What Do Teachers Need? A Probe of Best Practice for Assessment as Learning in EFL Writing Class

Hamamah[1], Ive Emaliana[2], Putu Dian Danayanti Degeng[3], Yulia Hapsari[4], Dani Samuel Budiawan[5], Putri Gayatri[6]

{hamamah@ub.ac.id[1], ive@ub.ac.id[2], dian_degeng@ub.ac.id[3], hapsari.yulia@upi.edu[4], samueldani@student.ub.ac.id[5], putri.gayatri@uon.edu.au[6]}

Department of Language and Literature, Brawijaya University, Malang, East Java, Indonesia[1], Department of Language Education, Brawijaya University, Malang, East Java, Indonesia[235], Department of English Language Education, Indonesia University of Education, Bandung, West Java, Indonesia[4], University of Newcastle, Australia[6]

Abstract. Assessment as learning has been extensively studied, yet its application in EFL setting in writing classes is still underrepresented. Ample research focused on learners' perceptions of peer feedback and self-assessment, but little is known about EFL teachers' best practices in utilizing the assessment in Indonesian EFL writing classes. This aims to understand teachers' views and effective implementation of assessment as learning in writing class. The narrative inquiry method was administered to investigate a teacher's teaching-writing experience. This study reported one interview drawn out from the teacher's perception in the teaching of writing and linked together as a coherent story about the teacher's teaching activities. The findings highlighted the difficulties teacher experience while instructing writing were managing number of students, preventing plagiarism, and structuring students' ideas. Besides, the teacher uses collaborative learning, automated written feedback tools and encouragement and motivation to get students involved in peer review and self-checklist assessment.

Keywords: assessment as learning, self assessment, peer-assessment, writing, EFL

1 Introduction

As a teacher, assessment is one of the most pivotal activities that need to be done to ensure and measure learners' understanding. Some researchers described assessment as an ongoing process that encompasses a broader domain, such as students' responses to a question, offering

a comment, or trying something new during writing class [1]. It can be formal, which can be stated as unplanned and impromptu, and informal, which can be stated as systemic and planned. [2] defined Assessment as the process of collecting information about something that the teacher wants to understand from the teacher, following systematic and substantially founded procedures. [3] described the purpose of Assessment as to collect evidence and make judgments or form opinions related to learners' knowledge and abilities, and it can be in the formal or informal record.

Assessment can be divided into three types assessment as learning, assessment for learning, and assessment of learning. Assessment as learning could be defined as learners' ability to reflect upon their works-in-progress relating to personal and academic goals or assessment criteria [4]. [5] mentioned some characteristics of Assessment as learning, such as capitalizing learners' thinking, emotions, actions, and motivation as resources to regulate the learning processes, emphasizing learners' active participation to evaluate and reconstruct accordingly knowledge of a particular discipline with or without teacher's guide, involving grade or marks but also encouraging the dynamic application of metacognitive awareness, knowledge, and strategies in rechecking their works. Then, AaL is personal, continuous, reflective, and self-initiated, although specific programs may place rigorous criteria on learners when they participate in AaL activities, such as requiring clear improvement plans following self-reflection.

[6] describes four relevant aspects regarding the implementation of Assessment as learning, such as (1) Establishing Learning Goals and Success Criteria, which can be defined as teachers need to assist students in developing a better understanding of their learning goals and success criteria against their writing that will be evaluated. Thus, it is a pivotal step in developing learners' metacognitive capacity and enhancing their metacognitive awareness. The teacher could employ instructional scaffolding that could be stated as detailing any information to help the students to work on their assignment. (2) Encouraging Students to Set Personal Learning Goals, so the teacher can encourage the students to reflect on their goals, personalize their learning, and can have personal learning goals that are meaningful and beneficial for them (3) Engaging Students Actively as Learning Resources for One Another which can be defined as helping each other through providing meaningful comment and feedback to enhance and support other students' draft which can be mentioned as providing feedback (4) Empowering Students to Develop Ownership of Their Writing which can help the learners to develop a sense of ownership of their writing. For example, a portfolio can be used by teachers to empower students' writing.

