Reformulation, Text Modeling, and the Development of EFL Academic Writing

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Abstract

This paper mainly investigates the benefits of the implementation of Reformulation and Text Modelling in an EFL writing setting. Reformulation and Text Modeling (henceforth RTM) is intended to help EFL students understand better how to write academic texts to make their texts sound as nativelike as possible. Therefore, RTM was implemented in a writing class in which 35 students participated as the respondents of the study. They were treated with RTM and their essays were then analyzed to examine the effects of the implementation of RTM on their writing products. Besides, this study investigated further the students' perception towards RTM in EFL writing settings. The findings of this study proved that RTM is beneficial to improve students' writing performances and students have positive perceptions on RTM. The implications of the findings for language learning are also discussed.

Keywords: academic writing, reformulation, text modeling, writing performances

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In the practices of teaching and learning activities of a foreign language, for several centuries, written language was regarded as being primary; and literature was viewed as a model of linguistic excellence (Rahimpour, 2013). Galbraith (2009) believes that writing is not simply a matter of translating preconceived ideas into text, but it also involves creating content and tailoring the way this is presented to the needs of the reader. In EFL settings, students not only have to put their ideas into a sufficient content, but they have to put into account style of organization and language use dealing with grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. In addition, developing writing ability is an important but a complex part of language learning (Dulger, 2011).

In fact, writing is not only a matter of a product but also a process. The process of writing is recursive steps allowing students to move forward and back in order to produce a good composition. In this case, effective writers apply more suitable strategies than ineffective ones. Accordingly, many EFL learners are frustrated by the fact that they are making little progress in writing, so teachers should facilitate students to understand the students' own writing process (Brown, 2001). In this case, Gebhard (2002, p. 222-223) suggests that students need to go through a process of creating and recreating this piece of writing until they discover and clarify within themselves what they want to express. Thus some writing approaches should be combined one to another in writing activities to maximize the quality of compositions produced by students.

Among the writing approaches, there have been three different approaches commonly applied in writing class settings: product approach, process writing approach, and genre-based approach. Product approach emphasizes on the students' product which is primarily concerned with correctness and form of the final as the goal of writing activities. According to Setyono (2014), this approach is characterized by the linear model of instruction in which learners do not receive adequate time and opportunities to produce the final product of writing through revising process. Besides, the students' product of writing is expected to: (1) meet certain prescribed English rhetorical style, (2) reflect accurate grammar, end (3) be well-organized. The teachers are influenced by the linear view of writing pedagogy viewing writing as a linear process of finding ideas, drafting, and finished composition. In addition, Tangkiensirisin (2006) adds that teachers, in this approach, are viewed as the judges of student writing.

The product approach has its weaknesses and strengths. According to Badger and White (2000), and Tangkiensirisin (2006), the weaknesses of product approaches are that process skills, such as planning a text, are given a relatively small role, and that the knowledge and skills that learners bring to the

classroom are undervalued. Also, the act of discovering ideas and creating meaning does not receive attention. In contrast, its strengths are that it recognizes the need for learners to be given linguistic knowledge about texts, and they understand that imitation, such as the result of the imitation of input in the form of texts provided by the teacher, is one way in which people learn.

In contrast, the next approach commonly applied is processed writing approach. The process writing approach, according to Cahyono (1999), focuses on what goes on when students write compositions and what teachers can do to help students get into the natural writing process. In this case, students need to know some activities in writing a composition by applying the awareness to plan and monitor their own activities. In other words, they need self-reflective thinking as reflected on their awareness to monitor each step of writing processes. For instance, after finishing a draft, they need to monitor or evaluate it and make a judgment related to what areas they should do in order to be able to produce a better draft. In addition, regarding the evidence that writing not only focuses on products but also process, and the fact that writing is a demanding task (Ruan, 2005), the way students employ appropriate strategies in writing will influence their writing quality. The reality is that, however, most students do not develop self-reflective abilities on their own; they need direct instruction, plenty of coaching, and frequent reminders (Joseph, 2006). Accordingly, encouraging students to apply process writing approach is hopefully beneficial to facilitate them to be confident learners.

