A PERSPECTIVE ON WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Herminus Efrando Pabur, Nihta V. F. Liando Universitas Negeri Manado

Abstract

This article presents views on written corrective feedback. It elaborates the type of written corrective feedback which was dominantly given by the teachers to the students. Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is used in correcting grammar error or error occurred in students' writing. WCF is considered effective in increasing writing accuracy, in particular it functions to improve learners' writing skill. There are two types of WCF that are commonly used by teachers to respond or correct the grammatical mistakes made by the students. They are direct and indirect WCF. Direct WCF is used by teachers to provide correct form, crossing out unnecessary word, inserting a missing word and writing the correct form and Indirect WCF is performed when the students are informed that they made errors but are not provided the correct forms so the students can do the correction themselves. There are 6 types of WCF: 1) Direct WCF; 2) Indirect WCF (indicating + locating the error and indicating error only); 3) Metalinguistics WCF (error code and brief grammatical description); 4) The focus of the feedback (focused and unfocused); 5) Electronic Feedback; and 6) Reformulation. However, the written corrective feedback does not cover all the aspects for developing respondents' writing skill.

Keywords: Corrective Feedback, Written Corrective Feedback, writing skill

INTRODUCTION

Perception can be understood as a process where we judge something based on our experiences. Jordan *et. al.* (2008) defines perception as a process by which we interpret and make sense of the things that are presented to our senses. In case of teaching and learning activity, students' perception can be understood as the way they judge the learning experiences or even the feedback given by the teacher. The concept of perception is also applied in the context of teaching and learning English.

Teaching English as a foreign language is not an easy matter. There are many things to be considered before teaching it. The main problem might be the influences of the native language. Another problem could be the lack of linguistic experiences of the target language. Environment is also a problem, for example, in a country where English is taught as a foreign language, classroom or school is the only place where English is used. Increasing student's competence (knowledge about language) and performance (ability to use the target language) is a goal which have to be achieved although there are many hindrances. In order to achieve this goal, an integrated learning (integration of learning) needs to be conducted.

Integration of learning is "a multifaceted process that emerges from the cummulative exposure..." (Barber, 2009; p. 12). It means that English as the learning subject need to be taught in cumulative exposure or in other words English contents (knowledge) and skills may not be taught separately. Barber (2009; p.13) then added, "Integration of learning is the demonstrated ability to connect, apply, and/or synthesize information coherently from disparate contexts and perspectives, and make use of these new insights in multiple contexts." In case of English learning, integrated learning may refer to connection between the content and content, content and skills, and skill and skill. In short, Integrated English have to be taught in integrated process.

Regarding the term of Integrated English (especially English skills), there are four basic skills in language learning: Listening, Speaking, Reading and Writing. Listening and speaking are acquired skills but reading and writing are learnt skill. Writing and reading need to be learnt to be mastered. It needs a formal setting and formal instruction to be learnt. Reading skill deals with the phonology aspects since it has relation with producing sounds. In the other hand, writing deal with more complex aspect such as morphology, syntax and semantic. But we have to admitted that writing is superior than reading in case of complexity. Zarei and Rahnama (2013) said, "writing skill is not acquired, it is learnt or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments." In short, writing skill need practices and instructional setting to be mastered.

Since writing deals with many aspects of linguistics, it is normal that there are many errors occur in learning writing skill. If there are many errors occur in learning writing skill, it would be frustrated for both teacher and students. Teachers will be frustrated because they have to correct the same error over and over again. In students' point of view, the error will demotivate them in learning the target language. In contrast, Corder (1967) viewed error as contributing factor in helping students and teacher to evaluate their learning process. Due to errors made by students in writing activities, we need a tool called feedback to reduce the errors

Feedback is one of the pedagogical tools which is used widely. Hattie *et. al.* in Khanlarzadeh and Nemati (2016) describe feedback as "the information provided to the learner regarding his/her action with the intent to assist the learner to either reinforce correct responses or to search for replacement for the incorrect ones." This notion emphasizes on the form of feedback as information and its purpose to help students in recognizing their error. Quoting Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics, Ebrahimzade and Khodareza (2016) sees feedback as "… any information that provides information on the result of behavior. In teaching, feedback refers to comments or other information that learners receive, concerning their success on learning task or tests, either form teachers or other persons." Furthermore, feedback can be seen in positive feedback and negative feedback. One form negative feedback is corrective feedback.

