

Promoting Collaborative Learning In Higher Education In Writing Class

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Abstract

The study examines the features of collaborative feedback among students in their writing process in the blended learning environment and finds their experiences during this collaborative learning. This study used the qualitative method. Twenty texts of the students' writing were used as the primary data. Then, this research employed an interview and an observation. Through textual analysis and survey results, I first found a similar trend of texts the students primarily focused on in giving writing feedback. There are tenses, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. These facts mean that the students are good enough to understand the correct and incorrect features used in writing at those features. Second, during the implementation of this collaborative learning, students have the opportunity to negotiate any feedback, give and respond to any available text, and practice decision-making skills. These findings imply that first, lecturers are supposed to acknowledge the students' language skill level to create better material for them. Second, the students can be categorized as self-regulated, other-regulated, and object-regulated. The number of self-regulated and other-regulated learners is dominant compared to



object-regulated ones. Understanding the type of learners is vital to developing a better approach in teaching and learning in a large class, especially for developing countries like Indonesia. The research is limited to a large class size where English is a foreign language. Hence, the method of blended learning for writing in a large class size needs to adjust to any local context. However, the challenges come from the students themselves, the classroom management, or the infrastructure available for teaching and learning. This collaborative feedback is a pedagogical breakthrough for most developing countries with many students.

Keywords: *Large class, writing process, collaborative feedback, collaborative learning*

Introduction

An issue of feedback in L2 writing can arise when the feedback should be used in a large class, say, a class consisting of more than fifty students. Whenever this happens, there is a need to make the feedback practices possible. The challenge is that there is no easy way to have a simple answer on how feedback is appropriately used, in what circumstance, and its benefit (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Therefore, this research will try to integrate feedback where a large class is the only option available for students and teachers in learning writing.

Then, the primary study of a large class for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) was in the 1980s called Lancaster-Leeds Language Learning in Large Classes Research Project (Todd, 2006). This project was conducted in some countries (Jimakorn & Singhasiri, 2006), Nigeria, Japan, Indonesia, and South Africa. The report suggested that class size is not problematic. More important things are required to assess in a large class, such as teaching methodologies and activities used as Kumar (1992) in Todd (2006) mentioned. This claim aimed to suggest that teachers should not be too worried about the size of the class.

However, even if large classes are claimed to have less direct bad influences on learning, the problems of having many students in a class are still a concern for teachers compared to smaller groups of students. As a teaching practitioner of large classes and from personal observation, challenges cannot be avoided leading to the need to find solutions for better teaching and learning, especially in writing. The challenge is quite uncomfortable when assessing students' writing. It is a real huge work in providing revision or feedback. At the same time, the quality of many students' writing is by no means well-written. This ongoing revision work has affected the feedback given to the students and the student's responses to the feedback itself, and the impact on their writing as it has been time-consuming. Therefore, collaborative feedback could be the answer to this issue.

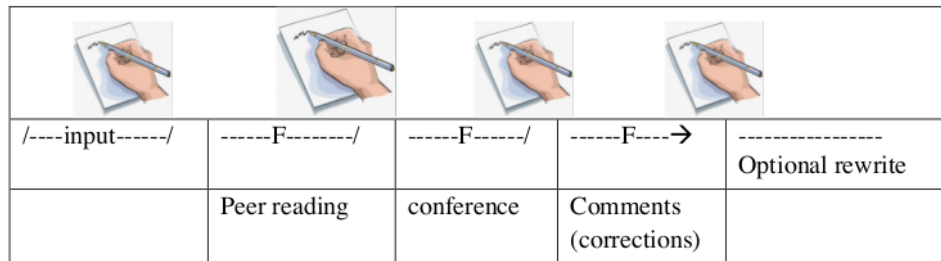
Hyland and Hyland (2006) have mentioned that the issue of feedback in writing has been always hotly debated by teachers and researchers for over 30 years. They give examples such as what kind of feedback is appropriate to be involved within a specific context and what kind of teacher practices can support the students' writing improvement. This research basically will describe the types of students' collaborative feedback and the types of learners. This research is important because by knowing the features of collaborative feedback, the teacher will acknowledge students' competence and needs for improvement. Then, knowing the types of learners will help develop the students' attitudes.

