

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Some common questions often arise when talking about English writing skill, and more importantly learning it as foreign language (EFL). The first question must be why students need to learn EFL writing. One of the reasons is because writing skill is one of the most basic skills to communicate with English. It can be a ticket to better academic achievement because it reflects intellectual flexibility and maturity. The mental activity the students have to go through in order to construct proper written texts is all part of the ongoing learning experience.¹ Therefore, it equips students with the communication and thinking skills.

However, accomplishing writing skill cannot be rushed. It takes time and patience. The most important thing the students need at the beginning is a good vocabulary. It goes hand in hand with the ability to think logically. Using words correctly and effectively can be a passport to worlds of interesting and exciting information. The students can travel in the past, in the present, and in the future through words, they write.² Without words, they have nothing to work with.

Furthermore, students have to start with the strong foundation of writing and slowly build their sentences day by day. Daily practice is very important. They do not need to worry about the mistakes. In fact, the more mistakes they make, the more they will learn from them.

Mastering effective writing needs a lot of contributions and efforts from not only the students but also the teacher. Teacher plays an important role to achieve a successful activity in writing class. He is expected to monitor the

¹J. Harmer, *How to Teach English*, (Edinburgh: Addition Longman Ltd., 1998), p. 79.

²Nasrun Mahmud, *English for IAIN Students*, (Jakarta: Pusat Bahasa IAIN Jakarta, 1997), Revised Ed., p. 1.

teaching learning process and make adjustments whenever and wherever necessary. He needs empirical evidence on how the learners are receiving his teaching. In this research, the researcher considers this teacher factor as the teacher's feedback to students' writing.

Providing response or feedback is one of the most important tasks for teachers of writing. It continues to be applied in the teaching of English as a foreign language (EFL) because by placing considerable emphasis on revising and responding to writing, it allows teachers and students more interaction that is meaningful. However, there is less certainty about the techniques that should be used. The spirit is certainly revealed in the Holy Qur'an as follow:

ان الانسان لفي خسر * الا الذين امنوا وعملوا الصالحات وتواصوا بالحق وتواصوا
بالصبر

“Verily man is in lost. Except such as have faith and do righteous deeds and join together in the mutual enjoining of truth and of patience. (Al-‘Ashr 2 – 3)”

Several studies have shown that the approaches to teaching writing have been varied. The studies have focused on feedback on form, content, means of delivery, and also the way the teachers deliver their feedback. However, one element has remained constant: both teachers and students feel that teacher feedback to students' writing is obviously essential. In most instances, teacher feedback represents the single largest investment of teacher time and energy, much more than time spent preparing for conducting classroom sessions. Teacher feedback also provides the opportunity for instruction to be tailored to the needs of individual students through face-to-face dialogue and written commentary at various points.³

³D. R. Ferris and J. S. Hedgcock, *Teaching ESL Composition; Purpose, Process, and Practice*, (USA: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Inc., 2005), 2nd Ed., p. 185.

Furthermore, the feedback provided by the teacher is one of the most important factors in enhancing students' writing. It can highlight the academic conventions within which students are expected to write, to be able to produce writing with minimal errors and maximum clarity, and it can suggest ways for students to improve their future writing. In addition, feedback from the teacher can create a motive for revising; without these comments, students will revise their work in a consistently, narrow, and predictable way.⁴ Finally yet importantly, teacher feedback does not only indicate the strengths and weaknesses of the students' writing but it may also assist students in monitoring their own progress and identifying specific language areas to develop further.

The researcher has chosen to study the teacher's ways of giving feedback in the class of writing at the at the 3rd semester students of English Department of IAIN Walisongo because the class is the most appropriate one to be analyzed concerning its classroom activities and the focus of this research. In fact, the students of English Department actually experience four writing classes; pre-writing (writing comprehension), writing 1, writing 2, and writing 3 starting from the first semester to the fourth semester. Since the students are at the third semester, they have already received the materials about organization, sentence structure, and grammar and mechanics at the second and first semester. So to say, the researcher thinks that it is a good idea to see the writing process at the third semester and, at the same time, analyze feedback given by the teacher during their writing process.

B. Reasons for Choosing the Topic

The reasons for choosing the topic of this research are that:

1. English writing skills are crucial to academic success.

⁴N. Sommers, *Responding to Student Writing* in I. L. Clark, (Ed.), *Concepts in Composition: Theory and Practice in Teaching of Writing*, (New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates Publisher, 1982), p. 233.

