

FEEDBACK ON THE STUDENTS' ERROR IN WRITING COMPOSITION

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Abstract: Feedback on the Students' Error in Writing Composition. This study aimed at describing the development of the students' ability in writing composition after the lecturer provided feedback in their composition writing. Four second-year art graduate students of the Art and Design Department of the Faculty of Language and Art Ganesha University of Education were involved in this study. Each of them was asked to write a 150-word composition writing with the topic: 'The Historical Development of the Department of Art and Design-Faculty of Language and Art-Ganesha University'. The comprehensive correction which include: direct correction and oral conferencing were applied in this study. In the direct correction in the form of written form, the course participants were asked to revise their work based on the teacher's revision. While in the oral conferencing, in addition to the written feedback correction, they were involved in face to face lecturer' feedback on their wrong grammatical points, that was, to achieve a better comprehension on certain grammatical points. A week after the conferencing, they were asked to revise their original writing composition. The obtained data were analyzed descriptively. The findings showed that the students made progress in the revised version, however the success was not repeated in their test version. This study indicated that teacher error feedback alone did not facilitate the learning of linguistic information.

Abstrak: Umpan Balik pada Kekeliruan dalam Karangan Mahasiswa. Studi deskriptif kualitatif ini bertujuan mendeskripsikan perkembangan tulisan mahasiswa setelah mendapatkan umpan balik dari dosen. Empat Mahasiswa Jurusan Seni Rupa dan Desain Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha dilibatkan dalam studi ini. Masing-masing dari keempat mahasiswa itu diminta untuk menulis karangan berbahasa Inggris dengan 150 kata yang bertopik 'Perkembangan Sejarah Keberadaan Jurusan Seni Rupa dan Desain Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha. Selanjutnya, dosen memberikan koreksi komprehensif yang meliputi: koreksi langsung dan diskusi lisan dengan mahasiswa secara berhadapan-hadapan. Dalam koreksi gramatika yang dilakukan oleh dosen, keempat mahasiswa tersebut disuruh merevisi pekerjaannya berdasarkan umpan balik dosen berupa koreksi tulisan yang dicantumkan dalam tulisan asli mereka masing-masing. Diskusi lisan untuk membantu mahasiswa mencapai pemahaman yang lebih baik dalam aspek gramatika pada tulisannya juga dilakukan setelah mereka mengumpulkan kembali hasil revisinya seminggu setelahnya. Seminggu setelah diskusi lisan tersebut, mereka disuruh merevisi tulisan aslinya. Data yang didapat dianalisis secara deskriptif. Temuan penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa mengalami peningkatan dalam tulisan yang mereka telah revisi sesuai dengan umpan balik yang diberikan dosen, akan tetapi kesuksesan ini tidak terjadi dalam tulisan versi tes yang dilakukan pada kegiatan berikutnya. Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa koreksi dosen sendiri tidak memfasilitasi belajar kebahasaan.

Key words: writing skill, lecturer's error feedback, oral conferencing

Research findings by Radecki & Swales (1988) and Straub (1997) show that students favor error feedback from teachers. Most students believe that they will benefit from it. There is an ongoing

debate in current literature whether error correction actually helps improve the accuracy of students' writing. Most teachers offer only comments such as "well written", "poorly

organized" or "*awkward wording*" on the majority of students' papers (Yi-Ching Pan, 2010).

Several studies done by Kepner (1991); Sheppard (1992); Polio, et al. (1998) found that error feedback from the teacher was not significantly more effective for developing accuracy in L2 students' writing than content-related comments or no feedback. In addition, study conducted by Truscott (2007) reveal that may be harmful because it distracts attention from much more important issues, such as the development of ideas. However, research on this topic is far from conclusive. For example, studies by Ashwell (2000) and Ferris (2003) prove a positive correlation between students' accuracy in writing and teacher's error feedback.

This study investigated the effect of error feedback from teacher on graduate level students in the Art Department of Faculty of Language and Art Ganesha University of Education in Singaraja North Bali. It will conclude by providing some suggestions to help the students write more accurately.

