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EFL Students' Engagement with Teacher's Written Corrective Feedback: A Case Study at A Vocational High School

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Abstrak

Umpan balik membantu siswa menilai tulisan mereka dan melihat apakah tulisan itu bagus atau perlu perbaikan. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana siswa EFL kejuruan menanggapi umpan balik tertulis dari gurunya dan terlibat dengan Umpan Balik Korektif Tertulis (*Written Corrective Feedback*). Makalah ini menggunakan desain studi kasus. Pengumpulan dokumen dan wawancara digunakan untuk mengumpulkan data. Penelitian ini menemukan tiga kategori keterlibatan siswa terhadap umpan balik koreksi tertulis dari guru: yaitu keterlibatan afektif, perilaku, dan kognitif. Singkatnya, keterlibatan kognitif siswa dengan umpan balik korektif tertulis dari guru melibatkan pemrosesan dan pemahaman umpan balik secara aktif, sementara keterlibatan perilaku melibatkan pengambilan tindakan berdasarkan umpan balik tersebut, dan keterlibatan afektif melibatkan respons emosional dan motivasi terhadap umpan balik tersebut. Temuan ini menyoroti bahwa kurangnya kemahiran berbahasa Inggris dapat membatasi kemampuan siswa sekolah menengah atas untuk secara efektif menerima umpan balik guru mereka dalam menulis, khususnya dalam menulis teks recount di kelas EFL.

Kata Kunci: *Keterlibatan Siswa, Umpan Balik Korektif Tertulis (Written Corrective Feedback), Umpan Balik Tertulis Guru*

Abstract

Feedback helps students assess their writing and see if it is good or needs improvement. Therefore, this study aims to find out how vocational high EFL students respond to their teacher's written feedback and engage with Written Corrective Feedback (WCF). This paper employed case study design. Document collection and interview were used to collect the data. This research found three categories of students' engagement toward teacher's written correction feedback: there were affective, behavioral, and cognitive engagement. In summary, students' cognitive engagement with teacher's written corrective feedback involves actively processing and understanding the feedback, while behavioral engagement involves taking action based on the feedback, and affective engagement involves responding emotionally and motivationally to the feedback. The findings highlighted that a lack of proficiency in English can limit high school students' ability to effectively engage with their teacher's feedback on writing, particularly in the context of producing recount texts in EFL classroom. Keywords: *Keywords: Students' Engagement, Teacher's Written Feedback, Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)*

INTRODUCTION

Receiving feedback is crucial when students learning to write well (Ibrahim, Abdel & Elashri, 2013). Feedback helps students assess their writing and see if it is good or needs improvement. Feedback empowers students to evaluate their writing and find areas where they can get better and they can work on their weaknesses and reach a satisfactory level of writing (Mi, 2009; Littleton, 2011). Engagement with corrective feedback is a crucial aspect of effective learning and development (Franklin & Harrington, 2019). This engagement can manifest as affective, behavioral, and cognitive involvement with the feedback provided by teachers (Zheng et al., 2020). This engagement is essential for students to understand and act upon the feedback, ultimately improving their writing skills.

Engagement with corrective feedback can foster a positive teacher-student relationship and create a supportive learning environment. By actively engaging with the written corrective feedback, students are able to perceive and act upon the learning opportunities embedded in the feedback (Mohammadi & Yousefi, 2019). Overall, engagement with teacher's written corrective feedback plays a significant role in students' writing development and academic success (Alharbi & Alqefari, 2021). In summary, engagement with teacher's written corrective feedback is essential for student learning and development. It is important for teachers to provide clear and constructive feedback that encourages student engagement.

Several recent studies (e.g., Han & Hyland, 2015; Zhang, 2017) have explored how students who are learning English as a foreign language (EFL), whether they are at a basic

or advanced level, respond to helpful feedback. These studies recognize the importance of students using feedback to improve their writing. While many factors can influence how much students participate in using feedback to improve their writing (WCF), one important factor is their language skill level. This can affect how engaged they are with feedback and how much they benefit from it, such as making changes to their written work. However, we have limited information about how lower-proficiency (LP) students specifically engage with feedback and how their language skills impact their participation. Notably, compared to more advanced students, LP students often struggle more with language skills than writing skills. Therefore, they may need more instruction that focuses on improving their language abilities from their writing instructors (K. Hyland, 2003). To make the most of student feedback and help teachers provide better language-focused education, it's crucial to understand how LP students interact with instructors who provide language-focused feedback.

