

Students' Perception of The Implementation of Written Corrective Feedback on Under-graduated Students' Thesis Writing

Persepsi Mahasiswa Terkait Implementasi Korektif Tertulis pada Penulisan Skripsi Mahasiswa

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Abstract

Writing is considered as the most essential skill to exceed in many professional fields of study. However, it is seen as the most challenging and complex skill to be engaged in because students must be encouraged to express their ideas and thoughts in the form of meaningful writing. To solve that problem, Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) came as a valuable strategy to help students in their progress of writing, especially in their revision. This study aimed to report on Indonesian under-graduated university students' views about the given written corrective feedback on their thesis revision process. Furthermore, their preferences for different types of WCF are also investigated. This survey study collected data by distributing a questionnaire to forty participants from English Department Students in Malang City that will be described quantitatively. Then, the interviews with six students were conducted to get the qualitative data to provide more in-depth information. The study showed that WCF plays an important role in students' thesis writing, as the students expected as long as the supervisors provided in a eligible and clear way. Based on the provided WCF, students could study from their errors, make corrections, and make improvements to their draft.

Kata kunci: WCF; direct WCF; indirect WCF; students' writing.

Abstrak

Menulis dianggap sebagai salah satu keterampilan penting yang sering digunakan dalam bidang studi profesional. Namun, menulis kerap dipandang sebagai keterampilan yang paling menantang dan kompleks untuk dilakukan karena siswa harus didorong untuk mengungkapkan ide dan pemikiran mereka ke dalam bentuk tulisan yang bermakna. Untuk mengatasi masalah tersebut, *Written Corrective Feedback* (WCF) hadir sebagai strategi yang berharga untuk membantu siswa dalam kemajuan menulis mereka, terutama pada revisi mereka. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk melaporkan tentang pandangan mahasiswa sarjana Indonesia tentang umpan balik perbaikan tertulis yang diberikan pada proses revisi tesis mereka. Selanjutnya, preferensi mereka untuk berbagai jenis WCF juga diselidiki. Studi survei ini mengumpulkan data dengan menyebarkan kuesioner kepada empat puluh peserta dari Mahasiswa Jurusan Bahasa Inggris di Kota Malang yang akan dideskripsikan secara kuantitatif. Kemudian dilakukan wawancara dengan enam siswa untuk mendapatkan data kualitatif guna memberikan informasi yang lebih mendalam. Studi ini menunjukkan bahwa WCF memainkan peran penting dalam penulisan draft tesis mahasiswa, seperti yang diharapkan mahasiswa dimana pembimbing dapat menyediakan feedback dengan cara yang jelas dan dapat dimengerti. Berdasarkan hasil, WCF yang diberikan dengan jelas dapat membuat siswa mampu belajar dari kesalahannya dalam penulisan, kemudian melakukan koreksi, dan dapat melakukan perbaikan pada drafnya.

Kata kunci: umpan balik tertulis; umpan balik langsung; umpan balik tidak langsung

1. Introduction

Writing is a complex productive skill that EFL students find difficult to apply. This is because writing requires students to be able to express their ideas and thoughts in a written

form that is in a systematic, structured, and legible arrangement. Related to Muliyah, et. al (2020), it is stated that writing is one of the English skills which is considered the most difficult skill because students have to express their ideas on written form by paying attention to various aspects such as content, grammar, vocabulary, organization, and mechanics involved so that it will make readers to be easy to understand. Thus, in compiling and writing the thesis, EFL students majoring in ELT often experience difficulties, where students need to find a suitable strategy to make it easier for them to correct the errors in their writing.

According to Ellis (2009), Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is very useful for the writing process because the teacher can encourage and train students by taking a comprehensive approach. In giving written corrective feedback, there are several ways that the teacher can do. The teacher can indicate errors in the student's text by using a certain approach to target certain linguistic aspects, cleans up any uncorrected errors, provide straightforward input and corrections to the existing framework or structure of writing, or provide certain codes that indicate students' errors in constructing sentence structures.

