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# BAHASTRA

Jurnal Ilmiah Bahasa dan Sastra

- ☐ THE EFFECTS OF TEACHER CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING COMPETENCE  
M. Tolkhah Adityas
- ☐ ENHANCING STUDENTS' SPEAKING SKILL THROUGH COMPUTER ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (CALL)  
Ardia Trivoga
- ☐ PERKEMBANGAN KEMAMPUAN TATA BAHASA PADA ANAK  
Nori Purwitasari
- ☐ IDENTIFIKASI VERBA PENGHUBUNG DALAM BAHASA INGGRIS  
Beti Nur Oktavianti
- ☐ THE EFFECTIVENESS OF STORYTELLING USING REALIA TO IMPROVE SPEAKING ABILITY IN THE TENTH GRADE STUDENTS AT SMAN 1 SANDEN IN ACADEMIC YEAR 2012/ 2013  
Salamah Jamiatun - Sucipto

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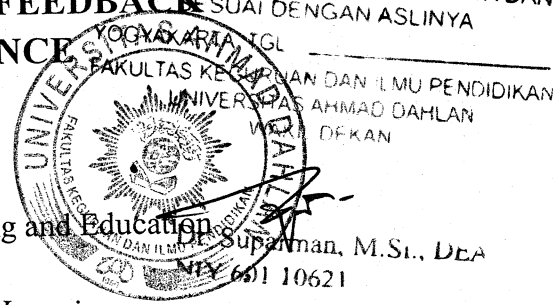
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# THE EFFECTS OF TEACHER CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING COMPETENCE

PENGESAHAN  
TELAH DIPERIKSA KEBENARANNYA DAN  
Sesuaikan DENGAN ASLINYA



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## Abstract

This study aims at investigating the students' responses toward the corrective feedback by formulating three research objectives: 1) To find out the categories of corrective feedback given by the teacher to the students' compositions. 2) To find out the students' responses toward teacher's corrective feedback. 3) To explain contribution of a teacher's corrective feedback towards the students' writing competence.

This is descriptive qualitative method. The data were gathered from students' compositions on expository writing. It consisted of eighteen pieces of compositions divided into nine pieces of the first drafts with teacher feedback on them and nine of the revised versions. There are two instruments used in this study, i.e. checklist and interview. The results of the data analysis on the first problem reveal that the teacher provided corrective feedback on language use, mechanics, organization, content, and vocabulary. The findings show that first, the teacher feedback was mostly on the aspects of form. The content, which was the main component to form a good composition, only got few attentions. Second, it was figured out that the students' responses toward teacher corrective feedback were correcting, revising, restructuring, consulting and ignoring. Third, it was also found that teacher's corrective feedback improves the students' writing competence in terms of language use, mechanics, content, and vocabulary.

**Keywords:** Corrective feedback, writing competence

## Introduction

The use of English language in the writing activity is still a problem for most Indonesian students, as well as many other students who learn English as a foreign language. Indonesian students are thinking in their first language and translating sentence by sentence when they write in English rather than translating ideas from first to second language, they often think and organize their ideas according to the logic of their first language, that is Bahasa Indonesia, and then translate them into English. For this reason, students' compositions may be far from English

compositions since students do not think as an English native speaker when they write so. It often occurs that in a composition made by an Indonesian student, the tenses are in English but the sense or logic is Indonesian. They are also lacking in knowledge on how to make a good composition, especially in terms of grammar accuracy, organization of ideas, and even probably, diction. Students feel afraid of making mistakes whether in organization or grammar while writing the composition and feel embarrassed if their mistakes may lead to the confusion of their readers.

Seeing the above problems, many think that it is important for the teachers to provide feedback in the process of writing to help the students improve their writing proficiency so that they are able to produce their composition with minimum errors and maximum clarity. Feedback from teacher is hoped to be more reliable since the teacher is more knowledgeable than the students about the linguistic and rhetorical features of English. Consequently, in many writing courses, teachers are in charge of correcting and improving students' English writing competence by giving some notes or suggestions on the students' writing.

#### *Corrective feedback in Writing*

There are many definitions of feedback introduced by many proponents and some ideas of those definitions will be quoted here. Feedback can be defined as any input from reader to writer that provides information for revision (Keh, 1990, cited in Reid, 1993: 218). In addition, Hyland (2002: 230) defines feedback as the response that is given to students writing. It can refer to either oral or written forms provided by peers, teachers or computers. Furthermore, according to Penafiora (2002: 346), feedback or response is an integral part of students writing. By providing feedback, students are given an opportunity to be able to identify their own strengths and weaknesses. This may encourage them to improve their writing skill and become more effective writers. Written corrective feedback can also be regarded as a positive way "to draw second language learner's attention to linguistic forms in their writing products and thus improve their acquisition of second language. The definition of corrective feedback used throughout this paper will refer to Lightbown and Spada's (2006) definition as an

indication to a learner that his or her use of the target language is incorrect.