Those research studies were conducted in understanding how helpful written feedback can be for students. However, there is still a need for more research on how effective these written comments are in getting students engaged. It is important to figure out how language learners react to feedback in writing because it's just one way they interact with feedback, and many factors can affect how they engage with it. Therefore, this study aims to find out how students in an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classroom respond to their teacher's written feedback. This research aims to give a better understanding of how less proficient students engage with Written Corrective Feedback (WCF). It also explores how a student's language skills can impact their emotional, behavioral, and cognitive response to this type of feedback.

Students' Engagement with Teacher Written Corrective Feedback

Engagement with teacher-written corrective feedback is critical to students' academic progress and development (Gan et al., 2021). Effective engagement with teacher written corrective feedback involves students actively reviewing, understanding, and implementing the feedback provided by their teacher to improve their writing skills and academic performance in the subject area (Afifi et al., 2023). Research has shown that when students engage with teacher-written corrective feedback, they improve their understanding of the assessment criteria and receive valuable suggestions for improvement to enhance their academic writing assignments (Aslam et al., 2021). In addition, student engagement with teacher feedback is influenced by factors such as the clarity and specificity of the feedback provided, the student's prior knowledge and understanding of the content, and the

student's level of motivation and self-efficacy (Burić et al., 2020). The feedback intervention plays a crucial role in improving students' understanding of the assessment criteria and positively influencing their motivation and ability to improve their academic writing (Marlies et al., 2020).

To solidify the meaning, The researcher, adopting the Conceptual Framework for student Engagement with WCF from Lira-Gonzales and Valeo (2023), provides a table for the convenience of the reader. Classified students' engagement with WCF into three subcategories: affective, behavioral, and cognitive.

Table 1. Classification of students' engagement

Dimensions of engagement WCF	Subconstructs of each dimension
Affective engagement	Affect: Students' feelings and emotions expressed upon receiving WCF Judgment: Personal judgment of admiration/criticism, as well as moral judgments of praise/condemnation toward WCF Appreciation: Students' value of WCF
Behavioral engagement	Revisions in response to WCF—these are responses used to improve the accuracy of the text
Cognitive Engagement	Cognitive processing of WCF (i.e., showing awareness of the presence of feedback) The use of cognitive and metacognitive strategies

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed case study design since it is used to obtain rich information to understand how learners engage with written corrective feedback, which is a top priority in feedback research, and students' actions in improving their writing. The study was conducted at a vocational high school in Karawang, West Java and thirty students who were in the eleventh grade of a vocational high school voluntarily participated in the study. The reason for choosing the eleven levels of the students was because they learned to recount texts based on the curriculum in Indonesia.

This research uses several data collection techniques to collect data. The techniques used were document collection and interviews.

Document Collection

The documents used in this study were recount texts that 30 students from two classes wrote. In the recount texts, students were asked to write about their experiences. The texts should be given feedback by the teacher to the students. There were 30 recount drafts from 30 students from two teachers and two different classes. Five selected drafts analyzed to represent student texts. From these drafts, the researcher analyzed some errors in the students' recount texts and compared the changes made by the students after being corrected by the teacher, which then became the subject of discussion and produced the findings of the study.

Interview

The interview used was a semi-structured interview. In this interview, five students were taken. In general, this research interview includes how students respond to feedback given by the teacher and see how students interact with written corrective comments from the teacher. This interview used a semi-structured interview consisting of four questions, the interview guide was adopted from (Zheng & Yu, 2018).

After students' recount texts were documented, the texts were analyzed based on teachers' written feedback strategies for correcting students' texts proposed by Ellis (2009) and Ferris (2006) and combined with the feedback categories proposed by Matsumura et al. (2002). Descriptive analysis was used to analyze the feedback strategies. Direct and indirect feedback were the main components of the description.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Result

Affective Engagement

Students can demonstrate affective engagement through affection, judgment, and appreciation. Affection refers to the feelings and emotions expressed upon receiving the WCF, and these changes occurred during the revision process. When the first draft with the WCF was received, some students were surprised. They said that they had tried to make the recount text good, but it turned out that there were still many things that needed to be improved. On the other hand, there were also some students who accepted that the text in their first draft still needed a lot of improvement because they realized that their English writing skills were not very good, which was caused by their lack of advanced grammar.

"Actually, I was surprised when the teacher gave me the correction result of my text, because there were many things that needed to be corrected, even though I tried my best to write the text" (Neo, interview, July 2023)

Unlike the previous students who expressed their negative emotions and feelings, although there were some students who reacted negatively to the WCF, most of the students reacted positively. There was one student who expressed that he was very touched by his teacher for giving him so many WCFs in such detail. He reasoned that with the WCF, the teacher had to be really thorough in correcting the text, so it took a lot of his time, while they realized that the teacher had a lot of other work to do.