According to Yi-Ching Pan (2010), research on teacher error feedback of students' writing may focus on three main issues. First, to what extent should students' errors be corrected? Whereas some teachers assert the best policy is to correct all errors, others maintain that it is preferable to only make strategic corrections of some errors. Still others maintain that error correction is essentially a waste of teacher time. Second, which type of intervention is preferable: direct or indirect correction? Whereas some teachers maintain the best policy is to point out errors explicitly, others maintain that direct corrections are more effective. Third, should teacher's error feedback take the form of face to face oral conferencing or merely traditional written comments, or some combination of both? Indirect correction can be long-term benefits for EFL writers because it involved engagement with and attention to forms and problems (Ferris, 2003). One of the benefits of indirect correction may be due to the fact that teachers often misinterpret students and speak for them in ways they did not indeed (Ferris (2002). Direct feedback may be appropriate for beginner students and cases when students are unable to correct structural or lexical mistakes themselves (Yi-Ching Pan, 2010). Very little research compared the efficacy of written correction with live teacher-student conferences. However, one study by Bitchener, et al. (2005) has contrasted

written feedback with dual-mode written and individual. Focusing their study on students' used of simple past tense and the definite article in writing new pieces among EFL students, they found that the combination of written and face to face conference feedback was significantly better than mere written comments in terms of accuracy level. According to Ferris (2002), the combination provides opportunities for students to ask questions and for teachers to explain the students' problems in writing.

METHOD

Four male first-year art and design graduate students with a mean age of 20 who enrolled at the Faculty of Language and Art-Ganesha University of Education in Singaraja-Bali were involved in the study. Each participant had 10 years of formal English education, and each was assessed as having low proficiency based on their scores on the simulated General English Proficiency Test. None of them attended any English classes in schools at the time of the study.

Each participant was asked to write a passage of about 150 words on the same topic about the history development of the art in their department. The students' individual writing composition was directly and comprehensively corrected in terms of language. Since the study aimed at describing the linguistic accuracy in their composition writing, there was no content revision was taken into consideration.

Soon after receiving their revisions from the teacher, all of the four students were individually requested to revise their own writings. In addition to written feedback, they were also provided oral conference, that is, the oral discussion in which face to face teacher's responses was provided by the lecturer to their work. The students turned in their revisions seven days after completing their original pieces. The oral conference, which was held one week after submission of their original passages lasted about three hours. No other classroom instruction was given after the submission of the revised composition. After that, all four students were asked to rewrite a test of the same topic in the class room as a test version. The students had to finish the writing in 2 hours.

This study applied a comprehensive correction: direct correction and oral conference followed by interview, to help the students

understand better about their grammatical problem in their compositions. The reason, is that, all of the participants expected the lecturer to correct their error in their writing composition. In this study, direct correction was done due to the fact that the subjects had minimal exposure to printed English, and they did not have the ability to do self correction. In addition, based on the interviews (during the oral conference) on their opinions toward the error correction revealed that they preferred their teacher providing correction to their composition. The researcher believes that the synthesis of both types will generate a greater number of opportunities for them to understand where their errors occur and how they are corrected, thus leading to improve learning and facilitating accurate writing. The obtained data were identified from the original, revised, and the test version writings. The data were grouped, compared, and described.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this study, the students' errors were grouped into three error types: grammatical, lexical, and semantic. The Grammatical errors include sentence fragments, incorrect punctuation, verb tenses, nouns, adjectives, clauses, participles, and improper use of subjective mood.

The lexical errors result from incorrect application of vocabulary. Semantic errors refer to sentences incoherent in meaning or unnatural in wording. Table 01 shows a distribution of Students 1's errors in the original writing project, in the revised version, and in the tested version. Table 01a, 02a, 03a, 04a present number of the errors of students 1, 2, 3, 4. Table 01b, 02b, 03b, 04b present the examples of errors which were breakdown from the four students' original writing. Table 05 presents a summary of the total number of the 4 students' errors in their original, revised, and tested written work.