Corrective feedback can be used for oral or writing activity. In oral activity, corrective feedback is used in correcting mispronunciation or the phonology features of target language so students can provide the correct sounds. In writing activity, corrective feedback or Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is used in correcting grammar error or error occurred in students' writing. WCF is also known as grammar correction or written error correction (Shao, 2015). The topic of WCF is still highly debated regarding its effectiveness and its role.

WCF is believed in providing many significances in increasing writing accuracy. Ferris (1999) viewed WCF/GC (grammar correction) as something that should not be abandoned because of its function in improving the accuracy in learners' writing skill. Shao (2015) summarized Ferris' idea in a statement, "survey of student opinion showed their consistent affirmation on the importance of GC; professors feel that students' linguistic errors are bothersome and affect their overall evaluation of students' papers, writing instructors should not ignore their students' linguistic difficulties; the absence of any feedback or strategy training will ensure that many students never take seriously the need to improve their editing skill and they will not have the knowledge to edit even when they perceive its importance." In the other hand Truscott as quoted by Shao (2015) states, "Grammar correction (GC) is not only a waste of time, but even harmful to students as well." Furthermore, Truscott think GC will cause stress and demotivates student in learning the target language (Zarei and Rahnama, 2013).

Based on the differences in opinion of Truscott and Ferris we could say that the effectiveness of WCF is still highly debated as Ebrahimzade and Khodareza (2016) examines, "effectiveness of the corrective written feedback is a very important issue to make students proficient in the second language languages." Furthermore, Ellis in Mir and Ghornavi (2017)

states, "corrective feedback (CF) is one of the issues in second language acquisition which has grown to be major concern among theoreticians and practitioners." It means that since the effectiveness of WCF is still debated, many researches are needed to uncover the significances made by WCF.

The differences in Truscott and Ferris opinion towards Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) will also make the readers questioned the function of WCF in writing activity. Both of them conducted their study in ESL class, so there might be some differences if the study is conducted in EFL class, these differences might be the type of WCF that students prefer to get. This opinion is advocated by the study conducted by Chung (2015): ESL and EFL students' perception towards WCF. The study conducted by Ebrahimzade and Khodareza (2016) also notes that researchers were in favor of finding the most useful feedback to help learners improve their written accuracy.

THEORETICAL BASES

Perception

In general, perception is a process to evaluate something based on our prior experiences. It means that perception is used to interpret stimuli of outer environment and to convert the stimuli into psychologocally meaningfull representation that defines our inner experiences of the world (Bodenhausen and Hugenberg, 2003). Perception, in other point of view, can be seen as the subject of our thought and as the source of our cognition (Démuth, 2013). It indicates that perception is the process where human intrepret his or her world. In short, How human sees or view the world is how human construct the world (Démuth, 2013)

Related to concept of cognitivism, Perception is the process by which we interpret and make sense of the things that are presented to our senses (Jordan *et. al.*, 2008). In other words, perception can be seen as the interpretation process of our experiences so it can make sense for us. Related to the previous idea, Kasschau (1985) states, "Perception occurs when you apply your experience to interpret sensations.... Perception is composed of sensations to which the brain reacts" So, the main function of perception is to interpret the sensation. Allport (1966) then defines perception as the way we judge or evaluate others. Hence, students' perception in this study can be viewed as their judgements or evaluation of their written teacher feedback.