"Even though my English vocabulary is very poor and my grammar is very bad, I can still accept corrections from the teacher about the text I have written, even though there are many things I need to improve in the text." (Jesy, interview, July 2023)

Another factor underlying students' affective engagement was how they evaluated the admiration or criticism of the WCF. It was clear that almost all students appreciated and accepted the criticism of grammatical errors; as a result, the sentences corrected by the teacher were much clearer and more precise than the first ones.

In terms of students' evaluation of the value of WCF, almost all students clearly stated that they recognized and admired the teacher's feedback. However, many students stated that they preferred to receive feedback directly from the teacher. The following statement from one of the students interviewed seems to best explain their preference for this type of feedback.

"Corrected, my teacher gives corrections that directly correct the wrong word and I prefer to be corrected directly like that, if it's not like that I don't know my mistakes and what the correct word should be" (Beng, interview, July 2023)

Behavioral Engagement

Students' behavioral engagement with the WCF indicates revision operations and learning strategies that can improve overall writing skills. Self-review reports and interviews can indicate their learning strategies, while changes in error rates between the first draft and the revised version can indicate their revision operations. Providing clearer instructions on how to provide feedback on students' recount texts is one way to improve their writing quality. This can be achieved by providing clear examples of how to revise and explaining why certain changes are necessary. Activities such as writing practice sessions, peer review, and one-on-one meetings with teachers to discuss feedback and revision can also help.

In some cases, students receive multiple written comments on their writing. In such

cases, students often tend to focus only on the summary statements and the parts of the text that need improvement, rather than on the whole task that they find challenging. There were many cases where students only revised the parts that received immediate feedback from the teacher. Looking between the first and second drafts, there were repeated errors in the second draft (fig. 4.1 and 4.2) where the student only corrected the part that had received direct feedback from the teacher, there was one error where the error was grammatical where the future tense should be used but the student still used "was" in his second draft.

"I justified the part I understood, the rest I rewrote because I didn't understand what to correct. This was the reason why she made the same mistake in his second draft" (Michel, interview, July 2023)

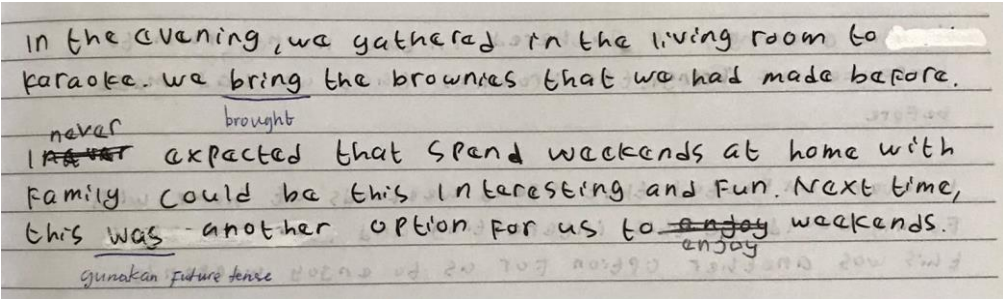


Figure 4.1 Draft 1 Students' Recount Text

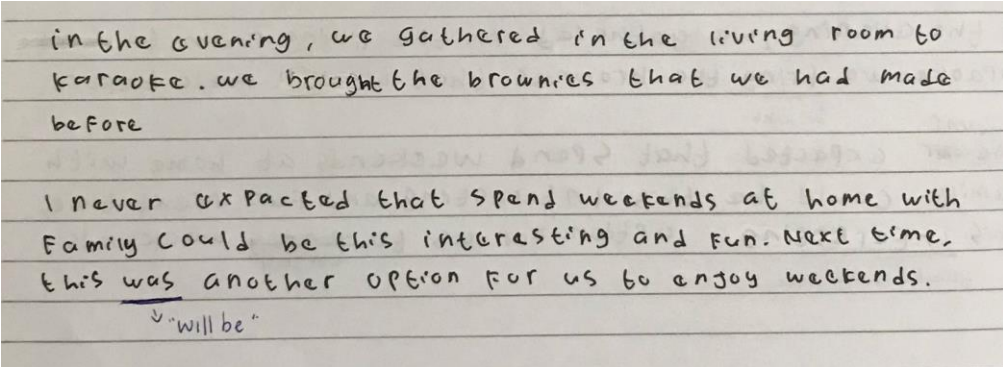


Figure 4.2 Draft 2 Students' Recount Text

Cognitive Engagement

How students cognitively responded to the WCF can be seen in this list of student texts and interviews. Students translated some words and phrases from Indonesian to English using the dictionary they brought with them, usually without paying attention to tense. As a result, the words are often used incorrectly. When the teacher gave indirect correction, although the teacher put a note "word wrong" under the word to indicate that there were some mistakes in word choice, the students did not understand the feedback and still made mistakes on the word in the next revision given by the teacher. In the

interview, it was revealed that students only relied on the dictionary they brought and asked peers without paying attention to the accuracy of making the text both in terms of grammatical and meaning.