Literature Review

Collaborative Feedback in Writing Process

Keh (1990) defines feedback as "an input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision." Then, collaborative means an activity involving more than one person. In other words, collaborative feedback in this study means that students read their peers' work, review the draft, give inputs, opinions, etc. This aim is to improve my writing. Related to the feedback itself, Keh (Ibid.) has illustrated the implementation of the feedback in the writing process (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Implementation of feedback



Source: derived from Keh (1990)

F= Feedback.  = draft

Figure 1 illustrates the central area of the writing process. There are inputs, peer reading, conference, and teachers' comments, feedback, and optional rewrite. In this research, because the concept used focuses on collaborative work, the comment is not limited to the teacher but also students' peers.

Keh's (Ibid.) illustration vividly illustrates what stages come first in the writing process. It explains that during every step, drafting and redrafting are supported by inputs, peer-reading, conferences, and comments or corrections. Due to its emphasis is on the process, the final writing seems to be regarded as less significant. It is seen that the final writing is an optional rewrite. Hence, I think the process is less completed because, in real practice, the teacher needs the students' final writing product to give them a certain score due to the students' assessment. Therefore, I will use combined approaches. It means that during the writing process project, by creating a blended learning environment, the product of the students will be counted, the process of their writing will be valued, and the function of the student's writing will be determined.

Group work also promotes peer assessment because they mutually give feedback. Shepard (2000) also calls it a social process leading to the improvement of 'intellectual abilities, construction knowledge, and formation of students' identities". This will be useful for students as they are given huge opportunities to improve themselves for academic and social development, which will be beneficial for a future career.



There is a bit of discussion on the term used, such as cooperative and collaborative learning. Bruffee (1993) in Barkley (2005) explains that they are different in term of the goal. In cooperative learning, the goal is "to work together in harmony and mutual support to find the solution. The goal of collaborative learning is to develop autonomous, articulate, thinking people" (p.7). Bruffee confirms that cooperative education may be appropriate for children; meanwhile, the collaborative one is for college students. In this paper, I use the term collaborative for the rest of the paper because its operationalization is suitable for the current discussion.

Concerning feedback collaboration among students, a study conducted by Salih (2013) on peer response to L2 student writing suggested that peer review is regarded as alternative feedback, which has given teachers important perspectives about the knowledge of students' language and writing. Having known the students' language and writing level will help teachers to set writing exercises that are suitable for them.

Salih's research (2013: 44) also discusses the pattern used by the peers in the script discussion between the writer and the reviewer. It is found that most student writers discuss feedback more on grammatical accuracy. This implies that grammar has become their priority while giving feedback and is regarded as one of the most critical areas of their difficulty. Salih's research does not aim to solve the problem of large classes because there are 'only' 16 students involved in his research. His research is vital because it aims to prove that the feedback is essential to acknowledge the students' language background, which is essential for future writing activities. Therefore, this paper will illustrate how collaborative feedback can be used in a large class and how it improves students' writing.

Writing Conference

A writing conference is conducted as a platform of interaction between teachers and students during the writing process. Hyland., F (2000) in Hyland & Hyland (2006) explains the benefit of writing conferences. It describes that "writing conferences can give students a clearer idea of their strengths and weaknesses, develop their autonomy, allow them to raise questions on their written feedback, and help them construct a revision plan" (p.5). The nature of the writing conference consists of giving a response, clarifying doubt, and finding solutions to problems. These kinds of interactions offer everyone an opportunity to rediscover what is missing. This will create a conducive teaching and learning environment because the writing process is completed by oral interaction, which has lasting effects on improving future writing tasks Patthey-Chavez and Ferris (1997) Hyland & Hyland (2006).