The last approach commonly applied is the genre-based approach, which regards writing as predominantly linguistic, but unlike a product approach, it emphasizes that writing varies with the social context in which it is produced (Badger & White, 2000). So, it has a range of kinds of writing such as sales letters, research articles, and reports - linked with different situations, or it is called English for Specific Purpose (ESP). It is also believed that learning takes place through imitation and exploration of different kinds of models (Kim, 2006). In addition, this approach, according to Hyland (2007), refers to the genre as Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) which classify text types into the narrative, recount, arguments and exposition, procedure, report, description, explanation, and exposition.

This approach has some strengths and weaknesses as identified by some experts. Kim (2006) argues that one of the strengths of this approach is that students generally appreciate the models or examples showing specifically what they have to do linguistically. Studying a given genre also provides them with an understanding of why a communication style is a way it is a reflection of its social context and its purpose. On the contrary, it has weaknesses such as the fact that it underestimates the skills required to produce content, and the

other concern is that it neglects learners' self-sufficiency (Kim, 2006; Badger & White, 2000).

Even though the approaches offer their own strengths and weaknesses, the teachers are still, basically, the ones who are responsible for facilitating their students to understand how written products should be produced. The complexity of writing activities makes students even teachers have to work very hard in writing courses. In fact, many EFL writing instructors believe that writing course is the least rewarding course for teachers and the most frustrating for students (Xiao, 2008). This condition exists because writing is fairly complex, so students do not ordinarily write a perfect composition in a single draft (Gebhard, 2000, p. 222), but they have to do some steps before completing their composition.

Widowson (1984) believes that written texts are a set of directions for leading an interaction between writers and readers. This interaction, therefore, will be meaningful if the texts are written in acceptable ways or consensus among the language users. The fact shows that in EFL settings, low proficiency language users are responding by focusing more on local issues, and high proficiency language users are responding like stronger writers by focusing more on global issues (Eckstein, 2013). Local issues deal with grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. In contrast, global issues relate to how the writer provides sufficient content and organization of a text. It should be understood that writing is a matter of discovery process– a process of expressing a writer's ideas, feelings, experiences, or information in a written form (Rahimpour, 2013)

During the discovery process, the writer has to experience some steps before being able to produce a good text. Thus, process writing approach should be applied in this discovery process. In this context, the roles of the teacher are basically important to facilitate students to produce their texts. One of the roles is providing some modes of feedback. Accordingly, the notion of effective and efficient feedback on L2 written production is an essential role of academic writing teachers. The modes of feedback might be in the form of direct feedback or indirect feedback.

Reformulation, as one of the modes of feedback, is a discourse objective whereby the second unit is a restatement or elaboration of the first in different words, to present it from a different point of view and to reinforce the message (Hylland, 2007). It provides learners with feedback in the form of a re-written version of the learner's original text. This new version makes the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original intact (Thornbury, 1997). Ibarrola (2013) avows that reformulation can be said to offer both indirect and direct modes of corrective feedback (CF). Direct mode of CF offers learners the correct target language form while indirect CF encourages

learners to self-correct the errors by using different strategies, such as underlining or circling errors, recording the number of errors on a given line and using a code to show where the error has occurred and which type of error it is. Yang and Zang (2013) add that reformulation, as an alternative technique, may complement traditional teacher and peer feedback practices, by providing students with a native-like form of their original writing. Thornbury (1997) adds that reformulation is consistent a fluency-to-accuracy, or task-based, a model of instruction encouraging students to apply the best use of whatever language they have.

The following example taken from Rahimpour (2013) demonstrates how reformulation works:

An important concept has emerged from these studies, namely equivalence or tertium comparationis. (The utterance is written by a native speaker of English)

The informants' verbal protocols were informative to some extent. They, however, did not provide the adequate date, that is, to validate the assumptions for the deletion of these lexical items. (The utterance is written by a non-native speaker of English)

The example above allows non-native speakers of English understand how the rhetoric is different, and it can help them understand how to write an utterance which is close to nativelike. Hyland (2007) suggests that reformulation is often indicated by parenthetical and lexical contexts. Thornbury (1997) believes that reformulation has gained currency in recent years as a technique in the development of students' writing skills: rather than simply correcting a student's composition, which usually involves attention to surface features of the text only. Johnson (1988) states that reformulation follows an initial trial, and is in turn followed by a re-trial, into which noticed features of the reformulated behavior may be incorporated in full operating conditions: reformulation provides a model of what the behavior should look like; and though its clearest use is for writing, there is no reason why spoken language should not be reformulated.