2. Teacher feedback plays an essential role in student's writing skills progress.
3. Teacher feedback should help students in the short- and long- term improvement of their writing.

C. Statement of the Problem

The problems to be discussed in this research are:

1. What feedback does the teacher give to the class of writing at the 3rd semester of English Department of IAIN Walisongo in the academic year of 2010 / 2011 in terms of what, when and how?
2. Why does the teacher give such feedback to the students?

To answer these questions, the writer starts on an intensive research work made to the sufficient fulfillment of these answers.

D. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of this study are:

1. To describe the teacher's ways of giving feedback in the class of writing at the third semester students of IAIN Walisongo in the academic year of 2010/ 2011 in terms of what, when, and how it is provided
2. To analyze the teacher's considerations for giving certain feedback to the students

E. Scope of the Study

There are five points that should be specified in this research:

1. The study concentrates on the teacher's ways of giving feedback in the class of writing, not feedback on other language skills.
2. The study focuses on the creative writing since the term creative writing suggests imaginative task to produce a variety of correct and appropriate language. In fact, there are two main kinds of writing task; controlled writing

task and creative writing task such as letters, report or explanation, and stories.⁵

3. The subject of the study is the students of Writing II 3B of English Department of IAIN Walisongo in the academic year of 2010/ 2011, not students out of those characteristics.
4. The study only describes the teacher's ways of giving feedback applied in writing class and then analyzes it; not correlates the teacher's feedback and the students' writing achievement.

F. Significance of the Study

Analyzing teacher's ways of giving feedback in the class of writing, this study is expected to make certain contributions to the related populations including the teacher, students and researchers of the same subjects.

1. The study would help teachers of writing to promote the ideal feedback provided in the writing class. Moreover, by noticing students' difficulties in receiving feedback and their preferences in getting feedback, the teacher could make suitable changes to meet the need of students in writing.
2. Similar to the teacher, through the study, the students could know more about their teacher's difficulties in providing feedback to them. Therefore, they would do their works more carefully and consider their teacher's feedback more seriously.
3. The study may serve as the foundation based on which further related research would be carried out. Particularly, future research could be made better after the limitations of the study are considered.

⁵J. Harmer, *The Practice of English Language Teaching* (England: Pearson Education Ltd., 2001), p. 109.

G. Definition of Key Terms

1. Feedback

Feedback is a noun. It means return of part of the output of a system to its source to modify it.⁶ Therefore, feedback refers to the process in which part of the output of a system is returned to its input in order to regulate its further output. It describes the situation when output or information about the result of a condition in the past will influence an occurrence or occurrences of the same event or the continuation of the original phenomenon in the present.

In everyday classroom terms, teacher feedback means judgments of students' knowledge or understanding given by the teacher to feed back into the teaching process and to determine for individual students whether to re-explain the task, to give further practice on it, or move on the next stage.⁷

2. Academic writing

Academic writing in English is essays that are written in college or university classes. These essays are somewhat formal in nature and very direct. Academic writing is linear in structure; that is, it has beginning, middle, and an end, and it continues directly from one part to the next. Thus, it has a very specific organizational pattern; when we follow the pattern, the paragraph will be easy for the readers to understand.

Most academic writing is done to persuade the reader that a point of view is reasonable. For this reason, another important part of academic writing is to write a paragraph that has a clear point of view, which is usually the writer's opinion. Some types of academic writing are such as essay, reports, compositions, and research papers.⁸

⁶*Ibid.*, p. 314.

⁷C. Gipps, "Teacher Feedback to Young Children in Formative Assessment", *British Educational Research Journal*, XXII, 04, 1996, p. 389.

⁸C. A. Boardman and Jia F., *Writing to Communicate*, (New York: Pearson Longman, 2008), 3rd Ed., p. 4

3. Class of writing

The class of writing refers to a group of students joining writing lesson. In the context of the class of writing in English Department of IAIN Walisongo, there are four classes of writing; pre-writing (writing comprehension), writing 1, writing 2, and writing 3 starting from the first semester to the fourth semester. Since the students are at the third semester, they have already received the materials about organization, sentence structure, and grammar and mechanics at the second and first semester