TEACHER WRITTEN-CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK: A CASE STUDY IN EFL WRITING CLASSROOM

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Abstract

Feedback is commonly implemented as the scaffolding learning technique in second and foreign language writing. The importance of this has also been acknowledged as a way for students to manage their writing abilities better, which is a crucial component of the process-based learning environment. However, the published literature on secondary teachers' responses to students' writing in an EFL context is less extensive. Furthermore, limited is known about the causes of the current feedback practices and the reasons behind the teacher's reactions to student writing. As a result, this study, which includes a teacher as a participant, investigates the application of written-corrective feedback in secondary school. This study was a case study aimed at (1) examining written-corrective feedback practice the teacher provides and (2) outlining the factors that influence teacher's practices of giving written-corrective feedback. The data were garnered by a document analysis and interviews adapted from Lee (2009) comprising five items associated with the practices in implementing written-corrective feedback type and strategy, respected by variables that form those practices. The results demonstrated that teachers preferred to use uncoded, indirect, hints, and selective written-corrective feedback. Additionally, it was discovered that those practices were primarily affected by personal experience and improvement in her practice.

Keywords: Written-Corrective Feedback; Practices; Factors; EFL Context

INTRODUCTION

The majority of second or foreign language classrooms still strongly emphasize teacher-written feedback, which according to Hyland (2003) may even be the most popular form of feedback applied by second or foreign language teachers, despite recent study on oral, peer, and computer as sources of feedback growing in L1 and L2 settings (Zhang, Chen, & Ketwan, 2021). Over the past few decades, written-corrective feedback, also recognized as error correction, has gained controversy in the context of second-language writing and acquisition. Since error correction could be detrimental to students' fluency and overall writing quality as well as detrimental to teachers as it is time-comsuming and diverts energy away from the more productive facets of the writing process. Truscott (1996) was the first to call for its abandonment. Nevertheless, according to Ferris (1999), Truscott's views were overly impulsive and intense given the rapidly expanding body of research evidence demonstrating how effective error correction can and does, to a certain extent, benefit many students with their writing as long as it is prioritized, precise, and selective. Additionally, Chandler (2003) claimed that

Truscott's findings in the original study occasionally lacked data support with statistically significant evidence.

Currently, teachers continue to respond to their students' writing by giving written corrective feedback, despite the fact that researchers are still debating its efficacy. They continue to believe that correcting students' errors through comments or correcting errors could improve students' writing accuracy, for instance in the absence of grammatical and lexical errors (Chandler, 2003). As a result, a substantial amount of research has been done to determine how teachers react to students' writing and the results of those reactions. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) defined teacher-written corrective feedback as information the teacher provides, either indirectly or directly, on the students' writing. This type of feedback is intended to correct and promote initial language revision. Depending on the requirements of teachers and students in various situational practices, various feedback types may function differently in terms of effectiveness. According to Lee (2003), there are 2 types of written corrective feedback from teachers: direct and indirect. Lee (2003) further specified that direct feedback refers to teachers finding and correcting students' errors outright. Lee continues by elucidating that in order to identify errors directly, teachers typically place symbols, codes, or comments directly above or next to the errors that have been highlighted or circled. According to Al-Hajri and Al-Mahroqi (2013), direct corrective feedback aims to assist students identify their errors, lessen cognitive load and confusion, and then demonstrate how to correct their errors clearly. On the other hand, Lee (2004) defined indirect written feedback as pointing out students' errors without revising them. Lee also outlined the various types of indirect corrective feedback, including explicit, implicit, coded, uncoded, selective, and comprehensive. The objectives of writing classes can vary, which means that dissimilar types of corrective feedback may be required. Since dissimilar types of feedback should be applied to address different errors, it is the responsibility of teachers to be selective in their feedback selection.

Numerous studies has been published to explore the type and strategy of teacher-written corrective feedback. The research done by Lee (2009) is one of those studies. In her study, Lee found that most teachers marked students' errors by providing the code and preferred to give direct corrective feedback to indirect corrective feedback. Furthermore, while thoroughly marking the students' errors, the teachers concentrated more on the language structure than the text's organization and content. Nevertheless, Lee did not go any further in her investigation of the elements influencing the practices of those teachers.