#### *Focus of Feedback*

The focus of feedback falls into two categories: form and content, and teacher written feedback can include both of them. Feedback on form, according to Fathman and Whalley (1990 in Chiang, 2004: 99), concerns with grammar and mechanics errors. There are several common strategies used by teacher in providing this kind of feedback. They are teacher's correction of surface errors in which students required to copy all the corrections, teacher's marking that indicate the place and type of error but without correction, teacher's underlining to indicate only the presence of errors. The two latter methods require students to correct the errors on their own (Williams, 2003). In feedback on content, teacher usually points out problems and offers suggestions for improvements on future revision. Using this feedback, the students are expected to incorporate information from the comments into other versions of their writings (Williams, 2003).

#### *Response to Feedback*

According to Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (1995: 1000), response is an action or feeling produced in answer to something. Another definition is given by Power who defines response as any verbal or non-verbal act designed to fulfill the expectations implicit in the questions, commands or requests of others (Dunkin, 1987: 413). From the definition above, it can be deduced that response to written feedback can be defined as any verbal or non verbal act produced in answer to the written feedback.

Some researchers like Cohen (1987) had conducted researches on students' responses on feedback. The findings of the

researches showed that students have some strategies when teacher provided written feedback to their compositions. In Hyland's study *The Impact of Teacher Written Feedback on Individual Writers* students tried to combine most of the usable teacher feedback in their revision when they were provided written feedback in their writing. In revising the draft, usually, students followed the suggestions offered by teacher or deleted words with errors. Students' revisions can also be an initial stimulus that encouraged changes in their writing beyond the point addressed by teacher.

Chiang (2004) also states that most students have different strategies in responding their teachers' feedback. The most common strategies included making corrections and remembering the mistakes. They also asked their classmates and teacher when they did not understand teacher feedback, checked dictionaries and checked grammar books. Furthermore, in his study *Student Processing of Feedback on their Composition*, Cohen (1987) found that learners have limited strategies of processing teacher feedback. In this study, the learners made a mental note of the teacher's comments as opposed to writing down points for future revision, referring to other papers, and especially, revising their paper with the incorporation of teacher comments.

In addition, Berzsenyi (2001) reports several types of students' responses when given feedback. They were revising words or sentences which were presented with an explanation or the student's agreement toward the teacher's suggestion or interpretation of the text, discussing writing strategies which responds to teacher's praise and making revision that were not initiated by the teacher. From the explanation above, it can be concluded that students have various strategies in responding written feedback provided by their teacher. The most common practices are

making correction and revision, adding missing details and explanations, deleting irrelevant words/phrases, discussing or conferencing with teacher and classmates also checking the books or dictionaries.

### *Research Question*

The broad research questions that guided our investigation in this study were as follows.

1. What are the categories of corrective feedback given by the teacher to the students' compositions?
2. What are the students' responses to the teacher's corrective feedback?
3. In what aspects does a teacher's corrective feedback contribute towards students' improvement in their writing competence?

### **Method**

#### *Participants*

The subjects of this study were nine of the eleventh graders of MAN Tempel, Sleman in the academic year 2011/2012. Those nine participants came from two different classes in which they were to possess writing ability, especially in writing exposition texts. The method of sampling used in the research is purposive sampling. Nine students were selected to be studied. Each of the students was distinct from one another in their capacity of English proficiency. Respectively, the first three students represented high-level students, the second three for intermediate-level and the rest for low-level students.

#### *Instruments*

In order to gather data for this research, two instruments that are checklist and interview, were used. The checklist was used to gather the data in document analysis to answer the first problem and third problem,

whereas the interview was used to validate the results of the second problem.

### 1. Checklist

In this research, a checklist was used as the instrument to answer the first problem which is what the categories of written feedback provided by teacher are. The categories of the checklist were adapted from the ESL composition profile proposed by Hughey et al. (1983: 141-145). The profile form contained five important elements to compose a connected, coherent, and effective piece of writing. Five important elements meant here were content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. Then, one category which was reference to source was added to complete the checklist. These five elements became the basis to analyze the corrective feedback given by teacher.

