

# STUDENTS' ATTITUDES CONCERNING LECTURER'S CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN TEACHING WRITING

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## Abstract

This research aims to explore and describe whether there is an inexpediency of the students' perception against the feedback which can affect the teaching pedagogy in implementing it. In accord to this, this research explores more about the students' attitudes in different levels of proficiency in writing. This research was conducted at IKIP PGRI Pontianak. A qualitative case study approach was employed and the data were taken through close questionnaire, in-depth interview, observation, and document. In analyzing the data, the interactive model of data analysis proposed by Miles and Huberman was used. Based on the synergistic findings demonstrate that: (1) the different levels of proficiency in writing do not affect the attitudes of the students as the informants. Most of the informants (the students) have positive attitudes towards teachers' corrective feedback; (2) the attitudes of the students affect their achievement in writing English. The major recommendations are that lecturers should carefully scrutinize target language features; practice a variety of suitable corrective feedback; and cater for individual students' specific needs.

**Keywords:** students' attitudes, corrective feedback, teaching writing.

## Abstrak

*Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi persepsi mahasiswa terhadap corrective feedback yang dapat mempengaruhi pedagogi pengajaran ketika mengimplementasikannya. Berkenaan dengan ini, penelitian ini mengeksplorasi lebih lanjut tentang sikap mahasiswa di berbagai tingkat kemahiran dalam keterampilan menulis. Penelitian ini dilakukan di IKIP PGRI Pontianak. Pendekatan studi kasus kualitatif digunakan dalam penelitian ini dan data yang diambil melalui kuesioner tertutup, wawancara mendalam, observasi, dan dokumen. Dalam menganalisis data, salah satu model interaktif analisis data yang disarankan oleh Miles dan Huberman yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini. Berdasarkan temuan sinergis temuan menunjukkan bahwa: (1) berbagai tingkat kemahiran dalam menulis tidak mempengaruhi sikap mahasiswa sebagai informan. Sebagian besar informan (mahasiswa) memiliki sikap positif terhadap corrective feedback yang diberikan oleh dosen; (2) sikap mahasiswa mempengaruhi prestasi mahasiswa dalam keterampilan menulis bahasa Inggris. Rekomendasi utama bahwa dosen harus memperhatikan umpan balik korektif sesuai dengan kebutuhan mahasiswa.*

**Kata Kunci:** sikap mahasiswa, corrective feedback, pengajaran menulis.

## **INTRODUCTION**

The study of English occupies an important role in our educational curriculum. It covers four language skills that must be mastered if someone wants to be successful in English, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. As one of language skills, writing has always occupied a place in most English language course. In terms of students' needs, writing occupies an equal role with the other language skill. And every people communicate with spoken language and writing language. Written language is much used in the publication such as book, newspaper, magazine and literary work. It shows how important mastering writing skill is. For that reason, students should master writing skill. In a writing classroom, it is quite often that students make occasional errors on some language aspects, particularly on grammar, lexis, and elaborating the ideas. In response to this matter, teacher occasionally provides corrective feedback prior to the students' error in writing. The underlying assumption for giving corrective feedback is that it supposes to help students notice their errors and, subsequently, to produce the correct forms.

Moreover, the use of corrective feedback in writing is one of the controversial issues being discussed by among teachers. In one hand, it is widely asserted that corrective feedback plays important roles as a negotiated endeavor employed by teachers to assist students in order that they can write better and it can trigger their retention on particular area of language they learn. In accord to this, teacher tends to consider that it has been necessarily employing corrective feedback to improve the quality of student's writing, whether focusing on grammar, lexis, content or organization.

Additionally, Truscott (1996) embarks a debate over the effectiveness of error correction. He strongly argued that feedback is actually ineffective and even harmful for the students' writing. in his research, Richmond (1984) proves that teacher's feedback are able to cause misunderstandings which eventually trigger errors to take place. Hyland and Hyland (2001) show that the mitigation strategies applied in teacher's feedback create an indirectness which often causes misunderstandings for the students while trying to comprehend them. These

results of research open up an argument that feedback given to the students are able to cause problems to improve the students' writing. Moreover, misunderstanding of the correctives feedback given is one of the factors that cause rewritten errors to appear.

