

EFL STUDENTS' RESPONSE TO INDIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN WRITING FOR GENERAL COMMUNICATION COURSE

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Abstract

Written corrective feedback aims at developing students writing proficiency where they are aware of what is expected as writers and are capable to create text with minimal errors and maximum clarity. This study aims at finding the students' response towards teacher's coded and uncoded written corrective feedback on their writing. A total of 79 freshmen majoring English Education Study Program of IKIP Siliwangi participated in filling questionnaire and twelve of them were interviewed using a semi-structured format. Qualitative method was applied in conducting this study. The data were labeled, coded and categorized in four dimensions: value, positivity, participation, and evaluation. The findings showed that in term of value students who got coded feedback showed positive opinion; while students who got uncoded feedback felt confusion. Further, in terms of positivity, participation and evaluation both classes showed positive response. Both classes agree they favor the teacher to provide the feedback by giving a mark, suggesting error correction, and providing written comments on the content. To conclude, students approve written corrective feedback on condition that teacher provides suggestions to improve their writing. Thus, it is suggested for the teacher to consider the feedback types in correcting the students' written error..

Keywords: *written corrective feedback, writing, students' response.*

Abstrak

Umpan balik tertulis bertujuan untuk mengembangkan kemampuan menulis siswa, dimana siswa menyadari apa yang diharapkan sebagai penulis dan mampu menulis teks dengan sangat jelas tanpa banyak kesalahan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menemukan respon siswa terhadap umpan balik dengan kode dan tanpa kode yang diberikan guru terhadap tulisan mereka. Tujuh puluh sembilan mahasiswa semester satu pada Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris IKIP Siliwangi berpartisipasi dalam mengisi kusioner dan wawancara. Metode kualitatif diterapkan dalam penelitian ini. Data yang didapat diberi label, kode dan dikategorikan kedalam empat dimensi respon seperti nilai, kepositifan, partisipasi, dan evaluasi. Hasil dari penelitian menunjukkan bahwa dalam dimensi nilai, siswa yang mendapat umpan balik dengan kode menunjukkan pendapat positif, sedangkan siswa yang mendapat umpan balik tanpa kode merasa kebingungan dengan umpan balik yang diberikan guru. Meskipun demikian, siswa menunjukkan respon yang positif pada dimensi kepositifan, partisipasi, dan evaluasi. Mereka lebih menyukai guru menggunakan umpan balik dengan kode atau komentar yang jelas. Dari hasil penelitian ini, disarankan guru untuk lebih mempertimbangkan jenis umpan balik yang digunakan di dalam kelas menulis. Hal ini disebabkan kebanyakan siswa lebih memilih umpan balik dengan kode dibandingkan dengan yang tanpa kode.

Kata Kunci: *umpan balik, menulis, respon siswa*

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INTRODUCTION

Writing as one of language skills has a significant impact on student's academic success. This is in line with Rizqiya, Pamungkas & Inayah (2017) that writing skills are considered as an important aspect in academic setting and that "a person's academic success is strongly influenced by his writing skills." Nevertheless, students admits that writing has substantial challenges that they may not be able to do it well (Zacharias, 2014). Among the problems that the students face, one of them would be accuracy. Since writing limits the communication between writer and reader, the writers has to make sure that their idea expressed clearly. Ahmadi-azad (2014) claims, "accuracy in writing has always been an integral part of second language (L2) teaching and learning and accuracy in writing is important to both readers and writers of L2 academic discourse." Besides, it is also claimed that cognitive and motivation aspects also play important role (Hyland in Wicaksono, 2018).

Among strategies to improve students writing, written corrective feedback has become a contentious issue among researchers. Truscott (in Goksoy & Nazli, 2016) argues that written corrective feedback does not have much to do on the improvement of L2 learning since the studies supporting it did not involve control group. This idea is also supported by the results of the study finding that most of the student participants of the study feel that teachers' written corrective feedback was discouraging, confusing, overwhelming and useless (Agbayahoun, 2016).

Nevertheless the view was challenged by others by presenting evidence of its effectiveness in improving students writing (Bitchener, 2008). Written corrective feedback has been regarded as a typical way to improve students writing accuracy especially in second language (L2) (Ahmadi-Azad, 2014; Wicaksono, 2018; Zacharias, 2014). It is also claimed that "the provision of feedback on students' writing is a central pedagogic practice" (Coffin et al., 2003).