Some research addressing the roles of reformulation and a text model has been conducted by different researchers with diverse results, including in the field of academic writing. Yang and Zang (2013) examined the effectiveness of reformulation and model text in a three-stage writing task (composing–comparison–revising) in an EFL writing class in a Beijing university, and they found that a combination of reformulated version of the student writing and a model text could enhance students' awareness of appropriation on language use, especially vocabulary. Rahimpour (2013) investigated acts of reformulation and exemplification as aspects that mediated the relationship between what writers intend to argue and their discourse communities in particular. He found

that students after being treated using reformulation mode of feedback show better rhetorical strategies using code glosses according to their respective mother tongues, demonstrating the significant function of elaboration in academic discourse. Kadkhodaei, Gorjian, and Pazhakh (2013) investigated the effects of reformulation tasks in EFL learners' writing accuracy and they found that reformulation task such as comparison and copying were beneficial for improving accuracy. In addition, Santos, Serrano, and Manchon (2012) who examined the role of reformulation revealed that there were positive effects of written corrective feedback on noticing and uptake, with a clear advantage of error correction over reformulation as far as uptake was concerned.

The other research by Adams (2003) indicates that the use of stimulated recall influenced the findings in that the extra exposure to the reformulations given to learners during the stimulated recall protocol, as well as the extra time afforded them to process those differences, enhanced the learning from reformulations. These findings imply that reformulated writing might be an effective tool for second language pedagogy, and supports the effectiveness of written output and feedback for noticing and learning forms. Irrabola (2009) examining the effectiveness of reformulation and self-correction found that reformulation is more effective on error correction while self-correction appears to be less effective but more valid for the classroom context. It was also found that with both correction strategies errors beyond sentence level remained unnoticed.

The previous findings, then, provide an open question related to the roles of reformulation and text modeling in EFL writing settings. Text modeling is integrated into reformulation since it is hard to find an educated native speaker to reformulate the students' sentences or paragraphs. Thus, the students need to get texts as models since every academic text is written both understood and accepted. Accordingly, the present study tries to investigate further the effects of reformulation and text modeling (RTM) in an EFL writing setting based on the following research questions:

1. Does reformulation and text modeling (RTM) affect writing performances of EFL students?
2. What are EFL students' perceptions towards the implementation of RTM in academic writing setting?

METHOD

The present study employed a mixed method research design in which qualitative and quantitative data were needed to be analyzed in order to answer the research questions. The qualitative data were employed to examine the conditions of the teaching-learning process of writing class and students' perceptions towards RTM. The quantitative ones, on the contrary, revealed the whether there was any effect of RTM on students' writing performances.

The present study was conducted at English Department of the Kanjuruhan University of Malang, and there were 35 students joining writing class who participated actively as the respondents of the study. They were treated using RTM and by the end of the treatment, they composed a paragraph. The pre-test and post-test of direct writing in the form of argumentative paragraphs were analyzed and examined using paired sample t-test to see whether or not there were statistical differences between them. In addition, 5 of the students were interviewed by the lecturer-researcher in order to reveal their perceptions towards the implementation of RTM in an EFL writing class setting.

FINDINGS

As time was short, the lecturer started the class by providing a model text of an argumentative paragraph. The text was chosen not only to provide a good example of a nativelike paragraph but also to make the students understand the expectation of the lecturer dealing with the quality of the paragraph the students had to compose. The modeling led a discussion on how to express utterances in an acceptable way. In the first step, the lecturer guided the students to notice the modeling paragraph and asked them to reformulate the topic sentence of the paragraph as the first step to understanding reformulation.

The original topic sentence of the paragraph " A nurse should have at least five characteristics" was then reformulated by the students as follows:
- A good nurse should have five personalities
- A good nurse must fulfill five criteria
- An excellent nurse has some characteristics
- Etc.

The examples above show that the students started to understand how to write good topic sentences which sound nativelike before writing a complete argumentative paragraph.

The following day the students started to write a paragraph and the lecturer observed the products and provided some examples of sentences

produced by the students to be reformulated. The followings are two examples of reformulation work.

Original sentence,
You know why a teacher must be excellent? Because the teacher must work hard preparing materials, teaching, giving a score, etc.