Table 01a. Distribution of Student 1's Errors in His Original, Revised, and Test Versions

Version	Grammatical	Lexical	Semantic	Total
Original	4	4	2	10
Revised	0	2	0	2
Test	2	2	1	6

In the original writing pieces, Student 1 committed 4 grammatical errors, 4 lexical errors, and 2 semantic errors. The examples of the students' errors can be seen in Table 01b below:

Table 01b. The Students' Error Examples Which were Broken Down from Original Composition Writing

Grammatical	Error
tense	.....the department * <u>was began</u>
To-v	.....it interesting *writing
punctuation	According to the Dean of Faculty of Language and Art* ,
S-V agreement	The Art and Design Department *were initiated by several senior lecturers in the Faculty of Teacher Training Udayana university
Lexical	Error
collocation	.....a new *specialist program.....five *rooms building.....four *legs tables
usage	.....its benefit is*comfortable.
Semantic	Error
Indonesian English	.....We as Balinese are proud with the development of the new department
Awkward English	Before opening, the head department art and design as informed by the current head department was selected from English Department.

Another grammatical error deals with not knowing how to use infinitive verbs. With semantic errors, Student 1 wrote 2 incoherent sentences.

After Student 1 submitted his revised version, he was invited in an oral conference and instructed to be more aware of the concept of a complete sentence in English. He was also reminded about wrong terms of certain words which were made exactly the same again in his revised version.

In the original writing, Student 1 committed 10 errors. Moving to the revised version, the number of his errors was reduced by 8. Two weeks after he turned in his revised version, he made 6 errors in his test version. The only error which was corrected in Student 1's test version was about the distinction between the verb and the noun.

Although Student 1 seemed to make a small improvement in accuracy, this improvement could not count. Student 1 did make a distinction between the verb and the noun forms. During the conference, student 1 confirmed the researcher's suspicion that it had indeed been a typo, so his correction in his test version did not denote actual progress.

So, the errors that Student 1 made in his original piece of writing did change in his test version. He was asked why he had not corrected most of the errors even though the fact that he had got both written and oral feedback from his teacher, and he had made revision on his writing. He said that he was able to identify some of his errors, but got problem how to correct them. He

mentioned that the reason for this failure was his lack of exposure to English. During the one-month period between his revision of his writing based on the teacher's model and his revision of his original writing test, he had read no material in English. Due to lack of exposure, the student may have been capable of notice some of his linguistic problem during the revision process or the conference with his lecturer, but noticing a few errors may not add new linguistic information to his knowledge repertoire, unless a significant amount of comprehensible input through extensive reading and writing is added to internalize what he had previously learned (Krashen, 1976).

Table 02a. Distribution of Student 2's Errors in His Original, Revised, and Test Versions

Version	Grammatical	Lexical	Semantic	Total
Original	3	3	5	11
Revised	0	0	0	0
Test	1	2	5	8

Student 2 made three grammatical errors, three lexical errors, and five semantic errors in his original writing. Regarding grammatical errors, student 2 did not leave a space after punctuation marks. The errors that occur the most often in student 2's writing are semantic in nature. The examples of the students' errors can be seen in Table 02b below:

Table 02b. The Student 2's Error Examples Which were Broken Down from Original Composition Writing

Grammatical	Error
tense	.....the department *was begin in 1984
To-v	.....it is interesting *opening
S-V agreement	The Art and Design Department *were opened without room for workshop
Lexical	Error
collocation	..... *an artist like work four *frames painting
usage	.....the suggestion is *beneficial.
Semantic	Error
Indonesian English	..... *Different *with the Art Design Department in Udayana University *The first class after opening only 12 students *the number students all males The second class after opening 10 students
Awkwad English	*The Faculty of Teacher Training Unud can with the support of local government of Buleleng open the department.

In student 2's revision, all the errors had been corrected. During the conferencing time, he was praised for his attention to every detail. However, only one grammatical error was corrected in his tested version, where he left a space after punctuation marks. Except for this mechanical error, other grammatical, lexical or semantic errors were untouched. It was found that the lecturer's feedback did not develop linguistic accuracy for Student 2's writing.

Student 2 was asked why he had not corrected most of his errors in the test version of his writing. His response was similar to that of Student 1. Student 2 attributed his unsuccessful learning of grammar points to insufficient input and practice.