Corrective Feedback and Written Corrective Feedback

Corrective feedback can be seen as the tool that is used by teachers to inform the students about the errors they have made. Corrective feedback is information given to learners regarding about the errors or mistakes made by students in their writing (Loewen, 2012), As an information, corrective feedback can be seen as a tool in increasing students' language competence and performance as opposed to judgment which has negative view. Corrective feedback is also seen as an indication to the learners that his or her use of the target language is incorrect (Lightbown and Spada, 1999). Furthermore, feedback can be seen as a parameter of students' development in learning the target language, so it helps teachers in evaluating learning activity (Shao, 2015)

We have to note that corrective feedback constitutes one type of negative feedback (Ellis, 2009). It takes form as information or response to a learner utterance (in oral activity) or learner error (in writing activity). This response or information, according to Ellis (2009), consist of (1) indication that an error has been committed, (2) provision of the correct target language form, (3) metalinguistic information about the nature of error. Corrective Feedback (CF) in this case is used to help student in improving their language competence and language performance.

WCF is known as grammar correction or written error correction (Shao, 2015). This correction made can take forms in tenses error, spelling error and others related to writing

activities. We have to note that writing is a complex skill: there must be conditions that have to be fulfilled to master this skill (Zarei and Rahnama, 2013). Since writing is a complex skill to be mastered, errors cannot be avoided. Errors are natural in writing activities and they take many forms. Accroding to Corder (1967), there are three significances of error made by learners: (1) Errors gives teachers information about what learners still need to learn; (2) They show developmental processes at work; and (3) They are useful to learners themselves since they allow for hypothesis formation and hypothesis testing. Furthermore, improving students' writing accuracy is an essential factor in effective writing (Maleki and Eslami, 2013). WCF is believed can be a pedagogical tool used to improving students' writing accuracy.

WCF, as states before, is known as grammar correction. It consists of some steps that need to be fulfilled. Clement, Gerdes and Marlet (2009) distinguish 4 steps in the grammar correction process: (1) identification of possibly ungrammatical segments, (2) identification of the possibly infringed constraints, (3) identification of the possible source of the error, and (4) construction and ordering of the correct alternatives. WCF as grammar correction has purpose to providing the correct form of the errors, it can be helpful for students in learning the grammar features of target language. By this notion grammar correction has two main functions: (1) It notifies the user of possibly incorrect sentences; and (2) It proposes correction, in some cases with the linguistics explanation about the errors.

Types of Written Corrective Feedback

In general, there are two types of WCF: Direct WCF and Indirect WCF (Shirazi and Shekarabi, 2014). These two types of WCF are the most common method used by teachers to respond or correct the grammatical mistakes made by the students (Ebrahimzade and Khodareza, 2016). Direct WCF focuses on immediate correction (can be accompanied by further explanations) for the errors made by the students (Shirazi and Shekarabi, 2014). Teachers can use direct WCF by providing the correct form, crossing out unnecessary word, inserting a missing word and writing the correct form (Maleki and Eslami, 2013). Indirect WCF occurs when the students are informed that they made errors but are not provided the correct form so the students have to correct the errors by themselves (Shirazi and Shekarabi, 2014; Maleki and Eslami, 2013).

Both indirect feedback and direct WCF help students in reducing their errors (Chung, 2015). Direct WCF is better used for the low-level-of proficiency students and is better used for making the students notice some specific grammatical features (Maleki and Eslami, 2013). Indirect WCF, in the other hand, is suited better for advanced level students because it geared up students thinking processes: solving problem (Shirazi and Shekarabi, 2014). Given with these two types of WCF a number of research has been made to consider the effectiveness of direct and indirect WCF. However, Maleki and Eslami (2013) argue that there are no differences between these two types of WCF in case of its effectiveness. Thus, WCF have to be seen in a positive manner so it can be useful for teacher and students.

The classification of WCF as mentioned above is too general. Ellis (2009) in his work "A Typology of Written Corrective Feedback Types" proposes 6 types of WCF: 1) Direct WCF; 2) Indirect WCF (indicating + locating the error and indicating error only); 3) Metalinguistics WCF (error code and brief grammatical description); 4) The focus of the feedback (focused and unfocused); 5) Electronic Feedback; and 6) Reformulation. Among the six types of teacher's WCF, Indirect CF (especially indicating + locating the error) has been recognized to have a greater positive impact over all the rest (Chung, 2015).