Hyland and Hyland (2006, p.6) confess that not all L2 learners find it easy to discuss face-to-face with their teachers. They might not regard these discussion opportunities to get individual attention and cope with their writing problems because some of them may "lack of experience, interactive abilities or aural comprehension skills to benefit (p.6). This situation is triggered because students' conference is situated not in typical classroom interaction. This student conference is supposed to engage students in the classroom to solve the problems because they are widely the owners of their writing draft. The questions are expected to be various. To minimize the problems, the adoption of the students' conference in this paper is not limited to the student writing conference in the classroom only. However, also it is widely open to happen in online learning.



Then, the teacher takes a vital role in guiding the students in both the classroom and online site. The teacher acts as a facilitator and must explain any unanswered questions among students. The interaction of teachers and students can happen in online media or face-to-face learning. The teacher must clarify all questions or unsolved issues during students' interactions.

Sociocultural theory framework

The theory of socio-cultural (SCT) will be applied, which aims to assess the interaction during feedback. This theory is associated with the work of Vygotsky (1978) in (Villamil & Guerrero, 2006), p. 23) by defining SCT as "a system of ideas on the origin and development of the mind." The ideas and the development of the mind are simply developed due to existing social interaction. Socially, the people involved in writing are engaged in 'thinking, feeling, and behaving.' These actions happen whenever people engage with one another. The development is not mainly the result of the mind of the learners but also others' perspectives, input, and behavior.

Students' interaction during the writing can reflect the types of learners. The interaction will undoubtedly impact their decision on the final product of the writing. For example, students can fully accept the ideas or opinions from their friends, or they can also think of their doubts in the form of confusion or questions. Further, students could also request their friends' feedback due to their ability to review and regulate the condition.

Villamil & de Guerrero (2006, p. 23) discusses the issue of patterns of interaction and regulation during the peer revision interestingly. Their study focuses on what kinds of students are in the writing class by looking at their interactions. The study uses the concept of learning theory coined by Vygotsky: Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and Scaffolding. ZPD is the zone between the actual development and the potential development (Vygotsky, 1978) in (Cole, 1985). A zone of actual development is one's ability to solve problems in the process of learning.

Meanwhile, the zone of potential development is where others assist one's learning. The theory of Vygotsky aims to emphasize the process of learning development for children. In this case, I adopt the Vygotskian perspective for adults in which naturally, learning a second language can be highly seen in line with the ability of the children to learn the language.

The second famous approach in learning is scaffolding. It is the first stage of the learning process. Next, the learners will be able to solve their problems independently. This condition means that the development of someone is due to the involvement of others. Learners may not reach optimal development without assistance from others or related environments.

Then, Villamil & de Guerrero (2006) elaborate on the critical issues of a socio-cultural theory related to the feedback process in learning writing. The concepts are mediation and internalization. Vygotskian perspective argues that in learning, even though there are many constraints in intellectual development, one still can reach a higher level of intelligence by the presence of socio-cultural elements as the mediation. In psychology, Vygotsky introduces signs as one of mediating tools to develop. There are three kinds of mediation; mediation by others, mediation by the self, and mediation by artifacts (Lantolf, 2000 in Villamil & de Guerrero (2006).

The key concept is the internalization of the mediation. Villamil & de Guerrero (2006) cited the explanation of internalization from Vygotsky (1978). Internalization involves "a long series of developmental processes resulting in the radical alteration of the nature of psychological activity



based on sign mediation" (p.24). Vygotsky argues that social interaction, such as informal education, is vital for internalizing external actions. Therefore, Vygotskian views ZPD as a sensitive zone for one's development because this zone is the potential to grow and develop through a process involving social interaction. Eventually, Vygotsky says that the involvement is not limited to only teachers or adults but also, importantly, peer mediation. The contact of the peer's impact is considered vital for internalization and development.

