UNIVERSITI PUTRA MALAYSIA

IMPACT OF PEER REVIEW ON THE ESL COMPOSING PROCESS

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By

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Thesis Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, in Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Universiti Putra Malaysia

DEDICATION

To my parents who inculcated in me the love for knowledge,

My teachers who gave me knowledge and guided me to search for it, and

My wife and son for their love, care, and support

Abstract of thesis presented to the Senate of Universiti Putra Malaysia in fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Chairman: **Mohd Faiz Abdullah, Ph.D.**

Faculty: **Modern Languages and Communication**

One of the distinctive features of the process approach to writing theory is its inclusion of various identifiable stages which composition undergoes, unlike the product approach which treats the act of writing with finality. The persistence of the composing process notion for multiple drafts in text creation has called for active involvement of learners as both reviewers and feedback providers. Despite the growing research in the area of writing processes, little is known about the effects of peer review on L2 writers' perceptions and linguistic development. The present study explores the effects of peer review activities on ESL composing process practice as perceived by the learners and the ways by which these activities affect students' linguistic development. Twenty nine undergraduate matriculation students at the IIUM majoring in English language and literature participated in the study. Sixteen of these students participated in the peer review activities, while the remaining thirteen formed the comparison group. A total of 130 essays (80 essays produced during peer

review activities and 50 essays during the pre test and post test stages by both groups) were collected over a period of nine weeks Peer reviews were conducted over five sessions, and first and revised drafts were produced on five different topics of expository writing genre The students' first and final drafts, pre test and post test essays were collected and analyzed, and a post interview and a questionnaire survey were conducted Non-participant observation was carried out to determine the types of negotiation and interaction that occur during peer review sessions Further, students' errors before and after exposure to peer reviews were analyzed, identified and classified

The findings indicate that the students perceived peer review as useful and effective, and that they maintained social harmony during the process of providing and getting comments and feedback It was also discovered that the students demonstrated selectivity in incorporating peer comments and suggestions, besides displaying fewer form and content errors after the exposure to peer reviews Peer reviews were also found to contribute to the development of learners' social skills, awareness as learners and of linguistic as well as rhetorical knowledge The study suggests that L2 learners be given more opportunities to participate in process-based composing activities The study also suggests that there is a need for error analysis within the context of process-oriented language learning in appreciation of learners' errors as positive learning strategies and signs of learners' current language on the target language

Abstrak tesis yang dikemukakan kepada Senat Universiti Putra Malaysia
sebagai memenuhi syarat untuk ijazah Doktor Falsafah

IMPAK PENYELIDIKAN KUMPULAN DALAM PROSES KARANGAN BAHASA INGGERIS (ESL)

Oleh

ABDEL RAHMAN ABDALLA SALIH AHMED

Mac 2003

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Salah satu perbezaan yang sangat ketara dalam pendekatan proses terhadap teori penulisan ialah kemasukan pelbagai peringkat yang dapat dikenal pasti dan yang dilalui dalam proses mengarang jika dibandingkan dengan produk penulisan di mana produk yang dihasilkan adalah muktamad. Elemen ketetapan dalam proses mengarang sangat penting. Ini adalah kerana pelajar-pelajar harus menulis rangka teks itu berulang-kali di mana pelajar-pelajar bertindak sebagai penyelidik dan pemaklum balas. Walaupun telah ada penyelidikan yang berterusan dalam bidang proses penulisan tetapi hanya sedikit sahaja yang diketahui mengenai kesan aktiviti penyelidikan kumpulan atas persepsi dan perkembangan linguistik penulis L2. Penyelidikan masa kini akan menyelidik kesan aktiviti tersebut dalam proses latihan mengarang penulisan ESL seperti yang dilihat oleh pelajar-pelajar. Di samping itu juga ia akan mengaitkan bagaimana aktiviti diterangkan ini boleh memberi kesan kepada perkembangan linguistik pelajar-pelajar. 29 mahasiswa UIAM yang masih menuntut di Matrikulasi dalam bidang Bahasa Inggeris dan Kesusasteraan telah