Attitude is defined by Ajzen and Fishbein (1975) as the general feeling (ranging from positive and negative) or evaluation (good or bad) that a person has towards self, other people, objects and events. Since there are many research conducted about the effectiveness of feedback in writing, this research must first address the issue of students' towards it because the success or the failure of an improvement in writing depends largely on attitudes of the students towards feedback which is given. It can be concluded that the effectiveness in students' attitudes towards the feedback given to them and the teacher's ability to perceive his or her students' needs and preferences. When the teacher uses the suitable types of teacher feedback to his or her learners, it is hoped that a satisfactory result in understanding the students' attitudes towards feedback to reduce rewritten errors can be obtained.

## **METHOD**

The research was carried out to the 5th semester students of IKIP PGRI Pontianak in academic year 2015/2016 since September until December 2015 The researcher applied descriptive case studies since the researcher conducted the research in order to present detailed information about a particular phenomenon (Merriam, 1998: 34).

The sources of the data of this case study are informants, events, and documents. The respondents of this study are the students taught by the teachers. Purposive sampling is applied for selecting the informants. Purposive sampling is based on the assumption that the investigator wants to discover, understand and gain insight and therefore must select a sample from which the most can be learned. The criteria establish for purposeful sampling directly reflect the purpose

of the study and guide in the identification of information-rich cases (Merriam, 1998: 61). In this research, the informant taken were considered from the students having high and low proficiency of writing. The two characteristics of students are taken in order to reveal whether there were different attitudes towards feedback given from the students with high and low proficiency of writing. Furthermore, the students of the fifth semester were taken based on the consideration that they had understanding towards feedback and the type of corrective feedback.

To ensure the trustworthiness of this study, the researcher decided on using triangulation of method as a technique to endure that an account was rich, robust, comprehensive and well-developed. It was used in order to check out the consistency of findings generated by different data collection methods. The multiple techniques that were applied are questionnaire, interview, observation, and document. Moreover, member checking was used in order to give more guarantee of trustworthiness on this research. Guba and Lincoln (1985: 314) explain that member checking is whereby the data, analytic categories, interpretations, and conclusion are tested with members of those stake holding groups from whom the data were originally collected, is the most crucial technique for establishing credibility. In this research, four kind of techniques of collecting data the data are used by the researcher. They are observation, interview, questionnaire, and also documentation. Furthermore, the data collected was analyzed based on Miles and Huberman Model. Miles and Huberman (1984) elaborate the activities in analyzing qualitative data.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

The findings based on the students' attitudes towards teachers' corrective feedback showed that all of them, both different levels of proficiency, agreed and strongly agreed that feedback was important to be given in writing class. Furthermore, there were some different reasons mentioned by informants in terms of importance of feedback. Most of them had similar belief of it. The most common reason mentioned by them was about the use of feedback as a means to recognize their weaknesses in writing. They realized that their writing was far

from perfection so that given feedback could help them to learn. In addition to that, the given feedback could also help to revise their work. They also stated that feedback helped them to minimize to do same errors on the next writing.

However, quite different reason was explained by S<sup>2</sup> who stated that someone who had higher linguistic competence was the reason mentioned by him. He thought that corrective feedback would be more useful if it was given by the teacher. Considering his belief, feedback was not only used as means to recognize their weaknesses but also as a way to measure the teacher's mastery of material. Similarly, another reason was mentioned by S<sup>5</sup> who stated that the feedback was used to improve her score in writing. She believed that by revising her works, it could give an improvement of her score since she realized that her ability in writing was low. The finding showed that there was a student which was more interested to his grade when revising.

The findings above are supported by the research conducted by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) who discover that students consider the teachers' feedback as important since it can be used to see their errors and it is the besy way to learn. By recognizing the weaknesses, it can minimize them to repeat their errors. As it is mentioned by Cole and Chan (1994: 224) they state that students seeks help from teachers because they have genuine need for assistance. Oral feedback also needs to be given to the students to extend their ability in writing. Likewise, it could be seen that the assumptions of informants were quite different in some ways. There are two informants indicating as high proficiency and one informant having low proficiency of writing who agreed that the corrective feedback given by the teacher was not effective. They confessed that even the feedback sometimes helped them to revise their works. The way of the teacher in giving feedback was not effective to be implemented. They argued that it was caused by the large number of the students in writing class which resulted on the unbalancing frequency of doing consultation individually. Moreover, the corrective feedback was often not easy to be understood.