### 2. Interview

This research also employed interview as the instrument to gather data from the students. Interview or careful asking of relevant questions is an important way for a researcher to check the accuracy of or to verify the impressions of the researcher has gained through observation (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1993: 385).

In this study, interview with the students was only used to provide a detailed description about students' reactions to teacher written feedback. There were five points of the questions delivered to the interviewees, i.e. (1) understanding toward feedback, (2) students' feeling, (3) problem appearing in responding the feedback, (4) students' responses and (5) reason why they respond in such a way. The questions were flexible, meaning that if necessary the interviewer might elaborate or omit the questions. The questions were delivered spontaneously as far as they could help the researcher to validate the information

about the students' responses to teacher's feedback.

### Analysis

The data used in this research were collected from the students' composition of the eleventh grade of the MAN Tempel, Sleman in the academic year 2011/2012. In total, there were eighteen pieces of writing collected from the students. They were nine compositions with teacher written feedback on it and nine compositions of the revision. The categories of teacher written feedback were analyzed from the compositions using a checklist. Afterwards, the second compositions which are the revision of the first composition were collected. By comparing the changes on first composition and the revised composition, the responses of students to teacher written feedback could be found out. Their efforts to revise the composition, which is based on the feedback given, were analyzed.

### Findings and Discussion

#### *The Categories of a Teacher's Corrective Feedback*

The results were presented in the table 1 below:

Table 1. The Table Checklist of Teacher Written Feedback Percentage

No	Feedback Categories	Total	Percentage
1	Language Use	75	60.48%
2	Mechanics	22	17.74%
3	Organization	7	5.65%
4	Content	5	4.03%
5	Vocabulary	15	12.09%
Total		124	

#### 1. Language Use

Language use concerns with the linguistic components used for effective delivery of discourse in writing, like grammar

and effective complex constructions of sentences (Hughey et al., 1983: 141). This research figured out that teacher gave written feedback most on language use including the use of articles, tenses, plural marker, pronouns, and sentence construction.

#### a. Articles

In the following example, the students did not put any articles to indicate a noun and the teacher gave feedback on it. Consider this example:

idea, claim that abortion is an irresponsible action. People who do this activity should know that <sup>the</sup> activity that they do infringe the humanity. They should think

(Participant No. 1, First Draft)

The sentence in the example above was incomplete. The word "activity" is a definite noun, therefore, article "the" should be put before that word. Teacher gave corrections by putting articles in front of the word to make the sentence complete.

#### b. Tenses

Students should not change the tense from present to past or the other way around unless they have a good reason. Teacher provided feedback on tense to ensure that students used the appropriate tense and they were consistent in using the tense. Consider this example:

better. Moreover, from the news, we know that most of them are often absent from meetings or slept while meeting. They should not do that, but they must work. It showed that they are lazy. I <sup>1/4</sup> can't understand why government thought those lazy people deserve the supply of laptops.

(Participant No. 6, First Draft)

#### c. Plural Marker

In this research, it was found that students omitted plural marker of nouns. Therefore, the teacher simply gave correction on the nouns by adding -s or -es in the end of the word. The examples were:

has stated their own reason to support their argument. Personally, I am in the both side. I agree and disagree with this action in certain condition.

(Participant No. 3, First Draft)

#### d. Pronouns

A pronoun is a word that substitutes for a noun, a noun phrase, or another noun (Raimes, 2002: 453). Teacher also provided feedback on the use of pronoun. Consider the example:

First, the lack of attention from parents about the social problems of teenagers today who led them easily influenced in her social.

(Participant No. 8, First Draft)

In the sentence above, the possessive adjective "her" should not be used because it does not agree with the antecedent "teenagers" that needs "their" for the possessive adjective. Teacher, then, corrected it by marking the interrelated words.

#### e. Sentence Constructions

The construction of sentences must follow certain well-defined rules (Warren, 1985: 335). In this study, it was found that students did not follow the rules in constructing the sentences correctly. For that reason, the teacher gave feedback on sentence constructions so that the readers are able to comprehend the information presented by the students. Consider this example:

For the reason, I think smoking <sup>is</sup> also advantageous or useful in us life. However, we must understand also negative aspect of smoking.

(Participant No. 2, First Draft)

In the example above, the student happened to miss the main verb that is "to be". He also made error in both choosing the possessive adjective and placing the adverb "also". Therefore, the teacher marked the erroneous part and gave correction.