The portfolio is one of the mediums that the teacher can use as an example of Assessment as learning. Portfolio assessment has become the most frequent type of Assessment that the teacher utilizes in writing courses because it is beneficial for the teachers and learners to be more focused on the process and the product and combine learning and assessment activities [7]. As the examples, the teacher can assess the process by understanding students completeness works' during the course with a checklist and the product by providing scores on the students' work by using a scoring rubric to examine how well each student or each group has completed the work [8]. [9] also mentioned that portfolio assessment could enhance learners' metacognition awareness and critical thinking skills. Although the use of a portfolio is a little bit controversial because portfolio assessment is time-consuming and requires good training, the use of a portfolio is still beneficial for students [10]. A portfolio can be used to

measure learners' progress during writing, and it can be their pride and encouragement to keep up their work.

In the practice of providing feedback as an assessment, many students still prefer teacher feedback rather than other types of feedback because it is more comprehensible, detailed, and helpful to revise their drafts [11], [12], [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18], [19], [20]. In contrast with teacher feedback, many students do not prefer peer feedback because peer feedback is too subjective and uncritical, so some students cannot understand the given feedback (Kuyyogsuy, 2019; Kaya & Yaprak, 2020; Keskin, 2022) which lead the students to discourage and disengage with peer feedback practices.

Although many researchers have already conducted a study regarding how writing should be assessed in the EFL classroom, there is still a lack of research about EFL teachers' best practices in utilizing the Assessment in EFL writing classes in terms of providing feedback and portfolio, especially in Indonesian higher education context. This research aims to understand teachers' views and effective implementation of Assessment as learning in writing class with this research questions:

(1) What are the teacher's challenges in teaching writing at a higher education level?

(2) What are the teacher's best practices in teaching writing at a higher education level?

2 Research Methods

To understand what is the best practices of the teacher who teaches writing at the higher education level, narrative inquiry was utilized in this present research. The use of narrative inquiry is very pivotal to understanding someone's story which could bring benefits to teaching practices and insightful information to improve the quality of the process of teaching [24]. To conduct a narrative inquiry study, the researchers interviewed one participant who had a lot of teaching writing and unique experience compared to the others, especially the one who can encourage the students to provide peer feedback. The researchers only put "the teacher" to present the results of the study. She had more than 10 years of writing experience in the English Literature study program at Universitas Brawijaya, one of the public universities in Indonesia. She also taught different types of writing courses from beginner to intermediate students levels such as paragraph writing, narrative and descriptive writing, expository and persuasive writing, and academic writing, so it can be concluded that she had a lot of experience in teaching writing.

Then, the researchers asked for the consent form to ensure whether or not she could participate in this present study. After getting the consent form, the researchers conducted an interview and recorded it; the interview guide was developed by the EFL teachers who are expertised in teaching writing and validated by the other experts. Next, the researchers analyzed and coded the data by utilizing *atlas.ti*. The researchers only coded the data based on what challenges she had to face in teaching writing and what strategies she had to utilize to help her in teaching writing. In addition, the researchers also conducted investigator triangulation by asking other

experts to analyze the data together to hinder bias. At last, the researchers report and write the results.

3 Finding

Based on the results of the interview, it can be seen that there are two big dimensions that can be found such as challenges for the teacher and strategies for the best assessment as learning strategies.

3.1 Challenges for teaching writing skills

It is found that she faced challenges in the teaching writing course. As she stated that there are more than 30 students whom she must give feedback on the grammar, content, and mechanism (elements of writing), she felt really overwhelmed although the students were introduced to self-check list and peer review. When she teaches a proposal writing course, it will be more overwhelming because she needs to read more than 30 proposals. To ease her work in correcting students' writing, she tried to implement peer review, but it was found that some students were not confident to give a review because they felt shy about their grammar competence. Then, the students also preferred to be given more focused feedback, yet it can help and assist them in improving their writing, so they also thought about where they made their errors.

