).

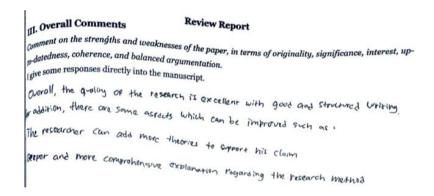


Figure 1. Example of Comments in Review Form

R2 and R3 have different experiences when receiving feedback from their peer, but both have positive views of receiving feedback. The lecturer gave full responsibility to the students to give peer feedback, which means that the students need to build trust between them in providing feedback. This study found that peer assessment in academic writing classes engaged students in the collaborative writing process by providing verbal and written feedback.

The type of assessment practiced in this study, academic writing class, is formative assessment. Formative assessment is known as the type of assessment which provides feedback. During formative peer assessment, students actively evaluate peers' work and give and receive feedback (Chen et al., 2014). The students are well-informed about the practice of peer assessment for academic writing. Students must be examiners in the context of participation in practice, the kind of highly contextualized learning they face in their lives and work. (Boud & Falchikov, 2006).

The participants in this study realize that their role as assessors makes them comfortable; moreover, when it is compared to the teacher assessment, the students feel confident collecting the writing that has been revised based on peer feedback to the lecturer. Peer assessment also helps students identify problems in each other's writing. (Zhao, 2018). In line with (Cheng &

Warren, 2005), who stated that peer assessment of writing found that it appears capable of yielding outcomes at least as good as teacher assessment and sometimes better. The students begin to recognize changes in classroom practice regarding the assessment in an academic writing class and realize the responsibility to identify peers' writing, provide peer feedback, and minimize the reluctance because of the friendship factor that appears in the class.

Peer Feedback Fosters Autonomous Learning

Oral and written peer feedback is a crucial thing in peer assessment. With peer feedback, students have time and ideas to revise their writing. Peer feedback is believed to develop students' writing (Widodo, 2013). Peer feedback fosters autonomous learning since it contains comments and insights that students need to consider in revising their writing. The study reveals that the lecturer should have been involved in revising stage after receiving feedback from the peer assessment process. Most students felt that peer-assessment practice for academic writing gives them chances to interact freely to change information or clarify their results from reading peers' writing. Working with peer make the graduate students aware of becoming more autonomous; they are not only relying on the lecturer as the leader in the class. The students are responsible for writing and must complete the revision in the following meetings. It showed from field note 5,

"The students must complete the revised draft in the next meeting."

Since peer assessment in academic writing class is carried out per chapter in a meeting, the students could improve and revise their scientific articles in enough time. The students stated that the process and product of peer assessment, that is, peer feedback, helped them a lot in the revision process.

"With practicing peer-assessment activity, I can evaluate my learning outcome, revise my writing based on the comments from my friends and my peer's feedback" (R1)

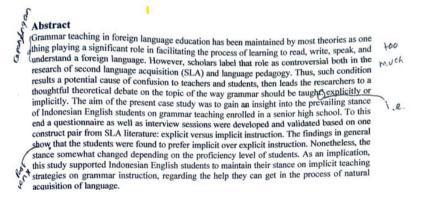


Figure 2. Example of comments on a student's paper

R1 argued that peer-assessment practice is a guide to evaluating their writing and their peer's writing. Besides, feedback given by peers leads them to know the things that should be written or not. Thus, peer assessment is the means of providing information to the learners about what to improve. Constructive feedback from peers is believed to help students in revising stage of

writing. After receiving feedback, the students need to work individually. They must reflect on peer feedback from peer assessment activity in academic writing class. Since autonomous learning is how students control their learning (Benson, 2013), it aligns with revising stage of academic writing. Students control peer feedback, which becomes a significant source for their paper writing. Interview with R2 revealed that peer feedback helps them to find more sources related to comments and suggestions mentioned by their peer,