Therefore, when the concepts of ZPD and Scaffolding are applied in the writing process, the less expert student writers will be provided a guideline or assistance from other more mature peer writers or experts. These mature writers, not necessarily the teacher or older friends, will mediate inputs based on their knowledge. These concepts give illuminating paths for learners that their actual development, in this case, is their existing writing skill ability, can be improved into a higher level of ability by the involvement of their friends during the process of feedback provision.

To prove, Villamil & de Guerrero (Ibid.) have applied the Vygotskian perspective in their research on the feedback process in writing. The illuminating finding of their research is on the patterns of interaction. They find that the learners have certain behaviors during the revision mediated regulation. Three kinds of regulation categorize the learners. The first is self-regulated. Self-regulated learners are those who can solve their problems independently. Then, they can also identify their errors, revise by themselves, and provide inputs for others. In addition, while revising, they are also confident in their skill so that they are not doubtful in giving inputs.

The second is other-regulated. The learners under this category can achieve a higher level of competence with the assistance of others. Those in this category do not have a set goal and need others to help them guide the process of learning. In this case, the involvement of peers is crucial to help them decide what to do and what not to do. In the feedback provision process, the learners may have less knowledge, making it challenging to analyze and revise their writing draft or friends' errors. They may give inputs but in a less confident manner.

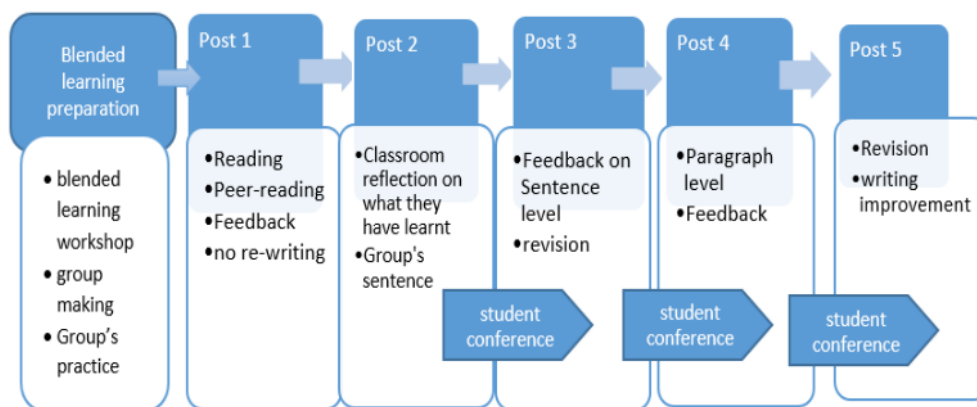
The last is the object-regulated type. Learners of this category cannot see what to improve and respond to the comments or inputs from their peers. They can also initiate revision because they have been happy to have their draft written and are not open to any inputs or revision from their friends. They are not successful in comprehending the purpose of peer feedback in the whole writing process.

One study related to social behavior in peer feedback has been conducted by Villamil & de Guerrero (2006). In 1993, their research focused on the social-cognitive dimension of peer feedback. Their project aims to find out how the L2 learners can develop their writing because of the involvement of social interaction-their peers. The interaction they focused on was an audio-recorded version during their discussion. The research reveals that social mediation is helpful in learning. They conclude that "individual development of the second language could be transformed by the social experience of talking about writing, as well as writing and revising, with a partner" (p. 39). It means that everyone has opportunities to develop their learning, in this case, is writing skills in favor of their peers, by having discussions, either spoken or written.

Method

This study is a case study using a qualitative approach by employing observation, questionnaires, interviews, and feedback content analysis. The study participants are economics students of Semarang state university involved in large class sizes and produced 20 texts. Figure 2 is the data collection procedure, and each step was observed and analyzed.