Second challenge can be found in plagiarism since some students still did not understand what plagiarism is and what the consequences are if they made a plagiarism mistake. For example, a student wrote a descriptive text about his/her family, but he/she just directly translated a text from Indonesian books, and he/she did not check anything and just submitted it without understanding what the consequence was. She also conducted interview about plagiarism with the students, and it is found that some lecturer did not aware of plagiarism, so some students can judge *"this lecturer may be strict, so I will be strict too, but if it is not, I will not be aware with plagiarism"*

Third challenge is organizing ideas. Some students are not able to develop their outline into a paragraph or essay. They might be able to write a good outline, but when they write into paragraphs, their topic sentence and supporting sentences did not match and stick together. Then, when they write an essay, their evidence also were not coherent.

3.2 Assessment as learning best practices

To overcome her challenges in teaching writing courses, she tried to implement some strategies. First, she tried to use a rubric when she assigned the students to provide peer review and guidelines which is helpful and meaningful for the students because it makes the students clearer about what they should correct or check during peer review and be more responsible with what they put and correct to their friends. At first, she tried to use likert-scale as a way to provide peer review, but it is complicated by the students, so she decided to give a yes/no question as a checklist strategy. For example, the students must put the reasons why this organization is very interesting, Based on her experience, it can be concluded that she tried to encourage and motivate the students about how to provide peer review, and self-checklist; so there is an improvement from students' writing; it will help her to reduce her load of works.

Secondly, she tried to encourage the students to utilize grammar checkers, especially Grammarly. Interestingly, the sophomore students were more knowledgeable and aware of many applications than the junior students, so the quality of their writing improved a lot. Then, the students also utilized google documents as a diction and mechanism checker. However, automated written feedback tools are not 100% correct, so she also needed to explain how to utilize these applications properly in improving their writing.

Another strategy that she utilized is collaborative learning. For example, she encouraged the students to discuss together the issues related to a subject during the proposal writing course. In addition, she also encouraged the students to write an outline together. However, she realized that some students cannot do outlining, they will feel stuck and did not know what they should write in the outlining process. She decided to encourage these students to do freewriting, but she still tried to explain a little bit about how to outline a draft.

4 Discussion

The first research question in this study sought to determine the challenges for the teacher in teaching writing courses. The results showed that feeling overwhelmed becomes the highest one due to the number of students followed by plagiarism and how the students organize their ideas. This result is in line with [25], [26] Anyiedah (2017), and [27] in terms of the number of students, but it differs from the other factors which are students' proficiency and time constraint. However, it is in contrast to [28] and Singh, et al. (2020) who found that sufficient training, pedagogical knowledge, and qualification are the challenges for the teacher, [29] , Hidayati (2018), [30], Rasid & Hui (2021) who found that motivating students, different range of proficiency, parental involvement, and lack of knowledge are the challenge to teach writing.

The second research question in this study sought to determine the best practice for the teachers for doing assessments as learning in EFL writing higher education courses. The results infer that the teacher needs to motivate and encourage the students to involve how to provide peer review and do self-assessment checklists as a teaching writing strategy. It is pivotal because it can help the teacher to minimize her load of work. Before conducting this type of assessment practice, it is essential to have a good plan and activity to guide the students to maximize the process of peer review and self-checklists. Then, the results also showed that doing peer review, self-checklist, and utilizing automated written feedback could help the teacher to reduce their work because this kind of feedback also helps the students to assist them in revising their writing although it is only focused on grammar. It is in line with [31] and [5] who suggested that encouraging and motivating students to be more involved in peer review and self-checklist assessment could promote learners' assessment as learning, so it can promote learners' ongoing development of metacognitive and cognitive capacities in assessing compositions. Then, the results of the study are in contrast with [21], [22], [23] who found that the students were discouraged by peer feedback or peer review practices; [32] who found that the students felt that peer feedback did not work to them because they felt that the teacher is more competent, professional, and trusted to provide feedback; [33] who stated that the students did not utilize peer feedback meticulously because they felt lazy and believed that peer feedback is not adequate; and [34] who mentioned that based on the results of an

interview, some students expressed that their peer review was too general through saying it is good, which cannot provide any information to what they should correct and revise.