On the contrary, most of the informants believed that feedback was effective to be implemented. They said that the feedback helped them when

revising their work. It could avoid them to make the same errors in writing. Additionally, one of them argued that it could give her a chance to improve her writing ability by considering the corrective feedback. It was also agreed that it could be effective to be implemented, because they did not need to confuse where she has to start learning and revising their work. Moreover, most of them confessed that the implementation of feedback was effective since it showed the errors that they made directly.

Furthermore, most of the informants agreed that feedback could improve writing skill and their writing achievement. Five informants indicating as high proficiency of writing and three informants indicating as low proficiency of writing. It could be seen that most of the informants had positive attitudes on their expectation of having corrective feedback on their works. The personal discussion was considered by them to be able to overcome the problems in dealing with the revising their works. The personal discussion was considered by them to be able to overcome the problems when revising their works. They could see their improvement from the comparison between errors they made in the given first assignments and the ones they made in the latest assignments.

On the other hand, the rest of the informants stated that although feedback could improve their writing achievement, but it could not improve their writing skill significantly. It was caused by the given feedback which tended to be uneasy to understand. Additionally, it was hard for them to improve their writing skill since most of the given feedback only concerned on the grammatical structure. In addition to that, the existence of implicit feedback which was often given to their works was considered to be another problem for them when revising. During the observation and interview, it discovered that at the very first class meeting the teacher did not make an agreement towards the giving of implicit feedback through symbol.

The findings showed that most of the informants had dissatisfaction towards the implementation of corrective feedback, five informants indicating as high proficiency and two indicating as low proficiency of writing. They mentioned that the limitation of the time to do a consultation individually was

being their problems. They stated that this activity just created a mess and it disturbed their concentration to keep focus. Oral feedback was considered to be given more often since it could decrease the noisiness during the class activity. They confessed that this activity would be better if it was conducted out of the class. Although the teacher gave them chance to ask out of the class, but it was difficult to meet the unoccupied time of the teachers with them.

Additionally, some hints applied by the teachers was helpful to recognize their weaknesses, but it was difficult how to improve it since there were no explanation of it. Regarding these problems, it showed that the noisiness and the implicitness of written corrective feedback were being the problems faced by them. It was indeed could be serious problems since it could affect the students' motivation to follow the lesson. This finding is supported by Treglia (2008) who states that the symbol also is served as a prompt to think through for themselves the process of checking their works instead of passively seeing the correct forms without doing anything to process them mentally.

On the other hand, the rest of informants satisfied and really satisfied of it, three informants classified as high proficiency and one classified as low proficiency level of writing. One of the informants explained that the feedback was very helpful to identify her errors and she had a lot of chance to ask everything during the class. Another informant also argued that even the teacher only gave marks on her work, but it could trigger her to learn more to improve her critical thinking.

Considering this, the implicit feedback through symbol could improve her curiosity and her engagement on learning process. In addition to that, another informant said that it could let him focus on what he should learn. The symbol given to their works had been their consideration which parts they should be revised. Moreover, another informant confessed that the personal discussion applied gave beneficial for him. He pointed out that he did not need to be reluctant to ask since the teacher gave them a chance to do it at the thirty minutes-end of the lesson.

The next findings show that most of the informants feel happy if they know that their works are being corrected. They mentioned that it helps them to learn and to improve their writing achievement. Moreover, the amount of written corrective feedback they got does not affect their feeling. They confessed that it had become their responsibility as a student to revise it. On the other hands, the rest of the informants had negative feeling about it. They mentioned that their feeling depends much on the amount of the corrective feedback given by the teacher. Moreover, they feel like their works being judged that it is wrong. It was stated that the corrective feedback burdened them much, because they have to work twice in order to revise it.