"....., it's just me who is low proficient in English especially my English vocabulary is minimal and only rely on the dictionary that is brought" (Boy, interview, July 2023)

"I only correct the wrong part and even then, by relying on asking my friends" (Jery, July 2023)

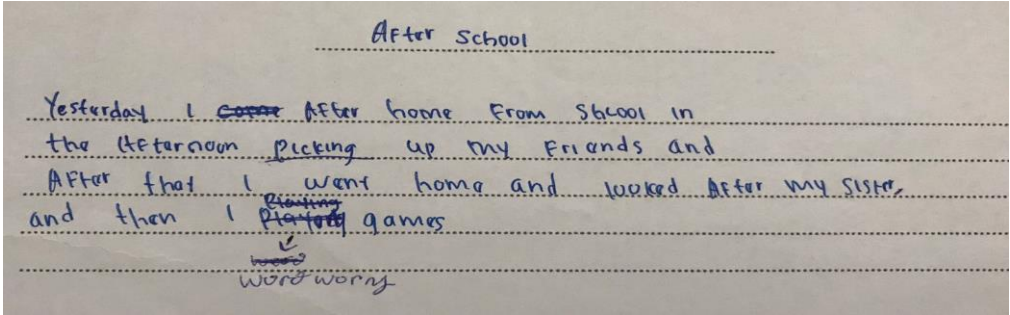


Figure 4.3 Students' Recount Text

It is not surprising that metacognitive and cognitive operations are rarely used in WCF processing and revision generation, given that some students criticize English writing classes negatively. Students who did revise seemed to only technically follow the prompts to get it done.

"I only look at the writing that needs to be corrected, I don't look at the whole thing again, it's too much of a headache for me" (Tom, interview, July 2023)

Students with extensive cognitive engagement in WCF are likely to experience deep learning in WCF situations because current research suggests that extensive cognitive engagement should involve the use of sophisticated, deep, and personalized learning strategies, the pursuit of a deep understanding of deep learning rather than superficial learning, and the use of self-regulatory strategies.

Discussion

This study provides insight into how English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students with lower English proficiency cope with feedback on an emotional, behavioral, and cognitive level, particularly when dealing with teachers' written corrective feedback (WCF). The teachers' choices in providing WCF were generally well-received by the majority of students. During interviews, almost all students expressed positive feelings about the feedback. Although there are students who are less enthusiastic, most expected to receive verbal feedback and made appropriate adjustments to their writing based on the limited WCF. They showed self-awareness about their shortcomings and made efforts to address them,

although some struggled to find a solution. All students agreed with the feedback assessment on grammatical errors, indicating that the teacher was a native speaker who mastered the established grammar rules, which showed their trust in the teacher (Han, 2017).

To ensure students with low English proficiency make accurate and meaningful progress in their work, it's vital to address the challenges they face when revising their texts. These students often struggle due to their limited language skills and unfamiliarity with writing conventions. However, with the right approach, they can certainly overcome these obstacles. This highlights that the students' language proficiency primarily influences how they engage with Written Corrective Feedback (WCF), and the teacher plays a crucial role in shaping their behavior, especially when it comes to unsuccessful revisions. This finding supports Lee's (2008) claim that language proficiency plays an important role in students' comprehension of WCF and that LP students who do not have sufficient language proficiency cannot comprehend the feedback thoroughly. All students, regardless of their language proficiency, were unable to comprehend the vocabulary well due to their understanding of the feedback on word choice errors.

It's also interesting to note that most students' self-editing techniques were limited to reading through their text and making changes they believed were necessary. When asked during interviews why they focused on sentence-level corrections, the students mentioned that they paid more attention to vocabulary and grammar errors because most of the feedback they received was related to these aspects. As Zheng and Yu (2018) pointed out, students tend to use literal Indonesian-English translations in writing and do not pay attention to their appropriateness and correctness; this indicates students' immature mastery of vocabulary and context of use.

CONCLUSION

This case study strongly shows how having low English proficiency can hinder high school students' effective interaction with their teachers' feedback on writing, especially when it comes to writing recount texts in the EFL context. Using a qualitative approach, the study carefully looked at how 30 eleventh-grade students and their English writing teachers responded in terms of affective, behavior, and cognitive to the written feedback given by the teachers. The results leave no doubt that limited English proficiency can lead to an uneven emotional response, which, in turn, has a negative impact on their thinking and actions regarding feedback.

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