Some significant contributions that are presented by this study are teacher's challenges in teaching writing such as feeling overwhelmed due to the load of work, plagiarism, and how to organize the ideas; and teacher's strategies in preparing and utilizing self-assessment and peer review in teaching writing through encouraging and motivating them, teachers' plan and activities to guide the students through analyzing and ensuring the students when they correct other students' draft, and through conducting this activity, it can help the teacher to reduce their works because the teacher could not need to check the grammar or providing teacher feedback.

It infers that individual differences in L2 learning could be the main reason why the students could prefer and understand peer review and self-checklist assessment. Individual differences in L2 learning are age, memory, motivation, language aptitude, learning style, language anxiety, personality, and learners' belief [35]. For example, [36] argued that high-anxiety students achieved lower rather than low-anxiety learners during recast feedback practices, an alternative type of feedback in which the corrector includes the immediately previous wrong grammar/ format content words and modifies the statement in some way [37]. It implies that learners' language anxiety can influence learners uptake of recast feedback. Since language anxiety can affect the learners' uptake in the process of teaching writing, the teacher should be more aware of this factor, to improve the quality of teaching and learning writing.

Then, [38] highlighted that learners' attitudes about good writing and positive motivation to enhance a draft are examples of learner variations that might impact their participation in peer criticism. According to [39], instrumental motivation also affected learners' absorption or revision after getting feedback, as students exhibited a desire to edit the input. [40], factors such as learner competency, learner attitudes, time allocation, and interpersonal interactions may all contribute to the value of peer feedback. Since these factors could contribute to affecting learners' performance and uptaking process, learners' development of cognitive or metacognitive awareness, the teacher should understand and be aware of these factors.

Then, the teachers also should be more aware of students' range of proficiency in preparing, planning, and doing activities to assess the students. It is another essential factor that can affect both teachers and students in the teaching and learning writing process. For example, [27] mentioned that sometimes the teacher felt afraid and worried about providing feedback due to the effect after the students receive feedback and [41] found that low achiever students suddenly became demotivated and discouraged with direct teacher feedback.

In assessing writing, another alternative assessment as a learning activity is doing a portfolio assessment. The portfolio is one of the mediums that the teacher can use as an example of Assessment as learning. Portfolio assessment has become the most frequent type of Assessment that the teacher utilizes in writing courses because it is beneficial for the teachers and learners to be more focused on the process and the product and combine learning and assessment activities [7] . As example, the teacher can assess the process by understanding students' completeness works' during the course with a checklist and the product by providing scores on the students' work by using a scoring rubric to examine how well each student or each group has completed the work [8]. [9] also mentioned that portfolio assessment could enhance learners' metacognition awareness and critical thinking skills. Although the use of a

portfolio is a little bit controversial because portfolio assessment is time-consuming and requires good training, the use of a portfolio is still beneficial for students [10]. A portfolio can be used to measure learners' progress during writing, and it can be their pride and encouragement to keep up their work.

5 Conclusion

This study has shown the challenges faced by the teacher in teaching writing at a higher education level and what the best practices that can be utilized by the teacher to improve the process and quality of students' writing. It showed that the teacher faced challenges in terms of the number of students, plagiarism, and how to organize students' ideas into an outline and essay. Then, teachers' strategies that are utilized to assess the students in terms of assessment as learning are encouraging and motivating them to be more involved in the process of peer-review and self-checklist assessment; utilizing automated written feedback applications; and employing collaborative learning.

Hence, this study has some limitations, such as it is only focused on feedback since many strategies could be utilized in improving students' writing. For future research, it is expected that future researchers could conduct an experimental study to ensure whether or not providing peer feedback with giving training before will help the students to improve their grammar, mechanism, or elements of writing; and explore more about collaborative learning for EFL writing courses.

References

[1]   H. D. Brown: Language assessment: principles and classroom practices. New York: Longman (2004)

[2]   L. Bachman: Statistical analysis for language assessmen. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2008)

[3]   L. Taylor: The changing landscape of English: Implications for language assessment. *ELT J.*, vol. 60, no. 1, pp. 51–60, 2006, doi: 10.1093/elt/cci081.