Furthermore, Purnomo et, al (2021) agreed that corrective feedback is one of the appropriate strategies to be used in learning English as a foreign language. Written Corrective feedback is often given in the form of comments on linguistic errors that occur in students' works. In practice, the teacher plays an important role in providing meaningful and useful feedback on the student's work, where students can be aware of the errors they make in their work, and it will contribute to improving their performance in the learning activities. Moreover, written corrective feedback is also considered a common practice in ESL/EFL writing classes where teachers are expected to give it to help their students in correcting their grammatical errors, so students can improve their writing performance (Tan & Manpchphinyo, 2004).

In applying the WCF strategy, there are two types of WCF, namely Direct and Indirect WCF. These two main types of WCF are also divided into several types. Direct WCF is usually given by deleting and/or inserting morphemes, words, phrases, or sentences in students' writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). This type will restructure the mapping of the meaning in students' written form. Suci, et. al (2021) also stated that directive feedback assists students in how to revise certain writing accuracy, building dialogic interactions in remembering schemas from previous mistakes, and creating new knowledge. Then the important thing that must be noted by the teacher is that the teacher must adjust various types of dialogical interactions during the feedback process.

In terms of ELT context, the types of WCF have often been applied to writing classes which will make it easier for students to carry out various writing activities, including in the process of thesis writing. However, on its application, WCF itself is often controversial. According to Lee (2019), the researcher believes that WCF can cause problems if applied continuously, but Poorebrahim (2017) agreed that both direct and indirect WCF give significant benefits and take different roles to improve the quality of student revision, editing, and knowledge-building. Bitchener (2008), Bitchener and Knoch (2009) also did the investigations among two classes as the experimental the receive corrective feedback and control group that did not get any feedback. The finding indicated that groups that received error corrections, regardless of the feedback types achieved better than the groups that received no feedback

Moreover, it was found that several other previous studies found that WCF does not significantly give benefits in students' writing performance. Truscott (2007) proved that error correction is ineffective to be implemented because he considered that aspects of students' writing achievement are influenced by other attributes such as "language experience, maturation" and "writing practice". Vyatkina (2011) also agreed that giving written corrective feedback does not always promote good improvement for the writing, even though some students would get a lot of benefits from that. Then it was supported by Zumbrun, et al (2016) that found that some students perceived WCF negatively because they felt that it was unimportant and didn't give any impact on their writing progress.

After analyzing some of the previous studies, most of the previous researchers examine the effectiveness of each type of written corrective feedback on English classrooms based on the test that is given to students, and there are pros and cons about the implementation of WCF. It needs to be conducted more in the Indonesian context to analyze the contribution of WCF for the progress of under-graduated thesis even though people might not be aware that this strategy is often used by supervisors in correcting student thesis writing. Thus, this becomes an interesting topic for the researcher to examine more deeply about the students' perception of the feedback given.

Furthermore, in this study, there are limitations that the researcher conducts. The scope is only on the application of the direct and indirect WCF on under-graduate students' thesis writing. The questionnaire focuses on their perception, preference, attitude, interest, and the benefit that they get from those two types of written corrective feedback. It is in accordance with the aim of the study which the recent researcher wants to know how students' perception about the provision of both direct and indirect types of WCF in their thesis draft, whether it can help them in the revision process of their thesis writing or not, and also to get the information about what type of WCF students preferred and the reasons behind it. The participants of this study are only ELT students who already have developed their under-graduate thesis writing and ELT students or graduated students who got written corrective feedback on their thesis drafts. Some students might get other kinds of feedback such as only oral feedback without and provided of written corrective feedback for their drafts. The study is conducted to answer the following questions (1) what kinds of WCF types that are given to the students' thesis writing drafts? What are students' preferences? (2) How do those types of WCF play a role on students' thesis writing?