The types WCF can also be categorized by the agents who provide the WCF. Rukmini et. al (2017) in their works explained that WCF can be provided by teacher, called teacher feedback, and by the students, called peers feedback. WCF provided by teachers is the common technique used in writing activity. Srichanyachon (2012) later explains that teachers' feedback

could help students in comparing students' performance in conducting a writing with the ideal writing form and even could diagnose the weaknesses and the strengths of students writing. WCF provided by students can be simply understood as an activity where the students corrected their friends work. However, Rukmini, *et. al.* (2017) doubt about the effectiveness of peer feedback since some researchers noted the inability of students in providing concrete and useful feedback.

Role of Written Corrective Feedback

WCF is a pedagogical tool that is used to inform the students about their error in writing. As a tool, it plays important rule in language learning. Wang and Jiang (2015) state that there are three important roles of WCF: Noticing facilitator, Output Monitor, and Interactive input. Another research describes WCF as an education tool used to assist learners in writing activity (Khanlarzadeh and Nemati, 2016). Furthermore, other researches note the social role of WCF which help students to connect with their teacher (Rukmini, *et. al.*,2017; Rad and Ghafournia, 2016). It means that WCF can help students in building a good relationship with teacher which can foster student's confidence in writing activity. By increasing students' confidence in writing activity, students can improve their writing activity performance. This role of WCF also gives support to the students so the students be more creative in conveying their ideas. It helps the students and teachers to build a good communication so they have a good relationship.

Writing

Writing, in language learning, is a skill which have to be mastered through a formal process. In general, writing can be defined as an activity where we construct our idea in written form by using some sentences. Yi (2009) examined that writing involved connecting interrelated sentences to produce a coherent discourse. Ihejerika (2014) later adds that writing is an ability to use appropriate words to from meaningful sentences that are logically and sequentially linked. The main point of writing is a coherent discourse: writing is not merely collection of sentences but the relationship of sentences which is logically accepted and sequentially linked to convey the ideas from an addresser to and addressee through a text (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016). Furthermore, Coulmas (2002) mentioned that the meaning of writing can be distinguished in six: 1) a system of recording language by means of visible or tactile marks; (2) the activity of putting such a system to use; (3) the result of such activity, a text; (4) the particular form of such a result, a script style such as block letter writing; (5) artistic composition; (6) a professional occupation.

Writing as a language skill means that writing is a means of communication. So, writing is a skill to convey our idea in paper or in written form as a complement to speaking skill even since 6000 years ago (Ebrahimzadeh and Khodareza, 2016). In other words, writing can be regarded as a secondary concern that functions as a reinforcement for oral habits, where it is not only preceded by, but also subordinate to, vocal speech (Yi, 2009). Barnett (1992) then explained that writing referred to written discourse intended for communication and to the diverse activities involved in putting thoughts on paper. In short, writting is a process of creating meaning in written form (Zamel, 1982; Rukmini, *et. al.*, 2017).

As a language skill, writing is a tool for the creation of ideas and the consolidation of the linguistic system by using it for communicative objectives in an interactive way: it implies the successful transmission of ideas from an addresser to an addressee through a text (Mohammad & Hazarika, 2016). However, transmission of ideas has the chance to fail due to the incorrect form and other factors, so the language teachers have to assist the learners in order to make sure that the transmission of idea success by using appropriate method or tool (Zamel, 1982).

There are many studies which have been conducted regarding corrective feedback, most of them focus on the oral corrective feedback. Studies about written corrective feedback is also conducted as a complement to the oral corrective feedback. Chung (2015) examined the perception of Korean EFL learners towards feedback types on their written errors by comparing the Korean EFL learners' attitudes with Japanese ELF learners and ESL students in North America. His study found that Korean EFL learners react in favor of direct feedback to their written work, and yet they show little tolerance for indirect feedback or metalinguistic corrective feedback.