[4]   Rita Berry: Assessment for learning, 1st ed. Hongkong University Press (2008)

[5]   R. Lam: Assessment as learning: examining a cycle of teaching, learning, and assessment of writing in the portfolio-based classroom. *Stud. High. Educ.*, vol. 41, no. 11, pp. 1900–1917, 2016, doi: 10.1080/03075079.2014.999317.

[6]   I. Lee: Classroom writing assessment and feedback in L2 school contexts. doi: 10.1007/978-981-10-3924-9 (2017)

[7]   A. Contreras-Soto, M. Véliz-Campos, and L. Véliz: Portfolios as a strategy to lower English language test anxiety: The case of Chile. *Int. J. Instr.*, vol. 12, no. 1, pp. 181–198, doi: 10.29333/iji.2019.12112a (2019)

[8]   P. A. Tyas: Promoting students' autonomous learning using portfolio assessment in EFL writing class. *JEES (Journal English Educ. Soc.*, vol. 5, no. 1, pp. 75–81, doi: 10.21070/jees.v5i1.379 (2020)

[9]   M. Farahian and F. Avarzamani: The impact of portfolio on EFL learners' metacognition and writing performance. *Cogent Educ.*, vol. 5, no. 1, doi: 10.1080/2331186X.2018.1450918. (2018)

[10]   J. Harmer: The practice of English language teaching, 5th ed. London: Pearson (2015)

[11]   M. Jodaie, F. Farrokhi, and M. Zoghi: A comparative study of EFL teachers' and intermediate high school students' perceptions of written corrective feedback on grammatical errors. *English Lang. Teach.*, vol. 4, no. 4, ; Nov. doi: 10.5539/elt.v4n4p36 (2019)

[12]   T. F. Mohammad and T. A. Rahman: English learners perception on lecturers' corrective feedback. [Online]. Available: http://www.theartsjournal.org/index.php/site/index (2016)

[13]   Listiani: Students' perception toward teacher's written corrective feedback in writing 3 class (2017)

[14]   T. Elhawwa, D. Rukmini, J. Mujiyanto, and D. Sutopo: the learners perceive of written corrective feedback in writing multicultural class," (2018)

[15]   N. L. Luan and S. N. A. Ishak: Instructor's direct and indirect feedback: How do they impact learners' written performance?. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, vol. 24, no. 3. Penerbit Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia, pp. 95–110, doi: 10.17576/3L-2018-2403-08. (2018)

[16]   P. Chuang, M. T. Susanty, H. Silmawati, and S. Effendi: EFL students' preference in receiving written corrective feedback. *Indones. J. Learn. Instr.*, vol. 2, no. 2, pp. 23–32, doi: 10.25134/ijli.v2i2.1990. (2019)

[17]   H. Hartono, C. Anwar, and A. Murtiningrum: Corrective feedbacks and grammar teaching in a situated teaching context of process-based writing. *Regist. J.*, vol. 12, no. 1, p. 28, Jun. doi: 10.18326/rgt.v12i1.28-48. (2019)

[18]   S. Fani: EFL Learners Perception of Written Corrective Feedback. (2020)

[19]   S. Sabarun: Direct teacher corrective feedback in efl writing class at higher education: what students perceive. *Vis. J. Lang. Foreign Lang. Learn.*, vol. 9, no. 1, p. 17, doi: 10.21580/vjv9i14652. (2020)

[20]   W. N. M. Wan Mohd Yunus: Written corrective feedback in English compositions: Teachers' practices and students' expectations. *English Lang. Teach. Educ. J.*, vol. 3, no. 2, p. 95, doi: 10.12928/eltej.v3i2.2255. (2020)

[21]   S. Kuyyogsuy: Promoting peer feedback in developing students' English writing ability in L2 writing class. *Int. Educ. Stud.*, vol. 12, no. 9, p. 76, doi: 10.5539/ies.v12n9p76. (2019)

[22]   F. Kaya and Z. Yaprak: Exploring the role of training in promoting students' peer-feedback including critical peer-feedback. *J. Educ. Res. Pract.*, vol. 10, no. 1, pp. 377–392, doi: 10.5590/jerap.2020.10.1.24. (2020)