2. Method

This study used quantitative and qualitative design to interpret the data. The data was taken by distributing the questionnaire with closed-ended items to get respondents' perceptions about WCF as the quantitative data. After getting the result from the questionnaire, semi-structured interviews were done to get the qualitative data. A qualitative design was also used to give more in-depth information about students' perceptions and rationales related to how several types of written corrective feedback take important roles in students' performance on writing the thesis. According to (Creswell, 2002), qualitative data collaborated with quantitative data to support the information and to provide pieces of evidence from different methods or types of data. The data combined were formulated to explain the participants of the study, and answer research questions by interpreting in the finding and discussion.

Instruments became important parts for collecting the data. A questionnaire through Google Form was arranged and then distributed to the respondents according to the targeted criteria. Google Forms automatically stores data in electronic spreadsheet format, so the researcher used no paper-to-electronic data transcription.

There were some different possible responses in each of the questionnaire which was adapted from Irwin (2017). In the first part of the questionnaire, as set in the table one, two, and three, it was about the variations of provided WCF from the supervisor. The second part as set on the table four and five, it was about students' experiences and preference of the kinds of WCF aspects. Next, the third part as set in the table six, seven, and eight, it was about the students' expectation related to the future feedback that might get for their thesis drafts. The last part in the table nine was about the brief breakdown about students' progress on writing thesis draft.

Furthermore, semi-structured interview questions were arranged as the steps to get following information based the questionnaire. The interview was implemented in collecting the data to gain an in-depth understanding of underlying reasons, opinions, and motivations from the 6 participants according to several criteria of participants; responses. The selected participants fulfilled the criteria by providing two different perceptions towards the providing WCF such as students who thought that WCF was beneficial for them in improving the quality of their thesis draft and who thought that WCF was useless. Then, those students who preferred getting direct, indirect, or specific code of indirect WCF.

The study was conducted in the area of the English Department from different universities in Malang. It involved 50 students who already passed or were still in the progress of writing the undergraduate thesis to fulfill the semi-closed-ended questionnaire. The required participants should already get written corrective feedback especially direct and indirect WCF from the supervisors because not all students got it. Some of the students only had oral feedback from their supervisors in their thesis drafts, and these students could not join as the participants of the study. Therefore, the set of the requirement to be the participants for this study is important.

These participants were randomly taken from different level of the years as long as they already have experienced getting written corrective feedback from the supervisor while writing thesis. 6 students were taken to have interview sections from the researcher based on the particular categories that the researcher made according their responds on the closed-ended questionnaire.

The data was analyzed in two ways. The first way is analyzing quantitative data by using statistical program. After getting the data, those were computed to SPSS to get frequencies, percentages, and mean of the responses to know what kinds of WCF feedback they mostly got. Then, the data was interpreted to get information about students' preference-related WCF types that they received.

The following way is interpreting the data from the interviews. The interview sections were recorded and transcribed. The transcriptions were coded according to particular themes based on fixed categories. The coding process was conducted by familiarizing the information, giving codes, developing themes, reviewing themes, defining themes, and ending with producing the results that can answer the research questions (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The last step

is doing the documentation of the given WCF that was provided to see how each type of WCF was implemented by the supervisors on students’ thesis drafts.

3. Results and Discussion

According to the Table 1, it can be seen the percentage of the feedback types that the supervisors often provided to the students’ drafts. More than one type of feedback was given to students’ draft. To the errors in the form of lexical, grammatical, and structural were corrected by three types of WCF. As can be seen in Table 2, the most common WCF type that the supervisors often provided was indirect WCF by giving the mark such as underline or circle on students’ errors. It was followed by direct WCF and categorized errors of indirect WCF. However, Table 3 also showed that some students did not get any indication of errors on some writing aspects.