Furthermore, teachers may give the students' writing corrective feedback in different ways. Ellis (2009) distinguish strategies for providing written corrective feedback in six categories. They are (a) direct CF; (b) indirect CF; (c) metalinguistic CF; (d) the focus of the feedback; (e) electronic feedback; and (f) reformulation. *First*, direct feedback means teachers write the correct form of the mistakes the students make. The *second* includes indicating and locating the error, or merely indicating the error. The *third* involves teachers write code such as 'ww' for wrong word, or 'art' for article. Another form of this feedback is by numbering errors in the text and giving grammatical explanation for each numbered error. The *fourth* means teachers concern with specific errors or attempt to correct all kinds of error occur in the students writing. The *fifth* form of feedback is that teachers spot the error and give hyperlink to a file that contains example of the correct usage. The *last* is that teachers help students to recreate the writing in order to be native-like.

In addition to the categories above, Mahmoud (2000) found teachers give feedback by (a) indicating the location of the deviation, (b) writing correction codes or symbols, (c) giving rules and explanations that lead to correct form, and (d) writing the correct form directly. Meanwhile, Štajner (2013) propose the teachers feedback as follow.

Table 1. Teacher's Written Corrective Feedback (Stajner, 2013)

<i>Type of teacher feedback</i>	<i>Short Description</i>
<i>Explicit</i>	<i>Error indication and explanation. Correct form of the error is provided</i>
<i>Implicit</i>	<i>Teacher reformulate the students' error (recast)</i>
<i>Direct</i>	<i>Error indication and provision of correction</i>
<i>Indirect Coded</i>	<i>Error indication by a correction code.</i>

<i>Type of teacher feedback</i>	<i>Short Description</i>
<i>Indirect Uncoded</i>	<i>Simple error indication (just providing a highlight, circle or underline) without a code of the errors</i>
<i>Focused</i>	<i>Correction of a particular types of errors</i>
<i>Unfocused</i>	<i>Correction of all errors</i>

Many studies have presented different results of which type of written corrective feedback should be given to the students (Agbayahoun, 2016; Bitchener, 2008; Sia & Cheung, 2017; Štajner, 2013). However they come to similar conclusion that the type of written corrective feedback might depend on the students' performance and preferences as well as students and teachers perspective of written corrective feedback.

In addition, this study aims at exploring the students' response to written corrective feedback, particularly indirect coded and indirect uncoded. The students' response to written corrective feedback was categorized into four, adapting the work of DeMonbrun et al.(2017). They are (i) value, (ii) positivity, (iii) participation, and (iv) evaluation.

METHOD

The research question of this study was explored using a qualitative approach. The rationale for choosing this approach was that qualitative data would help to gain insight how teacher's feedback practice influenced students' opinion, feeling, and behaviour. It was felt that more genuine response would be best obtained through questionnaire and interview process rather than the method that required the students did an excessive writing.

This study was conducted in IKIP Siliwangi, Bandung. The participant was second semester students in Writing for General Communication class. Seventy nine students participated in filling out the questionnaire. These students were from two different classes that got coded and uncoded feedback from the teacher. The students were already familiar with the usage of these two types of feedback. However, to ease the collection of the data, the first class were only asked the questions that focused on coded feedback (further it is called Coded Class), while the second class focused on uncoded feedback (called Uncoded Class). Not all participants in this study involved in the interview. There were twelve students with different written proficiency level became the interviewees; six students from each class. The information of students' proficiency was gained from the teacher's score.

Questionnaire and interview were used as instrument in collecting the data. The questionnaire was open-ended questionnaire with eight questions. The questionnaire was adapted from existing instrument made by DeMonbrun et al. (2017) included four dimensions of response stated in previous section: value, positivity, participation, and evaluation. Adaptation of the tool were regarded necessary as it only needed slight modification.

To further explore students' response of teacher's written feedback, one-on-one interview was used. Several questions were asked to determine: 1) the students' opinion or perception of teacher's feedback practice, 2) the students' feeling either positive or negative comment on their writing; 3) how the students use the feedback that was provided; and 4) how the students rate the feedback that was provided. The interview was audio-tape and transcribed. Member checking was used to validate the findings. Triangulation of the interview data and questionnaire data was expected to provide a clear and depth description of the data (Creswell, 2012). The data was then coded and analysed based on the presented response dimension.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study presented the result of questionnaire and interview data that were collected from two classes that ever used both coded and uncoded feedback. However, to ease the data collection, the focus of question in the first class was on coded feedback, while the second class was on uncoded feedback. The elaboration of the data was based on four dimensions of response: value, positivity, participation, and evaluation.

Value

Value deals with cognitive aspect. It referred to the degree to which the students see the activity as worthwhile (DeMonbrun et al., 2017). There were three questions of value in the questionnaire. The first question asked the usefulness of teacher's coded or uncoded feedback. Second and third questions asked the focus of teacher's feedback, especially in the case of aspect and error types.

The result of questionnaire in Coded Class shows positive result. The students had good opinion to the teacher's feedback practice. Most of them (65%) thought that the feedback was useful. It helped them to see both positive and negative points of their writing. They thought that the teacher's feedback was clear and understandable. Meanwhile, there were only some students (28.63%) who gave negative response. They considered it as discouraging, overwhelming, and useless activity.