Johnson's (1995) learning model can be used to explain students' failure in learning grammar, that is, learning a language may follow three stages: verbalization, automatization, and autonomy (in Yi-Ching Pan, 2010). In the first stage of verbalization, the teacher describes and demonstrates the language to be learned, and students perceive and attempt to understand it. After that, learning moves on to the second stage, automatization, in which the teacher suggests exercises and the students practice the language in order to internalize it. Finally, in the autonomy stage, they continue to use the language on their own, becoming more proficient and creative. Johnson's (1995) mentions that the three things are essential to the successful learning of grammar points. In the first place, the teacher

should explicitly demonstrate grammar for students to understand. In the second place, the teacher should provide students with opportunities to practice these grammar points for consolidation. Finally, students should continue to use the language in order to reach autonomy, which enables them to be ready and fluent in making self-expressions.

Student 3 committed 4 grammatical errors, 4 lexical error, and 6 semantic errors in his original writing. Regarding grammatical errors, he made improper use of tense. Moreover, two different types of errors were found in the sentence.

Table 03a. Distribution of Student 3's Errors in His Original, Revised, and Test Versions

Version	Grammatical	Lexical	Semantic	Total
Original	4	4	6	14
Revised	0	0	0	0
Test	2	3	6	11

Regarding the grammatical ones, student 3 did not leave a space after punctuation marks. Like the student 2's, the errors that occur the most often in student 3's writing are semantic in nature. The examples of the students' errors can be seen in Table 03b below:

Table 03b. The Student 3's Error Examples Which were Broken Down from Original Composition Writing

Grammatical	Error
tense	.....the department * <u>begin in 1984</u>
To-v	.....it is interesting *opening
punctuation	besides* ,simple rooms* , there were three lecturers* ,
S-V agreement	The Art and Design Department *were opened in a simple way.
Lexical	Error
collocation	.....Its most important program is *complete. .....three *well paintings.....four *studies room
usage	.....start *on July 1985.
Semantic	Error
Indonesian English	The story of my department is like follow *I am not know much about my department but will try explain in shortly. *At the beginning the department only have few lecturers *I heard also that it no have room for workshop *The first head department taken from English department *The facility of my department at the begin very simple and not complete

In student 3's revision, all the errors had been corrected. During the conferencing time, he was praised for his attention to every detail. However, only 2 grammatical errors were corrected in his tested version, where he left a space after punctuation marks. Except for this mechanical error, other grammatical, lexical or semantic errors were untouched. The teacher feedback in his writing did not develop linguistic accuracy for Student 3's writing. The student 3 was also asked why he was incapable of addressing the errors that he had successfully corrected in his revised version. The answer was that he was too busy with his too many exhibition activities required by his supervisor in his department. The student did not have enough time to open English dictionary and to read English reading materials such as magazines, leaf led and news paper. In short, his answer was the same as student 1's and student 2's. He did not have opportunity to consolidate what he got from his teacher in the revision process as well as in

the oral conference. Therefore, his final result was that he did not improve his writing accuracy.

Table 04a. Distribution of Student 4's Errors in His Original, Revised, and Test Versions

Version	Grammatical	Lexical	Semantic	Total
Original	8	3	4	15
Revised	2	1	1	4
Test	8	2	2	12

In his original writing, Student 4 made 8 grammatical errors, 3 lexical errors, and 4 semantic errors. Regarding the grammatical errors, student 4 did not also leave a space after punctuation marks. Likewise student 2, the most often errors that occur in student 4's writing are grammar in nature. The examples of the students' errors can be seen in Table 04b below:

Table 04b. The Student 4's Error Examples Which were Broken Down from Original Composition Writing

Grammatical	Error
tense	The Art and Design Department of FKIP UNUD *begin in 1984
To-v	Based on the opinion of senior lecturers of FKIP UNDU, it was interesting *developing
punctuation	In addition to* ,It needed a quick action* , There were three lecturers* ,
S-V agreement	The Art and Design Department *were opened in 1985 The opening ceremony *are not made special. The first head department *were selected for English department. All lecturers *was invited to in the opening. Facility *were very simple at the start.
Lexical	Error
collocation	.....Its most important program is *complete. .....three *well paintings
usage	.....start *on July 1985.
Semantic	Error
Indonesian English	*The story of my department is like follow, *I am not know much about my department but will try explain in shortly. *At the beginning the department only have few lecturers *I heard also that it no have room for workshop *The first head department taken from English department *The facility of my department at the begin very simple and not complete