dijadikan subjek dalam kajian ini. 16 dari pelajar-pelajar ini terlibat dalam aktiviti penyelidikan kumpulan manakala 13 pelajar-pelajar ini pula terlibat dalam aktiviti kumpulan perbandingan. Sebanyak 130 karangan (80 karangan dihasilkan ketika menjalankan aktiviti penyelidikan kumpulan dan 50 karangan dihasilkan ketika 'pre-test' dan 'post-test' diadakan bagi kedua-dua karangan) telah dikumpul dalam jangka masa 9 minggu. Penyelidikan kumpulan telah diadakan sebanyak lima sesi, draf yang pertama dan yang terakhir telah dihasilkan berdasarkan lima topik yang berbeza yang berkaitan dengan karangan jenis eksposisi. Hasil penulisan pelajar-pelajar untuk draf pertama dan terakhir, 'pre-test', 'post-test' telah dikumpulkan dan dianalisiskan. Di samping itu, kaedah soal-selidik dan wawancara dengan pelajar-pelajar telah dijalankan. Selain daripada itu, kaedah pemerhatian tanpa penglibatan secara terus juga telah dijalankan untuk menentukan jenis interaksi dan rundingan yang diadakan ketika sesi penyelidikan kumpulan. Kesilapan yang dilakukan oleh pelajar-pelajar sebelum dan selepas didedahkan kepada aktiviti penyelidikan kumpulan telah dianalisis, dikenal pasti dan diklasifikasi.

Hasil dari kajian ini, pelajar-pelajar dapat melihat bahawa aktiviti penyelidikan kumpulan sangat berguna, efektif dan pelajar-pelajar juga dapat memelihara keharmonian sosial ketika memberi dan mendapat komen serta maklum balas. Kajian ini juga menunjukkan pelajar-pelajar sangat berhati-hati dalam menggabungkan komen dan cadangan daripada rakan sebaya. Dapatan yang diperolehi daripada kajian ini menunjukkan pelajar-pelajar melakukan kesilapan yang kecil dari aspek isi kandungan dan pembentukan ayat setelah didedahkan kepada aktiviti penyelidikan

kumpulan. Berdasarkan kajian ini, perkembangan kemahiran sosial pelajar-pelajar, kesedaran sebagai pelajar dan pengetahuan linguistik dan retorik adalah hasil sumbangan daripada aktiviti penyelidikan kumpulan. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan pelajar-pelajar L2 harus diberi peluang untuk terlibat dalam aktiviti proses mengarang. Kajian ini juga mencadangkan bahawa keperluan mengadakan latihan analisis kesalahan dalam konteks mempelajari bahasa sebagai satu strategi yang penting dan positif dalam proses pembelajaran bahasa.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Some terms are commonly used in the field of applied linguistics and are known in their abbreviated forms while others have been expressed as acronyms in the present study:

L2 (Second Language)

FL (Foreign Language)

ESL (English as a Second Language)

EFL (English as a Foreign Language)

SLA (Second Language Acquisition)

L1 (First Language), MT (mother tongue): used as synonyms

EA (Error Analysis)

TL (Target Language)

PR (Peer Review)

UPM (Universiti Putra Malaysia)

UM (Universiti Malaya)

IIUM (the International Islamic University Malaysia)

ZPD (Zone of Proximal Development)

IL (Interlanguage)

The question mark (?) is used as an alternative correct form (Chapter 5)

TV (television)

I/PR (Included/Peer Review)

N/PR (Not included/Peer Review)

I/NPR (Included/Not in Peer Review)

Pre T (Pre test)

Post T (Post test)

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

The last decade or so has witnessed a considerable growing volume of second language (L2) research related to acquisition/learning processes, especially in the area of writing. As a result of the remarkable trend in L2 pedagogy research towards the incorporation of process-oriented tasks, the area of learning and teaching writing is now emerging as researchers are trying to focus on writing as a process with various dimensions and aspects. The process approach to writing invokes multiple identifiable stages which characterise writing as a recursive process where ideas are generated, negotiated and revised during text creation (Zamel, 1982, 1983; Carson and Nelson, 1996).

The typical written English of ESL learners is generally found to contain learner errors in coherence, organization, idea development, form and an absence of self-correction activity as well. In other words, the process of composition writing is expected to reflect a variety of learner error types and instances of absence of self-correction activities. It could be argued that self and peer review strategies are not taught to students in language classes. As a result of this problem, when students write or communicate in English they produce new forms of language that carry the features of the inappropriately used linguistic categories. Richards and Sampson

(1984:6) argue that "like first language learners, the second language learner tries to derive the rules behind the data to which he has been exposed, and may develop hypotheses that correspond neither to the mother tongue nor target language." This will definitely affect the communication process and cause confusion and inaccuracy.