Figure 2: Steps for Blended Learning Process



Findings

It is interesting to see the interaction's focus of the peer as the reviewer and then how the author responds to the suggestion given by their peers whether or not they accept it. It is found that there are various feedback features from the participants. Table 4 reveals illuminating data to give insights into how reviewers rank the features proven by mostly posted features in the clauses during the interaction process.

The reviewers have selected tenses as their prime area of feedback focus. Then, the participant's punctuation feature is ranked second, and spelling is on the third rank. Meanwhile, capitalization and concord (subject/verb agreement) come to the fourth and fifth, respectively. Then, the sixth is pronoun, word choice, plural, and article, followed by a preposition in the seventh rank. Then, the features of ideas and infinitive are at the same eight ranks.

Table 1: Reviewer Focus and Writer's response

No	Interaction Features	Reviewer		Writer's response	
		%	Rank	Accepted	Not accepted
1	Ideas/content	3%	8	50%	50%
2	Punctuation	14%	2	100%	-
3	Capitalization	10%	4	100%	-
4	Spelling	13%	3	100%	-
5	Preposition	5%	7	100%	-
6	Tenses	19%	1	75%	25%
7	Concord	8%	5	80%	20%
8	Pronoun	6%	6	100%	-



9	Word choice	6%	6	100%	-
10	Infinitive	3%	8	100%	-
11	Article	6%	6	100%	-
12	Plural	7%	6	100%	-

Source: Primary data, 2020

Having the reviewer's feedback has led to various authors' responses. Table 4 illustrates the types of responses from the authors after receiving feedback from their peers. The authors fully accept some feedback features; punctuation, capitalization, spelling, preposition, pronoun, word choice, infinitive, article, and plural. To note that not all accepted feedback are correct. The detail is provided in example 2 on the discussion of word choice. Meanwhile, the other feedback features are not fully accepted, such as ideas/content, punctuation, tenses, and concord (subject/verb agreement).

The feedback from the reviewers on ideas or content is 50% accepted by the authors. Next, 75% of the authors accept the feedback on tenses, and 80% accept the concord. These data mean that there is a negotiation and learning process. Not all authors' correction versions are correct, so some writers know that. This condition has resulted in different decisions whether they accept the revision from peers or not. Then, the capitalization feature is also 100% accepted by the author. The suggestion is clear enough and is correct. The response from R17 indicates that it is somehow his carelessness, not because of his lack of knowledge. he is open to the suggestion and accepts it even though using Indonesian.

The data revealed that the author changed the error as suggested in the feature of word choice, and the author also had no response. Unfortunately, the corrected version is incorrect, and the author only keeps using this incorrect version in his final writing text. In this condition, the teacher guides during the student conference time.

Having seen students' interaction and their decision towards what errors they revise and respond to, it is obvious that the learners have their autonomy in correcting errors, responding to them, and deciding whether the suggested inputs are accepted. I believe that this condition means the blended learning environment creates a non-threatening atmosphere leading to more interactive learning. However, the students seem to focus more on the four main features; tenses, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. Only a few students focus on the content. This condition could be interpreted as having the capability 'only' on the surface level in giving feedback.

Types and tone/manner of learners

Data of the participants' interaction imply that the types of learners can be classified into three types. Some learners are classified as other regulated types. The writer and reviewers know what to do, but they are not fully confident with their writing.

Reviewers' type and tone/manner

Other-regulated learners

First, some students are other-regulated learners. They know what they write, but they are hesitant and need others to give them input and suggestions. Below are examples. Some examples are given here to clarify each type of learner.



In-text one and text 2, the reviewers give input on punctuation and the use of the pronoun, but there is hesitancy or doubtfulness even though the written feedback is correct.

T1	(F)feedback	:	I think you should add "," in... <u>I'm sorry if my feedback is not correct</u>
T2	F7	:	Hi Eka. I want to give some comments to you :) 1. I think that your sentence ..." He also lived in Holland and met life partner, Soelami Soejoed.", should be "He also lived in Holland and met his life partner, Soelami Soejoed."... <u>I am sorry Eka if I have some mistakes in my correction :)</u>

The reviewers at the above examples are classified as an other-regulated type of learner. Other-regulated learners need others to help them to figure out what they have missed and what to do with their errors. They know what they are doing, but to some point, they are unconfident in giving their feedback because of the fear of being mistaken as in underlined sentences.