Table 1. The types of providing WCF from the supervisors

Feedback types	Feedback Points	Feedback Percentage
(1) Lexical Feedback: misspelling and incorrect word choice	27/40	67.7%
(2) Grammatical Feedback: verb tense, pronoun, article, and preposition errors	37/40	92.5%
(3) Structural Feedback: punctuation errors, sentence fragments, comma splices (etc.)	25/40	64.5%
(4) Content Feedback: feedback relating to details and ideas	27/40	67.6%
(5) General Comments: words of praise or encouragement	7/40	17.5%

Table 2. Feedback strategies from the supervisors

Feedback Strategy	Lexical Error	Grammatical Errors	Structural Errors	Total Feedback Points for Each Category	Mean
Correction Provided (direct feedback)	15/40 (40.5%)	22/40 (57.9%)	24/40 (66.7%)	10/40 (52.6%)	54%
Underlined / Circled Error (indirect feedback)	24/40 (64.9%)	22/40 (57.9%)	24/40 (66.7%)	11/40 (57.9%)	61.85%
Categorized Errors (coded / indirect feedback)	22/40 (59.5%)	17/40 (44.7%)	12/40 (33.3%)	13/40 (68.4%)	51.5%

Table 3. Unmarked errors (errors that the supervisors did not address)

Unmarked Errors (errors the supervisors did not address)	Percentage
Lexical Errors	10/40 (52.6%)
Grammatical Errors	11/40 (57.9%)
Structural Errors	13/40 (68.4%)
Total students who got unmarked errors	34/40 (85%)
No unmarked errors	6/40 (15%)

Taken from the interview, it was stated that for content, idea, general comment such as praise and encouragement were given mostly through the oral feedback. Therefore, the types WCF were not explained through these aspects.

Excerpt 1

“Most of the common feedback that I got on my content, idea, or additional comment was done by oral.”

Table 4. Students’ experiences and preferences for written corrective feedback

	Always (100%)	Often (75%)	Sometimes (50%)	Rarely (25%)	Never (0%)
1. How often have your supervisors provided feedback on your compositions or essays?	32.5%	57.5%	5%	25%	0%
2. To what degree do you want your supervisors to provide written feedback on your assignments?	57.5%	32.5%	5%	5%	0%
3. To what degree do you read the written feedback your supervisor to provides?	46.2%	43.6%	10.3%	0%	0%
4. Is your supervisor’s feedback legible?	36.8%	44.7%	18.4%	0%	0%
5. When your supervisors provide feedback in English, to what degree do you understand it?	43.6%	35.9%	20.5%	0%	0%
6. To what degree do you prefer feedback in English?	42.5%	45%	12.5%	0%	0%
7. To what degree do you want your supervisors to correct every mistake you have made?	65.8%	26.3%	50%	0%	0%
8. Does your supervisors’ feedback help to improve your writing?	62.5%	27.5%	10%	0%	0%

As can be seen in Table 4, most of the students often got written corrective feedback from their supervisors, and some of them always got it, even though some of them got it with less frequency. From the follow-up interview, in-depth information was found specifically to support the numeric data. Several participants were selected based on particular criteria according to their answers in the questionnaire. As general, feedbacks were provided to students’ thesis drafts. However, students who selected the option of 25% of getting supervisors’ feedback stated that they rarely got supervisor’s feedback because their supervisors were busy, and students got difficulty in having an appointment with their supervisors.

Furthermore, students tend to like to receive WCF from their supervisors, and most of them liked to read the feedback that had gotten from their supervisors to their drafts even though the feedback were not always legible. Most of the students tended to be happy in getting supervisors’ corrective feedback. Even though some students were frustrated of getting ineffective FCF.

Excerpt 2

“I don’t really like to get WCF because sometimes it is illegible and quite difficult to be understood without any oral explanation from the supervisor.” This statement is in accordance with the data that showed not all the feedbacks are written clearly and eligible.

Then, some students understood the whole feedback and some students didn’t understand some parts, and the rest sometimes could get the idea from the WCF, and sometimes they didn’t.

Excerpt 3

“My supervisor provided clear WCF, and the codes were explained by her in detail, so I can understand clearly.” On the other hand, some students stated *“At some parts, I got difficulties in understanding because the codes were unidentified like only putting the question mark on the paragraph without any explanation. These things make me confused about what I should revise.”*

Even though most of the students as the participants found that WCF is really important to help them in improving the quality of their thesis writing, unfortunately, some students sometimes do not thoroughly read the supervisors' feedback because they were careless and they thought that their purposes on the draft was different with the supervisors' point of view. Therefore, not all feedback on the content were read by the student.