[23]   D. Keskin: Students ' perceptions about peer feedback for writing : their effect on revised texts (2022)

[24]   J. W. Creswell: Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research 4th ed. Boston: Pearson (2012)

[25]   I. Leki: The preferences of ESL students for error correction in college- level writing classes." *Foreign Lang. Ann.*, vol. 24, no. 3, pp. 203–218, doi: 10.1111/j.1944-9720.1991.tb00464.x. (1991)

[26]   A. Hamouda: A study of students and teachers' preferences and attitudes towards correction of classroom written errors in Saudi EFL context. *English Lang. Teach.*, vol. 4, no. 3, doi: 10.5539/elt.v4n3p128. (2011)

[27]   D. S. Budiawan, H. Hamamah, and M. H. Isnaini: Exploring the use of direct corrective feedback in writing an undergraduate thesis. vol. 6, no. 1, pp. 59–72, doi: 10.25273/linguista.v6i1.13056. (2022)

[28]   A. N. A. Nasser: Teaching the writng skill to Yemeni EFL learners: The importance and challenge. *South-Asian J. Multidiscip. Stud.*, vol. 3, no. 6, pp. 191–203 (2016)

[29]   R. N. Moses and M. Mohamad: Challenges faced by students and teachers on writing skills in ESL contexts: A literature review. *Creat. Educ.*, vol. 10, no. 13, pp. 3385–3391, doi: 10.4236/ce.2019.1013260. (2019)

[30]   N. H. Ngoc and D. Nai: Classroom. pp. 503–508 (2021)

[31]   L. Lee: Autonomous learning through task-based instruction in fully online language courses. *Lang. Learn. Technol.*, vol. 20, no. 2, pp. 81–97 (2016)

[32]   M. Yang, R. Badger, and Z. Yu: A comparative study of peer and teacher feedback in a Chinese EFL writing class. *J. Second Lang. Writ.*, vol. 15, no. 3, pp. 179–200, doi: 10.1016/j.jslw.2006.09.004. (2006)

[33]   H. T. Nguyen: Peer feedback practice in EFL tertiary writing classes," *English Lang. Teach.*, vol. 9, no. 6, p. 76, doi: 10.5539/elt.v9n6p76. (2016)

[34]   I. G. K. M. Putra, M. H. Santosa, and N. P. A. Pratiwi: Students' perceptions on online peer feedback practice in EFL writing. *IJEE (Indonesian J. English Educ.*, vol. 8, no. 2, pp. 213–231, doi: 10.15408/ijee.v8i2.21488. (2021)

[35]   R. Ellis: Epilogue: A framework for investigating oral and written corrective feedback. *Stud. Second Lang. Acquis.*, vol. 32, no. 2, pp. 335–349, doi: 10.1017/S0272263109990544. (2021)

[36]   Y. Sheen: Recasts, language anxiety, modified output, and L2 learning," *Lang. Learn.*, vol. 58, pp. 835–874, 2008.

[37]   L. Journal, E. Rod, C. Jiang, and R. Ellis: Corrective feedback and teacher development. [Online]. Available: http://escholarship.org/uc/item/2504d6w3http://repositories.cdlib.org/uccllt/l2/vol1/iss1/art2/ (2009)

[38]   S. Yu and G. Hu: Understanding university students' peer feedback practices in EFL writing: Insights from a case study. *Assess. Writ.*, vol. 33, pp. 25–35, doi: 10.1016/j.asw.2017.03.004 (2017)

[39]   Y.-C. Tsai and Y.-C. Li: Test anxiety and foreign language reading anxiety in a reading-proficiency test," *J. Soc. Sci.*, vol. 8, no. 1, pp. 95–103 (2012)

[40]   P. Tyas and M. Safitri: Factors influencing the usefulness of peer review towards EFL Learners' writing performance. doi: 10.4108/eai.11-7-2019.159632 (2019)

[41]   E. Mollestam and L. Hu: Corrective feedback on L2 students' writing (2016)