In student 4's revision, all the errors had been corrected. During the conferencing period, he was praised for his attention to every detail. However, only 7 grammatical errors were corrected in his tested version, where he left a space after punctuation marks. Except for this

mechanical error, other grammatical, lexical or semantic errors were untouched. The lecturer's feedback did not develop linguistic accuracy for Student 4's writing. First, the main clause was lack of verb. Second, agreement between subject and verb was incorrectly presented in the relative

clause. In addition, Student 4, like many Balinese EFL learners, had trouble correctly using articles such as “a” and “the.” Also this writing pieces contained mechanical errors such as spaces before punctuation marks.

When the conference was held with the students, the researcher found only two errors in the subject and verb agreement in the student’s revised version and reminded him to recognize these errors. However, only one semantic error was corrected in student 4’s test version. In this case, the teacher feedback seemed to have no effect on student 4’s ability to write accurately.

In this study, student 4 was also asked why he was incapable of addressing the errors that he had successfully corrected in his revised version. His reply was the same as the other students, that is, he was so busy with the art and design exhibitions required by his lecturer at the Art and Design Department. He did not have extra time to devote reading authentic materials such brochures, magazine, and other printed form written in the target language. He did not have enough time to practice their English. In addition, he had not tended to listen to or watch any English radio or television programs. In fact, a lack of exposure to English prevented him from consolidating what he had learned in the revision process and the oral conference with the teacher. Consequently their writing accuracy did not progress as it was expected.

Table 05. Number of Four Students’ Errors in Their Original, Revised, and Test Versions

Version	Stu- dent 1	Stu- dent 2	Stu- dent 3	Stu- dent 4
Original	10	11	14	15
Revised	2	0	0	4
Test	6	8	11	9

Table 05 shows that Student 1 committed 10 errors in his original writing and left only 2 errors in his revised version after feedback was provided. However, two weeks after the treatment, it seemed that error correction was not retained mentally because 6 errors still existed in his test version. A similar scenario happened to Student 2, 3, and 4. The three students’ errors decreased in their revised versions, but their success was not repeated in their test versions. The students made progress in their revised versions. However, very few improvements were found in students’ test versions where they were asked to revise their original writing two weeks

after the teacher made corrections and they themselves revised their writings based on their lecturer’s feedback.

These findings were consistent with those of a significant number of research studies done by Sheppard (1992), and Yi-Ching Pan (2010). There are three explanations for the inefficiency of teacher feedback on students’ ability to write linguistically accurate pieces. First, the acquisition of grammar involves complex learning processes and cannot be achieved only by transferring information from teacher to students. Second, to know and to apply are totally different concepts. After being given teacher error feedback, students might have some knowledge of a particular grammatical structure, but that does not necessarily mean that they will be able to use it properly in the future. Third, there are developmental sequences for students to acquire grammar.

When students are corrected on grammar for which they are not ready, the correction is not likely to have much value. Therefore, teacher error feedback may produce no result if it is not provided when it is beyond students’ ability (Truscott, in Yi-Ching Pan, 2010).

CONCLUSION

This study concluded that lecturer’s error feedback which combined the direct correction and face to face oral conferencing applied in this study did not show the development on the ability of students to write composition writing accurately. The study showed that when students were corrected on grammar for which they were not ready, the correction was not likely to have much value. Three-stage learning processes: input stage (explicit instruction), acquisition stage, and consolidation stage are suggested to overcome the problem. The three stages might be an alternative to facilitate the students’ ability to use grammar points. In the first input stage, the teacher directs the students’ attention to particular linguistic features by means of explicit instruction. In the second acquisition stage, the teacher may provide reading texts that contain the grammar points that are being taught, or design writing tasks to apply the linguistic rules being discussed. Finally, in the consolidation stage, the teacher continues to encourage students to immerse themselves in English environments to reinforce what they have previously learned.

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