The manner of the above reviewers is authoritative. This manner can be seen from the word "should," which is mentioned. Even though they are authoritative, they are still hesitant about their feedback to their peers. Such tone of learners indicates that there needs a response from their addressed peers and the other readers. Having this blended learning gives opportunities to everyone to see not only their friends' work but also the others' comments.

The other type of learner is self-regulated. Self-regulated learners are indicated by their willingness to share their knowledge, an act of leading the interactive discussion, asking clarification, suggesting ideas, and allowing different opinions or preferences confidently.

1	(T)ext	2	(F)feedback	:	I think that's incorrect...' success businessman'... I feel you should use 'a successful businessman' " <u>what do you think?</u>
T4	F10	:	Hai, Kurnia. <u>Did you mean "new strategy" is "new strategy? :)</u>		
T6	F13	:	Hi Tri Suharyanti, when I read your assignment, I found some errors like "she grown-up" I think it should be "she grows up" or "she has grown up" <u>if I am wrong, you can refuse my suggestion :)</u>		

The examples above clearly illustrate how self-regulated learners explain and give their suggestions. F2 and F10 allow learners to have collaborative ideas because they question their opinion directly and allow preferences authoritatively. These can allow the authors to rethink



their writing and look for other resources such as dictionaries or the internet and then confirm the reviewers.

Besides having the manner explained above- authoritative, allowing preference, asking clarification, and questioning- self-regulated learners can also be confident, encouraging, straightforward upon their opinion, complementing, and appreciative.

- T1 F3 : “Sugeng, may I remind you to re-read your assignment? you wrote "can" that word should be "can" without space.. "much" should be "much," "
- T10 F25 : In paragraph 3. "all of whom" must be "all of them." Just it
- T15 F26 : Hi Endang, I'll make some corrections to your post. Your article is good, and it is easy to understand.
- T17 F38 : I hope you can make your dreams come true.

The underlined clauses above are some examples illustrating self-regulated learners who positively encourage their peers, such as reminding the author to re-read the writing politely in "may I..." (T1/F3), complimenting the author before giving the inputs in "your article is good..."(T15/F26), and giving straightforward feedback in "just it" (T10/F25). Meanwhile, in T17/F38, the author seems to be very thoughtful by saying, "I hope you can make your dreams come true" before giving the input. This shows that the reviewer reads the writer's writing thoroughly. A positive atmosphere can give a friendly-learning environment. It is expected that such a condition can encourage everyone not to be afraid of expressing ideas through writing and showing it to every related reader.

Then, the following type of learner is object-regulated. The object-regulated learners are not determined to improve their writing whenever there is a comment from their peers. In the example, F33 gives suggestions to the author related to capitalization. However, there is no response from the author. Basically, without responding, the feedback is not necessarily regarded as object-regulated, but in this case, the author does not seem to change their text into the corrected version. It stays the same as the original text. He does not change the small letter "w" into "W" because it is the beginning of the sentence. Therefore, this object-regulated learner can be indicated whether they are open to any better changes from their peers, or they keep the wrong version after having the correct feedback from their friends.

T14	“#we# foster a good family with the foundation of Islam...” (second paragraph). I think the word "w" in the sentence uses capital characters "W."
Corrected text	However, I also want to be a friend to my husband and my children. <u>we</u> foster a good family with the foundation of Islam



Authors' type and tone/manner

The author's manner can be clearly seen by analyzing the clauses of the written response (authors' response symbolized by R) towards the feedback from their peers.