"My peer suggests I add more literature review to my paper, and it requires me to read and write again individually. The lecturer does not have control over my revision writing. I need to take control of it and think of feedback from my peer and seek more sources related to the feedback" (R2)

Peer feedback gives more insight into peers' writing; thus, the assessee must consider peer feedback and rethink their writing individually. Autonomous learning deals with several aspects and strategies that can indicate whether students are autonomous (Benson, 2013). The first indicator is students' ability to reflect their capability, in this case, writing ability and areas of improvement. This research revealed that peer feedback gives comments and suggestions to peers as media to help peers find an error or give new information needed. However, the idea of autonomous learning is mainly discussed about self-reflection. Peer feedback has a role in building a learner's autonomy. R4 stated that peer feedback gives him ideas to improve his writing.

Feedback from my peer gives me ideas for improving my writing, and he gives an idea I have yet to think of before (R4).

Peer feedback is initiated to improve students' writing (Topping, 2017). The students in academic writing class can feel the development because of peer feedback. However, some students need help to reach the topic of their peer's topic because they need to gain knowledge regarding the topic written by the peer. This occurs when students reflect on their learning by providing feedback to others and improve their work by incorporating feedback from others (Patchan et al., 2018). This occurs when students reflect on their learning by providing feedback to others and improve their work by incorporating feedback from others (Patchan et al., 2018). To reduce the factors that can create negative emotions, educators need to improve student communication and instruction to solve academic writing problems based on a peer feedback system that supports student autonomy. (Jin et al., 2022). The role of feedback in writing implicates complex issues and must be considered in the overall context in which feedback is given. (Hyland & Diani, 2009). However, the students still realize that they are responsible for providing constructive feedback and realize that their peer needs suggestion from them.

Besides improving the quality of graduate students writing, peer assessment facilitates the effective monitoring of students' autonomous learning. The students become independent learners because of the experience given by the lecturer to work in pairs without lecturer intervention (Chen et al., 2014). The students need to think critically by reading the complete writing of their peers and try to give feedback to the peer. In line with strategies that can support students in achieving autonomous learning, that is, self-assess the areas of improvement (Benson, 2013). Moreover, peer feedback was found to be associated with a greater degree of student autonomy when compared with teacher feedback (Yang et al., 2006). Thus, autonomous learning is fostered by peer feedback in peer assessment activity. More importantly, students become more autonomous when actively participating in peer assessment. (Cheng & Warren,

2005). Peer feedback from peer assessment activity helps students activate students control over their learning and improvement. Autonomous learning is not a simple thing that every student can master. It needs several factors to trigger the willingness to be autonomous in learning.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, peer assessment activity in academic writing class provides peer feedback as a result of the activity. The practice of peer assessment for academic writing requires students to understand the peer-assessment pre-determined criteria, read their peer's writing critically, formulate feedback for their peer, and give feedback to their peer. Grading is not the main output from peer assessment activity in class. Peer feedback becomes meaningful artifacts beneficial in some aspects of learning, especially academic writing. Peer assessment does not focus on marking graduate students' writing with grades; nonetheless, peer-feedback is the primary outcome expected to make the graduate students benefit from being involved in the peer-assessment activity. By practicing peer assessment, it is hoped that graduate students have the experience to know about their progress in writing. Students reflect on the strength and weaknesses that they made in their peer-assessment product. Peer assessment activates the autonomous learning and critical thinking skills of students. The students show several beneficial things for them in writing because of giving and receiving feedback during peer assessment practice. The students could understand the strengths and weaknesses of their writing from the feedback given by their peers, which is helpful for them to do the revision. By knowing strengths and weaknesses from peer feedback, the students have the courage to find ways to revise by themselves by reflecting on those peer feedback. Peer assessment could be carried out within all educational levels, which this study can not achieve. Further research possibly explores the practice of peer assessment in other educational levels, from elementary to high school, to discover the broader benefit of peer assessment.

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