Excerpt 4

"I did not read the whole feedback because I got what the supervisor suggested on my drafts was totally different with what should my draft to be. The plot and the point of view is totally different, so I filter the feedback."

Moreover, in providing WCF, most of the students liked to receive feedback in English because all of them are from English Department, even though some of them preferred to get feedback in Bahasa Indonesia. Based on the table, it also can be seen that students' expectations toward the feedback from the supervisors were so intense. Many students expected that the supervisors were able in correcting every mistake they did, even though some students thought that the supervisors only need to correct some important parts, not for all single mistakes, because they thought correcting the errors were their responsibility. Therefore, the supervisors only need to indicate and comment on what students need to improve.

Excerpt 5

"It is really easy for us if we get the whole correction for our mistakes and errors. It will be really time effective for us to revise and finish our drafts." On the other parts, some students thought that "It is the students' responsibility to correct our errors, and the supervisor only needs to provide suggestions and comments on our drafts."

The impact of WCF on students' thesis drafts can be seen from the tables that most of the students agreed that WCF can help to improve their thesis writing. According to the interview, students think that supervisors' WCF is beneficial because they will know where they should go after they know which parts are wrong and correct. However, some students think that illegible and unclear WCF will make them confused.

Excerpt 6

"I found it really beneficial for WCF to be implemented because I know my parts that are needed to be revised. For example, I often make errors on grammar, like I made present simple where actually I have to make it in the form of simple present. Then, the supervisor will mark it and correct it if it is possible. I think the supervisor is more observant and thorough when checking my work than I do."

Excerpt 7

"I found it unclear and illegible and so ambiguous in providing codes or mark, so I think these will not help me in improving my quality on writing thesis, unless the supervisor improves their feedback. Or at least, make it clear. It was really time-consuming if I made the same errors because of unclear feedbacks."

Based on the students who get good and legible WCF, they thought that what the supervisor had provided were enough, and they were happy to receive it. Based on the table, most of the students preferred to get only written comments and error corrections that would be beneficial for them. However, some students suggested that the supervisor could give more feedback such as giving more comments, more error corrections, or such gave an evaluation

of the draft like scoring even though the thesis draft did not need to be graded. The rest students suggested to the supervisor to provide clear corrections.

Table 5. Feedback style preferences

Future Feedback Method Preferences	Percentage
Provide error corrections	26/40 (65%)
Give more scores and grades	16/40 (40%)
Write comments in English	25/40 (62.45%)
Current feedback methods are adequate	18/40 (45%)
Provide complete correction to the whole thesis writing aspects	1/40 (2.5%)
The correction must be clear	1 (2.5%)
Sentence structure and style (structural mistakes)	33/40 (82.5%)
Vocabulary and expressions (lexical mistakes)	29/40 (82.5%)
Grammar and sentence pattern (grammatical mistakes)	37/40 (92.5%)
Content and ideas	28/40 (70%)
More other aspects	1/40 (2.5%)

Excerpt 8

"I feel enough in getting the feedback from my supervisors because they really awesome. I almost finish my thesis because I got a clear correction from them in a very short time. My both supervisors provided the correction on my structure, vocabulary, grammar, and of course the content as an important part."

Excerpt 9

"I don't think that I got enough feedback, so I wanted more correction, scores, comments, or the complete correction would be better."

Table 6. Direct vs Indirect WCF

How would you like your supervisors to respond to the mistakes you make?	
Direct Feedback 26/ 40 (65%)	Strike out the mistake and correct my errors for me (He <u>flied</u> to Japan) -> flew
Indirect Feedback 11/40 (27.5%)	Underline my mistake and I correct the mistake (He went to japan)
	Use a symbol to indicate a mistake in the sentence that I must find and correct (He went to japan.*)
Categorized Indirect Feedback 3/40 (7.5 %)	Underline my mistake, use code to identify the type of mistake and I correct it (He flied to Japan [V])

In responding to WCF, most of the students prefer to have Direct WCF rather than getting Indirect WCF. However, some students also preferred indirect WCF, which many liked more in the way the supervisors indicated the error by giving a symbol or mark instead of Categorized Indirect WCF. According to the interview, most of the students prefer to get Direct WCF because it will make them easier to revise their errors. Some students prefer to get Indirect WCF like having codes to make them more aware about what kind of errors need to be improved. Some students do tend to get categorized as Indirect Feedback.