Maleki and Eslami (2013) by considering the controversy over the usefulness of written corrective feedback on the accuracy of learners' writing (especially Trusscot's assertion) examined the impact of written corrective feedback on 90 intermediate Iranian EFL students. Their study is conducted by separating the participants into three groups and then they randomly received direct, indirect, or no corrective feedback. To measure the impact, they created three tests: pre-test, intermediate post-test, and delayed post-test. Their study found that the recipients of WCF achieved more than those in the control group and suggested that both kind of WCF is effective in writing accuracy.

Khanlarzadeh and Nemati (2016) conducted a study about the effect of written corrective feedback on grammatical accuracy of elementary students in an EFL context. Their research was made by selecting two intact classes totaling 33 students, and assigned 16 students in direct feedback group where the rest (17) in control group. Their study found that while the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in the revision of three writing task, no significant difference was found when the two groups produced a new piece of writing after one-month interval. So, they concluded that accuracy improvement caused by WCF during the revision process did not extend to EFL learner's future writing when no feedback was available, at least at the elementary level.

Zarei and Rahnama (2013) investigated the effect of WCF on the grammatical and lexical writing accuracy. 164 participants were divided into four groups where each group received a specified WCF. By using Chi Square and One-Way ANOVA procedure to analyze the data, their study found that the direct corrective feedback group performed significantly better than the other groups in grammatical accuracy. Rukmini *et. al.* (2017) examined the effect of WCF techniques and students' writing anxiety on students' essay writing ability. By using experimental method of 3×2 factorial design, they found out that WCF affected students' writing anxiety. It means that the effect of WCF varies for each students and WCF technique is not the only variable that affected students' writing ability.

In 2016, Rad and Ghafournia (2016) conducted a study to examine the effect of focused corrective feedback and attitude on grammar accuracy. Their study was conducted in Iran and they chose 75 EFL students as their subjects. The students then were divided into one control group and two experimental groups. Their study found that focused corrective feedback gives a significant improvement in students' accuracy. It then indicates that the use of WCF is effective in enhancing students' grammatical accuracy.

Based on Truscott's doubt about WCF in 1996, Ebrahimzade and Khodareza (2016) conducted a study entitled *The Effect of Hedged-form Feedback vs. Uncoded Feedback and Grammatical Accuracy of Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners.* This study aims to show the effectiveness of WCF to 65 low intermediate Iranian learners by using two types of Indirect WCF: Hedged-form feedback and Un-coded feedback. After 2 months of treatment to the subjects, the result of their research shows that WCF has a significant effect in the learning process. They later noted that the ones who received hedged-from feedback outperformed the ones who received un-coded feedback.

With the development of technology in education, Vahedipour and Rezvani (2017) conducted a research about the impact of Wiki-based feedback on grammatical accuracy. By using experimental design, they divided 50 intermediate Iranian EFL learners in two groups: Experimental and Control groups. Both group received WCF, but the control group received WCF based on the discussion among their peers and the experimental group received WCF based on the corrections found on wiki pages. The result describes that the experimental group outperformed the control group. It means using wikis to provide feedback on student's writing can have a significantly positive effect on improving their grammatical accuracy in a writing task. Vahedipour and Rezvani (2016) also mentioned that students showed a positive attitude towards the application of wiki for EFL writing.

CLOSING REMARKS

The issue such as the effectiveness of written corrective feedback in teaching and learning process is also suggested to be conducted in further research. The classification which is used to categorized students' preference of written corrective feedback is too general (direct and indirect written corrective feedback) so the writer hopes the further studies will use the specific classification (as proposed by Ellis) as the category of preference. The issue such as the comparison about the effectiveness between direct and indirect corrective feedback in EFL context is also highly recommended to be uncover in further research. It is also suggested for other researchers who are interested in the topic of corrective feedback to conduct a further research about oral corrective feedback as complement to written corrective feedback.

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