## 2. Mechanics

Mechanics is the technical aspects of writing including punctuation or capitalization (Sorenson, 1996: 571). In this research, it was found that teacher gave written feedback on mechanics (17.74%). Most of the feedback provided on the use of punctuation, italics and capitalization. The discussions were below:

### a. Punctuation

Sorenson (1996: 576) defines punctuation as the use of standardized marks in writing and printing to separate sentences or parts of a sentence or to make meaning clearer. Punctuation marks are easy to use correctly if their functions are understood; however, there is an exception that is the comma. Comma is the most common mark of punctuation and the most complex uses also (McCrimmon, 1984: 656). This statement is in line with the result of this study in which all feedback given on punctuation concerned on the uses of comma. Its complex uses made students misuse it when writing their compositions. Here is the example:

Abortion viewed so coldly (on the other) it's really about human life. If it was just a simple issue (umor) there would be no debate. I'm sure most of us don't want anyone to get it. People

(Participant No. 1, First Draft)

The most important use of punctuation is to prevent a confusing, ambiguous or awkward reading. As the examples above, without proper punctuation those sentences became confusing and awkward. The teacher, then, added the period and comma to between the two clauses to make them clear enough for the readers.

### b. Capitalization

The teacher also gave feedback on the use of capitalization because students misused it on their writing. Consider this example:

In the current era, many teenagers are not free from cigarettes. When they know what the result of smoking itself but they may fall into that too because of several factors.

(Participant No. 8, First Draft)

In the sentence above, the writer misused the capital letter. A capital letter should be used after a period instead of a comma, therefore, the word "in" and "when" should be written in capital letter. The teacher directly corrected the words to make the writer be aware of his/her mistake.

## 3. Content

Providing feedback on content to students in the process of writing is important to figure out whether the ideas conveyed in students' compositions are in line with the topic they want to discuss. It may ensure the students that their ideas are well developed and organized and that they have included information that is not only interesting but also relevant to support their ideas. In this study, it was figured out that teacher provided feedback on content to students' compositions. This feedback was in forms of imperatives or questions and it often functioned as general comment, for example: "Omit it!" or "What do you mean by this?" These kinds of feedback sought for students' understanding towards what they had previously discussed and asked for further discussion about it in the next revision.

## 4. Organization

Campbell (1998: 87) defines organization as the structure of paragraphs, essays and longer stretches of discourse. Good organization in writing can help the readers to follow the movement and the flow of the ideas in the composition. It was found that the teacher also provided students with written feedback on organization. Consider this example:

Home schooling is an education system which <sup>provide children</sup> provide child's main education program place of full-time school attendance and, in the United States and Canada, it usually meets state requirements for compulsory education. <sup>Make it into two sentences</sup> Although home schooling could achieve the objectives of compulsory education, there are some points that should be noticed from the home schooling.

(Participant No. 5, First Draft)

In the examples above, the sentences were not well-organized. The writer used many unnecessary words in the sentences which made the explanation become not to the point. For that reason, teacher asked the student to reorganize the paragraph so that it could be straight to the point in order to make the readers follow the writer's ideas easier.

## 5. Vocabulary

Vocabulary is a sum or stock of words employed by a language (Merriam- Webster Dictionary, 1993: 1322). In writing, it deals with the sophisticated range of word choice and the appropriateness and effectiveness of the word choice and usage. In this study, the teacher provided written feedback on vocabulary like the following example.

<sup>Many</sup> Much can be done so that corruption is flourishing <sup>be</sup> more specifically with

(Participant No. 7, First Draft)

The word "*flourishing*", in the example above, made the sentence sound awkward to read. Therefore, the teacher underlined the word with intention that the student will find the correct diction.

## Students' Responses

In responding the teacher written feedback, students did several responses. They were correcting, revising, consulting and ignoring or making no change in the revision. The discussions of each response that was done by students toward teacher written feedback were presented below. The highlighted part in the examples indicated the revision that was made based on the teacher feedback.

## 1. Correcting

In this research, it was found that when the teacher gave corrections, students' responded in two ways. Firstly, students simply copied the teacher's corrections. When students were provided with corrections on parts which contained errors, they tend to simply copy those corrections in their revision. It was because they were aware that the parts which were given feedback were incorrect and they agreed with the correction suggested by the teacher. Thus, they directly copied the corrections and did not change any other parts.

Example:

The issue of abortion <sup>is</sup> ~~is~~ <sup>is</sup> ~~become~~ controversial in society. Some people will say they agree and some people will say they are against abortion. Each of the ~~side~~ <sup>sides</sup> has stated their own reason to support their argument. Personally, I am in the ~~both~~ <sup>both</sup> side. I agree and disagree with this action in certain condition.