This result was supported by the data gained from the interview. The interview result reveals that 5 of 6 students in Coded Class considered the teacher's feedback as a worthwhile, in which they got an input from the teacher to improve their writing quality. Only a low achiever student who considered it as a burden. In this case, he did not have any idea of how to correct or revise his error.

Unlike the above mentioned class, half of the students (53.3%) in Uncoded Class shows negative opinion. They thought that the teacher's feedback was not clear. It was difficult to decode or to understand. It contained too many feedback points. It also did not offer suggestion for revision. There were only 47.7% of students who saw it in a positive side. This result was in line with the data gained from the interview. Three of six students mentioned that the feedback given by the teacher did not make any improvement in their writing. It just added their confusion as the teacher only circled the word without giving any clue. This was mostly stated by low and mid achiever students. This findings is in line with the study of Agbayahoun (2016). It is stated that negative error feedback may devastate the students and they may lose their interest to continue the learning process.

Regarding the focus of teacher's written comment, questionnaire data presents that students in Coded Class (71.4%) and Uncoded Class (85%) had the same opinion. They thought that teacher's feedbacks focused on both positive and negative aspect of students writing was better than on just positive or negative aspects. This data was in accordance to the interview data. The students also agreed that grammatical error should be the main focus of the teachers' correction, which was then followed by mechanics, spelling, and vocabulary. This shows that the students recognize the importance of grammar. Grammar is stated as "the weaving that creates the fabric" (Azar in Mart, 2013). It means grammar makes the utterance or sentence comprehensible and can be conveyed clearly among the participants of communication.

Positivity

Positivity is related to students' positive or negative feeling about the activity (DeMonbrun et al., 2017). This feeling is affected by students' thoughts, belief, and expectation. There was one question in the questionnaire data that asked this aspect. The questionnaire result in Coded Class revealed that 80% students had positive feeling to the feedback provided by the teacher. They were

very enthusiast when they received the paper contained the teacher's comment. They saw negative comments provided by the teacher as the opportunity for them to improve their writing quality, while the positive comments gave them the motivation to write better. There were only 20% students that had negative feeling. They felt frustrated and lost (did not know how to revise the composition).

Even though having negative opinion, most of students in Uncoded Classes (63%) felt positively to the practice of teacher's feedback. Negative comments provided by the teacher did not demotivate them in improving their writing. It even did not give any impact to their emotion. There were only 37% students who had negative reaction to the teacher's feedback. Similar to those in Coded Class, they felt irritated after receiving negative feedback in their composition. This mostly felt by the lower and middle achievement students. It was proven by the result of interview which revealed that two mid-achievement students and one low achievement-students were uninterested when receiving uncoded feedback. This was because they could not identify their error and revise the composition into the good one. In contrast, high achievement students feel challenged to find the error in their writing. They even tried to open grammatical book just to make sure that their error identification was right.

Participation

Participation relates the extent to which students do or do not participate or demonstrate resistance (DeMonbrun et al., 2017). Related to this dimension, there was one question stated in the questionnaire. From coded class, it was revealed the students show positive response. Most of them (69.7%) claimed that after they got the coded written feedback given by the teacher, they revise their writing by taking into account the teacher's suggestions. They believed that the teacher's feedback was the right guidance to have a better and correct writing. Some students (33.3%) also agreed to start revising their writing mistakes that are easy to correct. Meanwhile, there were only 4 of 33 students (12.1%) who gave negative response to the teacher's coded feedback. They preferred to only read the grade and the comments from the teacher and after that they discarded the paper. This result was in line with the interview data. Five of six students considered the teacher's coded feedback as the things that they should follow to have a better writing. The rest of them tried to start their revision by correcting the easy parts.

The similar result also comes from uncoded class. Almost half of the students (46.5%) gave positive response to the use of teacher's uncoded feedback. They took account the teacher's suggestions in their writing revision although it was uneasy to understand the uncoded feedback. This result was also supported by the data from the interview. Four of six students claimed that despite the unclear suggestion, they still relied on the teacher's uncoded feedback to revise their writing. They also started their writing correction from the easiest one, tried to ask for clarification about their teacher's uncoded feedback, and asked for help from their home tutor.

On the other hand, the negative responses were also found in interview data. One low-achiever showed his open resistance. Open resistance is appeared on some occasions that the students openly object to the approach (Weimer, 2002). He showed his objection by complaining the uncoded feedback as the confusing suggestions. He had to guess and even have a further step in order to know how to revise his writing correctly. Meanwhile, one low-achievement student demonstrated her partial compliance resistance. This behavior commonly appeared when students demonstrated partial compliance by completing a task poorly, half-heartedly, quickly, or by putting forth minimal effort (Weimer, 2002). She stated that she did the revision just as long as she understood the uncoded feedback. In other words, for the parts that she did not understand, she only left it as the way it is. Such behavior was considered as poor or minimal effort task completion.