Excerpt 10

"I like direct WCF because it is easier to help us in revising our draft."

Excerpt 11

"It would be better to have indirect WCF because it helps me by having the indication of errors, and I can learn how to correct it by myself. It makes me have long-term memory of understanding of the correct contents, structure, and any kind of writing aspects."

Excerpt 12

“Categorized Indirect Feedback is really beneficial because I know some specific feedback helps me in revising. For example, I got the indication of the mark ‘V’, so I know the errors in on the verb. I need to find the solution by myself by learning again about the errors that I made.”

Table 7. Students’ Experiences on Writing Thesis

1. How do you feel about writing in English?	Very Confident 10/40 (25%)	Confident 27/10 (67.5%)	Not Confident 3/40 (25%)
2. How much effort did you make on this assignment?	Significant Effort 16/40 (40%)	Appropriate Effort 24/40 (60%)	Inadequate Effort 0/40 (0%)
3. How well do you understand the feedback on the thesis draft?	Mostly Understand 16/40 (40%)	Somewhat Understand 21/40 (41%)	Inadequately Understand 2/40 (53.8%)
4. How well do you understand the supervisors’ comments on the assignment?	Mostly Understand 18/40 (45%)	Somewhat Understand 19/40 (47.5%)	Inadequately Understand 3/40 (7.5%)
5. Can you correct your mistakes using the feedback from your supervisors?	Yes 25/40 (64.1%)	Maybe 13/40 (33.3%)	No 1/40 (2.6%)

According to the table, most of the students were confident enough in their thesis writing, and only a few students were not confident on their works even though all students already made big efforts. However, even though they already made a significant effort on their work, most of them felt that they need feedback so that they could make their thesis writing better. On the other hand, a few students disagreed with the effectiveness of WCF on their thesis drafts. They felt that they did not understand the feedback well. Therefore, they felt that providing WCF did not really improve much on their work or even it did not help them at all. From the conducted interview, it can be seen that that feedback is really important even though not all the feedback is understandable. If the provided feedback is clear, students make sure that they can revise correctly their errors.

Excerpt 13

“I am confident on my draft and I made a big effort on it, but I still need corrections from my supervisor because sometimes I made some errors that I don’t notice it.”

Excerpt 14

“I am not really confident on my thesis writing because sometimes I don’t know whether my draft is already correct or not even though I put a lot of effort on it. It is because I got unclear feedback from the supervisor, so I don’t really understand what should I revise from those feedback. I am not really sure if the feedback helps me or not.”

4. Conclusion

Written corrective feedback is very useful for students on writing their thesis. There are so many ways for supervisors in providing feedback. Some supervisors like to provide the whole aspects of writing to the draft, but some supervisors only provide several writing aspects on the drafts. Almost all of the students expect the supervisor to give clear, legible, and understandable feedback on their drafts. They think, by having clear feedback from the supervisors, really helps them in finishing their thesis properly either using direct or indirect WCF. However, students might not feel happy if the supervisors provide unclear and illegible WCF. The students will make the same errors if they do not understand about the indication of errors

from the supervisors. They think it is unnecessary if they got the feedback but it is not clear and they cannot understand the provided feedback. Hence, it is really beneficial for direct and indirect WCF to be implemented as long as they are clear, understandable, and illegible to be given on students' writing drafts. It is important for the supervisors to know and understand about how to implement WCF in the right way. Supervisors also need to learn about how the practice of this strategy can be applicable, what aspects should be taken into consideration, and what kind of WCF is expected by the students to be given in their drafts. If the feedbacks are not clear and contain some ambiguity, it will be useless and will cause other problems on students' writing drafts.

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