Reformulated version by the lecturer,
An excellent teacher has to work hard by doing a lot of things, such as preparing materials for teaching, teaching, giving scores, etc.

Original sentence,
Some teachers spend their time by sitting on the chair. They wait for their students' work. And it is not a good way of teaching.

Reformulated version by the lecturer,
A bad teacher, on the other hand, spends his time waiting for the students to accomplish their work by sitting down on the chair without giving any help to them.

The original sentences produced by the students seem unacceptable in English, but the formulated versions sound nativelike. In this step, the students faced a reality how some of their sentences were still incorrect grammatically and rhetorically.

Table 1. Mean Scores of Pre-test and Post-test on Students' Writing Performances

Paired Samples Statistics				Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
		Mean	N		
Pair 1	Pretest	72,0286	35	6,31285	1,06707
	Postest	75,7857	35	6,15759	1,04082

After giving some practices of RTM, the lecturer asked the students to write again an argumentative paragraph as the post-test to be compared with that of the pre-test in order to investigate whether RTM affected the students' writing performance. Table 1 shows the comparison between students' performances on pre-test and post-test to see the effect of RTM on students' writing performances. The table shows that the students got better achievement in the posted compared to the pre-test, even though the improvement is not so

high, and Table 2 concludes that there is a statistically significant difference between the achievement of the students in the pre-test and the post-test since the level of significance obtained was 0.000 which was lower than 0.005.

Table 2. The Result of Statistical Computation on the Pre-test and Post-test on Students' Writing Performances.

		Paired Samples Test							
		Paired Differences							
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		T	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Pretest – Postest	-3,75714	4,63264	,78306	-5,34851	-2,16578	-4,798	34	,000

DISCUSSION

The first question of the research is "Does reformulation and text modeling (RTM) affect writing performances of EFL students?". Answering the question, the article provided Tables 1 and 2. The results of computation (Tables 1 and 2) show that RTM promotes the students' writing performances. The results are in accordance with the findings of the research conducted by Hyland (2007) which proved that providing a model text and reformulation is an essential part of the teaching-learning process of writing. Further, he found that RTM facilitates students to be aware of how to express utterances in different ways but still have the similar meaning. Hanaoka (2007) also suggests that teachers provide model texts in writing classes to help students understand nativelike texts. Comparing their own original sentences and reformulated ones makes students aware of their own weaknesses in expressing their ideas. Even they should aware of how the first language affects their written production in the target language. Nunan (2001, p. 89) avows "proponents of Contrastive Analysis (CA) claim that where the first and second language rules are not the same, errors are likely to occur as a result of interference between the two languages". Furthermore, Dulay et al. (1982, p. 96) believe that the first language has been long considered the villain in second language learning, the major cause of a learner's problems with the new language". It proves that the first language takes a role in the production of the second language, and it is called interlanguages where L2 production is still influenced by L1.

Another study by Yang and Zhang (2010) also proved that students write much better after being treated with RTM. In addition, Eckstein (2013) found that Feedback in the form of conferencing and RTM help students write much better, and the students are more familiar with feedback given by the teachers. Rahimpour (2013) found that the students treated using RTM improved significantly their writing performances in terms of their rhetorical strategies using code glosses according to their respective mother tongue, demonstrating the significant function of elaboration in academic discourse. Thornburry (1997) and Adams (2003) revealed that text modeling facilitates students to analyze the differences between their original texts and the ones written by an educated native speaker so that they can increase their writing performances.

Hanoka (2007) adds that noticing, facilitated by exposure to reformulated writing, can promote learning of more target like form. Reformulated writing might be an effective tool for second language pedagogy, and supports the effectiveness of written output and feedback for noticing and learning forms.

The second question of the research was "What are EFL students' perceptions towards the implementation of RTM in academic writing setting?". To cope with the second question, the implementation of RTM, in addition, must also be perceived from the students' perception. They said that RTM is a good way to make them understand how to write nativelike texts since they could see the differences and similarities between their original texts and the model texts written by educated native speakers as well as by their own lecturer. The results of the present study, accordingly, proposes that the students have good attitudes towards RTM since the reformulated versions and model texts give semantic details important for foreign language learners to make inferences about the texts they read and the sentences they produced. These devices also promote comprehension and provide the learners with the rich linguistic form they require for further language learning (Rahimpour, 2013).