Self-regulated learners

1	T	(R)response 1	"Thanks for your correction, Ulfi :) But I think no comma "," in my sentence, "I prefer Bill Gates to other businessmen because he is a hard worker." Thanks for the comment :)."
3	T	R6	Thanks for your feedback's Ukhti :) I think the sentence "He had studied in Semarang for two years before he moved to Malang." is correct. Because I want to tell about something that happened in the past, I want to refer back to something that happened before that time. So, in this sentence, I compare two sentences that happened in the past. I think the second correction is correct, Ukh.
19	T	R21	Thank you sooooo muuuuuuuuch asriiiii :D That helps me, but wait, in point 2 from u, I disagree. I think the Profession name uses a capital letter, isn't it?

In T1/R1, the author can defend his writing draft because he knows the correct version. Even though he does not seem to agree with this peer's comment, he appreciates the reviewer. This is a positive attitude in supporting fruitful interaction. It also happens in T3/R6. It shows that the author appreciates before informing the reviewer that his feedback is incorrect. The author is willing to share his knowledge by explaining to the peers why the writing is correct comprehensively without arguing negatively. Surprisingly, some learners, such as in T19/R21, are very direct to rebut their peers' input directly but in a very polite and negotiation-friendly manner. He opens further discussion because he has found errors in the given comments. This kind of manner also signs a negotiation happening in the written interaction, not only arguing but also explaining.

Other-regulated learners

The data show that the author also indicates a different kind of learners seen from the written response to the feedback from their peers. These kinds of learners are open to any input from their peers. They are thankful for the inputs because they are actually enthusiastic but need others to figure out better the errors they have made (T4/R10, T15/R19, T19/R20). and even request others directly to give inputs. The following are some of them:

- T4 R10 : @Septiana, Asri, and Lintang: Okay, thanks for your feedback :).
 @anggi : Okay Anggi, typo "new strategy" :D Thanks for your feedback :)
- T15 R19 : Thanks for your feedback :). I will use it to my revision
- T19 R20 : hai ..:). TQ for your feedback faridaa. i'll remember it ..

Object-regulated learners

Object-regulated learners do the writing because it is obliged to write in the writing class. Frankly speaking, it is hard to determine this kind of learner since it can be overlapped with the other-regulated learners. This is also due to. Theoretically, both object and subject-regulated learners basically need the other friends to review and guide them in revising their work. The most logical



difference we can use is on the self-driving element, such as whether the learners know the rules of the game in the blended learning for writing tasks; for instance, they have to use English during the interaction. The data show some learners neglect these rules, and I assume that they are not aware since the beginning of the blended learning activities and are even less enthusiastic in using English during the interaction. For example when someone replies to a comment saying "oh iyaa, kurang teliti,, makasih buat koreksinya" in T11/R17.

Conclusion

To conclude, through textual analysis and survey results, first, there are similar trends of features of texts the students mostly focused on in giving writing feedback. There are tenses, punctuation, spelling, and capitalization. This means that the students are good enough to understand the correct and incorrect features used in writing at those features. Second, by applying this collaborative learning, students were allowed to negotiate any feedback, give and respond to any available text, and have decision-making skills. Further, the students can be categorized as self-regulated, other-regulated, and object-regulated. The number of self-regulated and other-regulated learners is dominant compared to object-regulated ones. These findings imply that first, lecturers are supposed to acknowledge the student's language skill level to create better material for them. Second, Understanding the type of learners is vital to develop a better approach in teaching and learning in a large class, especially for developing countries like Indonesia. The blended learning method for writing in a large class size needs to be adjusted to any local context because this research is limited to a large class size where English is a foreign language. As the challenges either come from the students themselves, the classroom management, and the infrastructure available for teaching and learning, I suggest that following research on collaborative learning can also integrate those areas. In this research, it can be concluded that collaborative feedback is beneficial during the writing process. The impacts are seen in the existence of dialogue, information exchange, constructive arguments, learners' responsibility to respond to errors, and the various expressions in encouraging and complimenting each other using informal language.

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