Evaluation

Evaluation reflects how students rate the overall course and quality of instruction on course evaluation forms (DeMonbrun et al., 2017). It plays important role since the students' ratings can determine whether the teacher can adopt and continue to use particular types of instruction or approach in their classes. There were three questions of evaluation stated in the questionnaire. The first question asked about how they define the teacher's written feedback completion. The second was about how they evaluate the teacher's reaction to their writing. Last, the third question dealt with how they suggest their teacher on their preferences of being corrected on their writing.

In terms of how they define the teacher's written feedback completion, the result of questionnaire in both Coded Class and Uncoded Class shows the same result. After the students got the written feedback from the teacher, they could judge on how they prefer to have the correction. Most of them (45.4% in Coded Class and 41.3% in Uncoded Class) defined that the feedback should be by giving a mark, suggesting error correction, and providing written comments on the content. It was also revealed that some students (19.3% in Coded Class and 17.4% in Uncoded Class) preferred to have the correction by being given a mark and suggested error correction, followed by a number of students (13.3% in Coded Class and 15.3% in Uncoded Class) judged that the correction should be by suggesting error correction and providing written comments on the content. It was also found that not even a single student in both classes defined their judgment to have a mark only on their writing. The parallel result was also discovered from the interview data. All six students in Coded Class judged that after having the correction from the teacher, they could determine that having a mark, error correction suggestion, and written comments on their writing was preferable. They saw that kind of written feedback was helpful for them to have a better writing. Furthermore, it let them to see the rate of their writing ability.

Regarding on how they evaluate the teacher's reaction to their writing, the results in both Coded Class and Uncoded Class was encouraging. After having the correction from the teacher, more than a half students in Coded Class (57.6%) and most of students in Uncoded Class (89.1%) evaluated that their teacher's reaction to all errors on their writing was desirable. This result was supported by the data gained from the interview. Four of six students of Coded Class claimed that when teacher reacted to all the errors they made on their writing, they could easily notice the parts should be corrected and it increased the chance of having a correct revision. The similar results also came from five of six students of Uncoded Class. In the meantime, the rest of the students (two of Coded Class and one of Uncoded Class) defined the teacher's reaction to some errors was challenging since they had to find the same type of error somewhere in their writing without being told.

The last question of evaluation dealt with how the students suggest the teacher on the preferences of being corrected on their writing. The questionnaire data presents that after they got the written feedback, most of students in Coded Class (30.3%) judged that they prefer the teacher to make circles or underlines the errors and a code to indicate the type of error. The same number of students also defined that they favor the teacher to not only make circles/underlines and state the code, but also to provide the correction. The interview result reveals that 5 of 6 students in Coded Class considered the teacher's feedback was sufficient. They preferred the teacher to make circles or underlines on their writing along with the codes to indicate the type of error, in which that kind of written feedback had already done by the teacher in Coded Class. Only one low achiever student considered that the teacher should also provide correction. It will be much helpful.

Unlike the above mentioned class, almost half of the students (43.1%) in Uncoded Class required only the signs in the error parts –it can be circles or underlines- and a code to specify the type of error. Only smaller number of students in Uncoded Class (23.8%) required the teacher to also provide the correction. The interview data reveals that the students in this class really appreciate if

the teacher can state the type of error instead of only make circles or underlines on their errors. Three of six students thought that the teacher's feedback was not clear. It was uneasy to understand since the teacher only circled the word without giving any clue.

CONCLUSION

To sum up, there is difference opinion between Coded and Uncoded class to the teacher's feedback practice. The students getting coded corrective view the feedback implementation positively. They are very enthusiast since it helps them to improve their writing quality. On the other hand, some students receiving uncoded feedback have different view. Even though they admit the benefits of feedback implementation, they think it is unclear. They do not get any clue about their types of error. As a result, they are difficult to decode or understand the given feedback.

Fortunately, the students in both classes have similar attitude to respond the teacher's feedback. Soon after getting the feedback, they revise their writing. They start their writing correction from the easiest one, try to ask for clarification about their teacher's feedback, and ask for help from their home tutor. The students also prefer the teacher to make circles or underlines the errors and a code to indicate the type of error. In the case of frequency, they favor the teacher to react to all errors.

Based on the above conclusion, it is suggested for the teacher to apply coded feedback in correcting the students' written errors. The types of feedback with clear identification of error is more favorable for some students as it helps them to easily notice the part that should be corrected and enhances the chance of having a correct revision.

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