In another study, Juncqueira and Payant (2015) investigated teacher-written feedback practice in the L2 context in the US, a nation where English is the primary language. They researched the practices and variables involved in the teacher written-corrective feedback practices through a case study. First, they discovered that the teacher pointed out the global problem rather than the local problem that needed to be revised. Nevertheless, she also made a point about the grammar problem because, despite the fact that she did not have time to teach it, she realized how important it was to correct it in an L2 setting. Furthermore, by providing direct feedback for local issues and indirect feedback for global issues, the teachers in this study highlighted contextualized feedback for the students' errors. Additionally, Juncqueira and Payant discovered that the teacher's practice of providing written-corrective feedback was shaped by both personal experience and academic curricula. The results of this study, however, may differ from those of an experienced teacher because it was completed by a novice teacher from L2 setting.

The majority of written corrective feedback reseach has been published in L1 and L2 contexts, as well as in English-dominant nations (Lee, 2014). As a result, less research has been done in Indonesia to date on the actual practices of teacher-written corrective feedback and the influences on those practices. Thus, the current study aims to fill the gap by investigating actual written corrective feedback practices in the EFL setting by concentrating on the practice of error

correction in students' writing. Since teachers must effectively deliver written corrective feedback to enable students to fully develop their ideas, it is crucial to understand to what extent teachers implement it (Magno & Amarles, 2012).

In addition, in order to design pedagogical improvements, teachers must understand the reasons behind their improper written-corrective feedback practices and the degree to which their practices are consistent with their beliefs. It can only be done by conducting reflective studies on their practices (Alkhatib, 2015). Moreover, the studies that are currently being conducted in Indonesia primarily concentrate on experimental studies to determine which types of corrective feedback are significantly effective in improving writing accuracy (Septiana, Sulistyo, & Kadarisman, 2016; Saukah, Dewanti, & Laksmi, 2017; Herlinawati et al., 2020; Elfiyanto & Fukazawa, 2021) while there is only limited study researched on teacher practice and the reason behind its practice to date (Mulati, Nurkamto, & Drajati, 2018).

METHOD

This current study employed a case study with a purposive sampling technique for the selection case. A teacher was chosen as the participant because she fit the description of a teacher who teaches writing using teacher-written corrective feedback. Te (pseudonym) had graduated from the English education program, has been teaching English for about 14 years, and was experienced in utilizing written-corrective feedback for about 5 to 7 years. The researchers used an interview adapted from Lee (2009) in analyzing the students' texts, which contained teacher-written corrective feedback provided by Te. There were two main parts to the interview. The first section addresses the type and strategy of written-corrective feedback used by Te, while the second section addresses the influences on her current practices. The interview information was recorded, coded, and compiled. Meanwhile, the document analysis was completed to investigate the frequency of the written-corrective practice. The research questions that lead this study were first, what are the types and strategies practiced by Te in giving written-corrective feedback? Second, what are the variables behind those current practices?

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

The two relevant topics about teacher written-corrective feedback practice and its reason are presented in this section.

1. **Teacher's practices on giving written-correcting feedback**

   The first question of this research investigated Te's practices related to the type and strategy of teacher-written corrective feedback. Each practice is first explained, followed by illustrations compiled from document analysis and interviews. Then, the later question is to describe the practices from the data collection.

   a. The teachers' practices for identifying direct versus indirect errors: "Feedback must be given indirectly."

      Based on the document analysis, it was evident that students obtained more correction on direct corrective feedback rather than indirect corrective feedback, although the total case is insignificant. The 140 points was allocated to indirect while direct corrective feedback was 144 points for the students' errors. Te asserted during an interview that feedback should be given without revealing the correct answers. The following excerpt illustrates her justification for preferring indirect over direct:

      > "I preferred to apply the later, indirect feedback. Because it can make students more independent."