(Participant No. 3, First Draft)

was corrected into

The issue of abortion **has become** controversial in the society. Some people will say they agree and some people will say they are against abortion. Each of the **sides** has stated their own reason to support their argument. Personally, I am in the **both sides**. I agree and disagree with this action in certain **conditions**.

(Participant No. 3, Second Draft)

## 2. Revising

Students mostly revised their compositions when they got feedback on their content, clarity and organization of ideas. There were four strategies they used in revising their writing, which were adding details/explanations, deleting words/phrases, substituting words/phrases and restructuring sentences.

#### 4. Consulting

Another response that was found in revising was consulting. Students had consultations with teacher, peers and books related to the written feedback they received on their compositions. They asked their teacher or peers when they did not understand the meaning of written feedback provided. The problem occurred in understanding the feedback mostly concerned with teacher's handwriting. The students did not want to misinterpret the feedback because of the teacher's illegible handwriting so that they asked their teacher or friends to clarify teacher's comments. One of the participants said that if she could not read teacher feedback, she would ask his/her friends first whether they could read it or not. If his/her friends could not help in interpreting the feedback and she still did not understand about what the teacher wrote or what she should do, she would come to ask again and have a discussion with the teacher.

#### 5. Ignoring

The last response that the students gave toward feedback was ignoring it. Students left some parts which were problematic or contained errors without any changes in the revised composition although they obtained written feedback on them. This ignorance occurred because students did not know how to revise the composition. They might also be careless in reading teacher feedback on the draft of the composition. They missed to read the feedback especially if the feedback was about minor syntactic components of a sentence, for example punctuation or capitalization. Therefore, the students did not make any changes in their revised composition.

*The Improvement of the Students' Writing Competence*

The following would further discuss to what extents teacher feedback improved the students' writing in each aspect.

#### 1. Students' Improvement on Language Use

Revising their language use, the students improved their errors on articles, tenses, plural marker, pronouns, and sentence constructions. Since the students revised their writing, the number of the cases that the students committed errors went into decline. It is interesting that the fact that the teacher provided indirect corrective feedback by simply underline the erroneous word, forced students to real-learn and find the correct forms in their own ways. In some cases, the teacher simply underlined the pronoun that did not agree with the antecedent, and wrote "noun" next to the word "social" that served as an adjective in the student's first draft. It can be seen that in the second draft the student was able to find the intended or correct forms of the pronoun and vocabulary.

#### 2. Students' Improvement on Mechanics

Among the five aspects in the analysis, the improvement on mechanics was not as much as that on language use. The revision covered the revision on capitalization and punctuation. One student wrote every beginning of the sentence in non-capital letters, but later he revised his writing and had the correct capitalization. It was apparent that the teacher gave comments on mechanics. It was due to the fact that the students did not possess sufficient knowledge on good mechanics in writing. It was considered less important as the main focus of writing is not the mechanics. Yet, it would be better for the students to be exposed to have better knowledge on mechanics.

#### 3. Students' Improvement on Content

There were four strategies that the students employed in giving feedback and

revising their organization. They are providing logical conclusion, stating their reasons on each argument more clearly, connecting their reasons and their arguments in more reasonable ways and providing clearer ideas of their arguments. Despite the fact that on average the students were able to provide knowledgeable content and develop their content so that the content were assigned to the topic, the students still revised their content based on the feedback from the teacher.

#### 4. Students' Improvement on Vocabulary

Some students appeared to reveal occasional errors of word choice and usage. Dealing with it the students did the revision on this aspect. It is obvious that the number of the students revising their language use was higher than that of the students revising their vocabulary. Before revision, there were cases of errors on diction, however, after the revision, the cases of making errors went into decline. The errors of their vocabulary commonly dealt with diction (choice of words). Some of them failed to demonstrate appropriate choice of words as well as the usage, for example the choice of "professionality" instead of "professionalism", the choice of "guiltless" instead of "innocent", and the writing of "flourishing" instead of "eradicating". The students' strategy to revise their vocabulary was, then, by changing the words that were ineffective into the effective ones.

#### Conclusion

It was found that teacher corrective feedback dealt with language use, mechanics, organization, content, and vocabulary. From the results, it was shown that the feedback focused more on form area which was concerned about language use and mechanics, while the content area which was concerned about content and organization of the

composition only got few attentions. Second, it was found that there were several responses done by the students such as correcting, revising, consulting and ignoring. Last, Implemented in the writing class of the eleventh grade students of MAN Tempel, Sleman, teacher corrective feedback has successfully improved the students' writing competence in the aspects of language use, mechanics, content, and vocabulary.

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