A recognition of the need to explore not only the learner's linguistic knowledge in writing but also the different phases composition goes through, has paved the way for a new concept in composition research, namely the composing process (Nelson and Carson, 1998). Recent research attempts to understand the various stages underlying the composing process by which writers generate ideas, discover meaning, receive feedback and revise drafts to present the final product (Zamel, 1982, 1983; Chaudron, 1984; Keh, 1989; Nelson and Murphy, 1993; Villamil and De Guerrero, 1996), and the students' perceptions of peer feedback to writing and the socio-cognitive dimensions of interaction in peer review activities (De Guerrero and Villamil, 1994; Carson and Nelson, 1996), as well as the search for the best moments for providing feedback to student writers (Frankenberg-Garcia, 1999).

Research has also attempted to provide theoretical and empirical validity for process-oriented learning models, experiential learning and collaborative learning, and the application of process-oriented and collaborative learning models in target language learning activities (Kohonen, 1992; Olsen and Kagan, 1992; Coehlo, 1992). While some work has been done in the area, many questions still remain for investigation. For instance, what are the learner's personal factors that contribute towards the

quality of writing? Moreover, what are the aspects of peer-peer response in peer writing? And what are the suitable techniques that could be implemented in order to validate self and peer review for learner linguistic development? Yet, the question of the role that the learner's culture and experience play in responding to the interaction process remains confusing.

In fact, the emergence of learner language focused in the late 1980s and its growth in English as a second language (ESL) and foreign language (EFL) contexts has provided considerable insights into how ESL/EFL classes could be more learner-centred (Ellis, 1985; Larsen-Freeman and Long, 1991). The idea of learner-centredness has actually developed in tandem with a strong tendency for researchers to explore the usefulness and validity of feedback, self and peer review and revision on learners' written language (see, for example, Devenney, 1989; Makino, 1993; Chandrasegaran, 1986; Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang, 1999; Nelson and Carson, 1998; Mendonça and Johnson, 1994; Sheppard, 1992).

Research has also refocused on performance and the processes that accompany the production of particular aspects of the language system by learners. In fact, error correction is one of the several major themes and perspectives that have attained wide interest among researchers and language instructors. According to Krahnke and Christison (1983), no facet of language pedagogy has been viewed a conundrum other than that of learner shortcomings. What has occurred, then, is a veritable controversy over the issue of learner errors and the way they are to be treated. Thus, teachers and

researchers' efforts have focused on seeking the best way to respond to and correct learners' errors, especially in the written language (Robb, Ross, and Shortreed, 1986; James, 1998; Atari and Triki, 2000).

However, despite the emergence of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) as a fertile research field, and in spite of the growing shift in interests in the area, the issue of treating learners' errors by teachers or tutors remains controversial. According to Chaudron (1988) Nunan (1989) and Ferris (2002), researchers, when tackling this matter, are faced with the following key questions:

1. What is there to correct in learner language?
2. When should correction be carried out?
3. How should learner error be corrected? and,
4. Who should correct the learners' errors?

In past decades, however, the issue of error treatment in the written work of learners in second and foreign language settings has restricted itself to only giving attention to production of the forms without considering the aspects of learning the structure and other systems of the target language. Moreover, no attempt has been made to relate L2 learners' errors to the different stages in the composing process. Instead, learners' linguistic production in the written and spoken language has been accommodated by a systematic intervention of the teacher correcting the errors without giving the

learners a chance to practise correcting their errors by themselves. Learners were not trained to review their errors or to participate in correcting them either.

Nevertheless, L2 research has shown that errors made by learners have been viewed as mere failure to grasp L2 data successfully (Dulay, Burt and Krashen, 1982). Due to this perception, and in the absence of empirical justification for the incorporation of feedback alternatives, teachers have remained as the main source that provides feedback for learners' production. This heavy teacher corrective process, in one way, has led to what is known as the teacher-centred approach (Gaies, 1985).

Teacher-centred classroom procedures seem to overlook both involving students in providing corrective feedback and implementing composing process skills and strategies. "On the other hand", Atari and Triki (2000: 95) argue that, "teachers tend to approach students' compositions as final drafts to be evaluated and corrected rather than as texts developed over time and analysed in terms of writer's intention, readers' expectations, topic and purpose of writing." The implication of this observation is that, learners' written scripts are expected to reflect an absence of peer review and process-based feedback. One more factor that has contributed to make the situation difficult is the fact that learners are not given time to take part in error treatment.

It is basically important to mention here that the growing body of L2 research with its abundance of information, resulting in often surprising findings, has contributed to considerable shifts in the researchers' interests in various areas of the discipline