The followings are some statements given by the students related to their attitudes towards the implementation of RTM in a writing class setting.

A statement was given by one participant that,
> *Reformulation makes me understand that my sentences are still far from the target language. I still use my way of thinking in Indonesian contexts when writing an English text. It makes my sentences sound funny and unaccepted.*

Another participant said that,

Text modeling helps me to analyze parts of a paragraph and how to express sentences correctly. Reformulation, on the other hand, helps me much better the weaknesses of my sentences after comparing my original sentences with the revised versions done by my teacher.

The statements imply that the students understood the importance of expressing English sentences as closed as to nativelike, and they realized the importance of RTM in writing classes. In short, they find it essential to empower the students with RTM in writing classes, and it is a good condition of learning. Kara (2009) mentions that successful learners are enthusiastic, exhibit confident attitudes towards learning, have positive expectations from it. Furthermore, Ushida (2005) found that motivation and attitudes play a primary role in L2 learning, while other attributes such as the context of L2 acquisition play supporting roles on various levels. Also, the attitudes towards learning learners have inevitably influenced the outcomes (Braten, 2006; Duarte, 2007). The positive attitudes and motivations simply determine how the learners actively take part in the process of learning, and, in a long run, the students have more opportunities to maximize the learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

Basically, the results of the present study conclude that RTM is beneficial to improve students' academic writing performances since they are empowered with model texts and reformulation activities led by the teacher. The step of noticing - comparing their original sentences and reformulated versions, helps students to be aware of the target language they have to produce when composing a text. Reformulation step helps students to be able to compare their original texts with nativelike texts, so they are able to produce much better and acceptable written utterances in English. Also, model texts provide students with good models in composing a text. Accordingly, the students can improve their academic writing performances, not only in terms of grammar but also a rhetorical issue. This is true to say that since L2 production is commonly influenced by L1, it is important to increase students' awareness of the way native speakers of English organize their writings (Rahimpour, 2013).

It makes sense to notice the hypothesis of Nunan (2001, p. 89) saying that proponents of Contrastive Analysis (CA) claim that where the first and second language rules are not the same, errors are likely to occur as a result of interference between the two languages. Furthermore, Dulay et al. (1982, p. 96) believe that the first language has been long considered the villain in second

language learning, the major cause of a learner's problems with the new language". It proves that the first language takes a role in the production of the second language, and it is called interlanguages where L2 production is still influenced by L1. Therefore, RTM might take greater roles to make learners aware of better-written production which sounds more nativelike.

In addition, they have positive attitudes towards the implementation of RTM in academic EFL writing classes. Therefore, RTM will help learners benefit not only from process-oriented activities in producing texts but also from the meaningful investigation of how nativelike texts work. Positive attitudes in the learning process play an essential role in determining how the students behave towards teaching and learning process, particularly in RTM settings, as well as how they willingly take part actively in it. As a result, the learning outcomes of L2 will be much better because the more positive attitudes one has, the better he or she performs in L2 learning (Braten, 2006; Duarte, 2007).

Regarding the implementation of RTM, it is suggested that teachers may also provide model texts for their students and motivate them to reformulate the texts by themselves with the positive guidance from the teachers. In addition, it is also probably valuable to empower the students with different genres of texts, so they can have more positive motivation in language learning. These modes of discussions probably are very meaningful to make students more active in the classroom activities and help students evaluate their own writing process. Furthermore, model texts also motivate the students to search and read more the target language texts and take benefits from the texts not only deals with syntax and semantics but also rhetorical issues. Since RTM shows the ways how the learners express their ideas in a text, their analysis of the text organization in their own writing processes plays a pivotal role in L2 learning about proper ways of conveying appropriate attitudes in academic writing activities and engaging with those who will read their written products.

There are somewhat several limitations to the present study. The data were taken from a small number of students. Further studies on RTM should be conducted in more comprehensible manners in terms of adding bigger respondents across different student learning styles in order to obtain more valid conclusion on the effect of RTM in EFL writing settings. Furthermore, the present study did not discuss the gender factor which probably affects the role of RTM and it may be an interesting issue, too. It is also hoped that further research will also investigate the influence of RTM in a more detail learning L2 outcomes, such as complexity, accuracy, and fluency as indicators of quality writing products of the learners.

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