In the previous statement, Te stressed the importance of giving the students indirect corrective feedback. The reason for this is that indirect corrective feedback requires students to make an effort to look for the right answer on their own under the teacher's guidance, which can prompt them to think more critically and analytically. She further elaborated that giving students the right answer up front would make them lose interest in learning and become reliant on the teacher.

b. The teacher's practices for coding versus encoding errors in marking: "It is preferable to mark errors by circling or underlining the error."
    Following a document analysis, it was discovered that 120 out of 144 marked errors were actually uncoded feedback. It indicates that Te preferred to underline and circle the students' mistakes while leaving out all other information. Although Te has stated that she prefers coded feedback to uncoded feedback, this analysis of the feedback did not follow that practice. The following is evidence that supports the claimed practice:

    > *"I used the code to be more specific. That will make it easier for students to recognize their errors."*

    However, she realized that even though it was rare, she might find the challenge in providing code for students' errors. That was due to the student's lack of knowledge in identifying the codes. The following excerpt demonstrates evidence of this stated practice:

    > *"However, I occasionally run into difficulties. For example, if I use the code V for the Verb, students who don't understand will ask, "What is V?". They still ask about the adjective "Adj" as well. However, that case is quite rare to find."*

c. The teachers' practices for identifying errors through explicit or hints strategy: "Error marking for students should be hints rather than explicit strategy."
    Te was identified as using several hints without utilizing any explicit strategies in the feedback analysis. She was circling or underlining the students' errors with additional marks, such as question marks on the line's margin. That reported feedback matched the results of the interview. She explained:

    > *"I immediately pointed out the error. For instance, "the kittens was gone." Then I'll underline the "was," and then I put an arrow to "kittens". So, they know they shouldn't use "was" because there are many "kittens."*

    Furthermore, Te stated that her goal in doing strategy hints, or creating arrows to relate or indicate one word to another, was to create logic for the students' thinking process. Hence, students could reconsider what was wrong and how to deal with it.

d. The teacher's error-marking strategy, selective or comprehensive: "Selective strategy results from focusing on several aspects."
    Te believed that every aspect of the writing composition should be corrected. Nevertheless, she assumed that those aspects should not be corrected once at a time. As a result, she stated that she should be selective in her error correction practice as follows:

    > *"In fact, every aspect of writing is important, including the content or idea, grammar, organization, mechanics, and vocabulary. It will only burden students if done once. That's what I think."*

This statement is actually in accordance with her feedback analysis, which selected some aspects to be corrected. It was a combination of vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

e. The teacher's practices in giving written corrective feedback on the focused aspect: "The priority is contextualizing feedback practice."
According to the data analysis, Te concentrated more on using appropriate vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics while making a few minor changes to the organization and content. This finding differed slightly from the stated practice, which refers to content, grammar, and diction or vocabulary as the focus items, as explained in the excerpt that follows:

> *"I would only pay attention to diction and grammar, for instance, if those were the only things being stressed at the time. I will ignore the rest and correct it when I have another chance. Yet, I usually emphasize the content, followed by grammar and diction."*

Although there are differences between the document analysis and the stated practice, Te insisted that her practice should be concentrated on a few aspects rather than all aspects because it could cause students to become depressed and dislike English, as she stated in the following interview excerpt:

> *"Iif all the errors that exist must be corrected, it will be unfocused, and students will feel burdened. Finally, they do not like English."*

2. **Factors affecting the written-corrective feedback practice**
The objective of the study's second section was to investigate the variables that influenced Te's practices for giving written corrective feedback. The feedback analysis and follow-up interview have yielded a number of factors, each of which will be pronounced, illustrated, and then explained.

a. Personal experience as a determining factor in how teachers deliver written corrective feedback: "Adjusting her previous teacher feedback practice as Te was in secondary school."
Since Te did not learn the written-corrective feedback concept from a training, seminar, or academic background, her personal practice was what shaped her practice in giving written corrective feedback. Therefore, she received written corrective feedback in senior high school. Te nonetheless had a negative experience with her teacher as a result of the excessive feedback she received, which left her feeling down. Thus, she adjusted that understanding into this current practice of feedback. She explained:

> *"In my senior high school, if there was a task, the teacher would correct it. It was already a burden for me because I had made so many mistakes. "There is so much to be revised; English is so complicated." We are aware that learning English is challenging. However, we must constantly work to make sure that English is simple and easy to learn. One of them is by doing step-by-step. Initially, we take small steps until they fully understand."*

b. The importance of personal experience in determining how teachers provide written corrective feedback: Practices are evolving as a result of practice with experiential feedback.
Her practical experience was the second factor. In order to have more effective written corrective feedback practices, some modifications have been added since she initially practiced written-corrective feedback. These modifications are noted as follows:

> *"I have probably been using written-corrective feedback for 5to 7 years. In contrast to the nowadays practice, I circled, marked, and then wrote, "This is incorrect." "It should be like this." Now, I do more than mark or circle. That is by asking the students to trigger them. So, they searched for why this word or sentence is incorrect."*

She gave more details regarding the causes behind her new practice. These factors included the students' propensity to forget the feedback they received and their reliance on the teacher's scaffolding, as seen in the following excerpt:

> *"I marked, or I ticked, and then I wrote the incorrect one, "It should be like this". When I did it, students tended to forget the errors they'd made. They also frequently rely too heavily on the teacher.*

Discussion

This current study aims to investigate how the teacher delivers written-corrective feedback in an EFL setting. The research results demonstrated that the teachers used indirect corrective feedback as opposed to direct corrective feedback. She used indirect corrective feedback because she wanted her students to become independent learners who could recognize and fix their own errors. Al-Hajri and Al-Mahroqi (2013) identified that indirect corrective feedback aims to encourage students to analyze their errors in order to help them develop problem-solving skills, which is in line with the reasoning behind this. Although in minimal amounts, Te did continue to use direct corrective feedback. In contrast, this result differs from a study conducted by Jinowat & Wiboolyasarin (2022) that shows a preference for using direct feedback. The reason behind its practice is to ease students to recognize and repair their errors, which is supported by the research done by Lim & Renandya (2020) although it was not statistically significant. Jinowat & Wiboolyasarin further added that students were more willing to correct the error according to teachers' comments.

Additionally, Te used mostly uncoded teacher-written corrective feedback. Uncoded refers to circling and underlining the error without adding any additional code to identify the type of error. Ferris (2002) responded to this finding by asserting that it might be difficult for the teacher to implement and confusing for the students to identify the error code. Te also preferred to practice giving hints rather than explicit written corrective feedback intended to develop logic in the students' thinking processes. According to Lee (2003), students with higher language skills might gain more from using the hint-written-corrective feedback strategy. However, Lim & Renandya (2020) argued that this strategy may be difficult for the learners with a lower proficiency since they may not own a sufficient linguistic comprehension to revise the errors directly. In contrast to Junqueira and Payant's (2015) findings, Te chose to practice selective corrective feedback rather than comprehensive corrective feedback. Te's emphasis was on local concerns like grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. In response to this finding, Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) argued that it has been demonstrated that choosing focused aspects at a time is better for both short- and long-term writing accuracy. Further, it is in line with the research conducted by Lee (2019) and Cheng & Zhang (2021) in the L2 context, which discovered that teachers in L2 classrooms preferred more local issues, including linguistic or grammatical errors. The first factors that have an impact on teachers' practices, in accordance with Borg (2003), are personal knowledge, subject knowledge, academic background, and practical experience. In this study, the factors that influenced Te's practices were those that related to her knowledge and practical experience since she had no prior college or training, or seminar-based education. This result is in line with the study conducted by Junqueira & Payant (2015), who discovered that the teacher's practice was guided by her practical experience,

which is also influenced by her decision-making process. It happens because, as a novice teacher, she thought it was so hard to incorporate all her knowledge into her teaching practices. Therefore, she modified it into current practices. In contrast, this reason may be dissimilar from Te's who believed that her former practices are less significant for students' writing improvements. Therefore, she transformed it to trigger the students to be more independent in correcting their errors.

CONCLUSION

This study aims to investigate the factors that influence teachers' actual practices for giving written corrective feedback in EFL classrooms. Direct, indirect, coded, uncoded, hinting, explicit, selective, and comprehensive written corrective feedback are some of the types and strategies presented in Lee's framework. Te favored the use of indirect corrective feedback as a form of feedback. She thus preferred to practice uncoded, hinting, and selective written corrective feedback when using indirect corrective feedback. Her practice of giving written corrective feedback was thus influenced by her personal experience as well as her practical experience. The results of this study only focused on one teacher in an EFL classroom. To obtain a thorough description of teachers' actual practice in the classroom, it is suggested that additional research on practices and beliefs be done.

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