This finding is contradictory with the Nugrahenny's finding (2007) who explores that most of the informants do not feel excited about teachers' corrective feedback. This finding can be difference since the experience of the informants during the teaching and learning activity is also different. Furthermore, it can be deduced that the different way of the teachers when implementing corrective feedback can affect the students' feeling towards it. Furthermore, there were two informants indicating as high proficiency level of writing can engage the activity well. They admitted that they would never let a single chance to consult their works with the teacher. Additionally, one of them also said that if she did not get the answer, it could make her be anxious to find the answer. The observation also proven that both of the two informants tended to be active and could engage with the learning process very well. They would prefer to sit in front of the row in order to ease them to keep in touch with the teacher.

On the contrary, one informant indicating as low proficiency level of writing cannot engage the activity well. He admitted that he was shy to ask about his works. It seemed that his friends would tease him when he asked or discussed his works to the teacher. It was also proven by the observation that he tended to be passive and chose to sit at the back row and tended not to follow the lesson well. During the interview, it was known that he did that because he felt so bored with the class activity. Besides, the rest of them indicating as both high and low proficiency level of writing infrequently engage with the classroom activity. They



explained that even they infrequently asked the teacher, they still kept their questions in mind and asked it later. In fact, during the observation, it was proven by their behavior that they tended to be more active to ask when they were given a chance to ask out of the class. Yet, they tended to listen to the teacher's explanation.

From the results above, it can be concluded that the attitudes of the students can give impact on their behavior during the learning class. They tend to act as what they believe, feel, and what motivate them. It is also supported by Mouly (1968: 452) who also states that attitudes can trigger behavior in such a fundamental way that it is necessary to understand attitudes if we are to understand behavior, especially that they tend to be become generalized into an overall outlook permeating all aspects of life.

Likewise, according to the two teachers, corrective feedback is important to be given in writing class. They stated that corrective feedback was important to be implemented as a means of learning process. It was also mentioned that it could be used by them as a tool to recognize their weaknesses in writing. From corrective feedback, students are expected to learn from their experience when making errors so that it can minimize the occurrence of repeating errors. In addition to that, it is also assumed by one of the teachers that the students having good ability in writing do not often need to be assisted by the corrective feedback since they can do self-correction.

It is in line with the research finding conducted by Nugrahenny (2007) who states that students having low proficiency of writing will be embarrassed when they know that their works are being corrected by peer, so that the corrective feedback provided by the teacher is important. On the other hand, the students having not good ability in writing will be given feedback more. It is supported by Cole and Chan (1994: 224) who state that competent students are usually sure of their abilities and do not seek a teacher's help often while they are completing assigned tasks. On the other hand, students with learning problems are often highly dependent on the teacher and will seek feedback whenever they are in doubt.

What is more, both of the teachers agreed that corrective feedback was effective to be applied in writing class. They stated that it was due to the rule of the feedback which could be used to assist them in producing a good writing. Additionally, one of them also confessed that it could be used as a tool to measure their progress in writing. In accord to this, the role of the teacher to assist the learner is playing the crucial role. It is due to the statement which explains that feedback is not only given just to keep individuals informed about their knowledge, but also how to make the individuals think to give better quality responses (Cole and Chan, 1994: 215). The explanation above is being the base of the two teachers why they need to assist the students in learning writing.

During the research, it was also found that both of the teachers felt satisfied with the way they applied corrective feedback on writing class. During the implementation of giving feedback, the personal consultation is implemented by both of the teachers to help students to achieve learning goals. They stated that it was applied so that all of the students are having a chance to consult their works personally. However, even correctives are typically provided in both group and individual situations, but the one-to-one basis discussion with the students should not be given in teaching and learning activities (Cole and Chan, 1994: 229). It was also added by most of the informants who disagree with this kind of activity if it was done during the learning activity. The teacher actually has arranged the class on the small group basis in order to arrange corrective instruction for those in need of it, but the problems arise when the students still do not pay attention, and some of them seem to get confuse with the general explanations.

The teacher often gives a symbolic feedback without giving explicit explanations on the students' works. They believe that it can save their time and it can trigger the students to think through themselves. This finding is in line with the research conducted by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) who find that teachers consider the students autonomy to be important and discover that the explanation on students' works are too time consuming. It can be stated from the findings above that even the explicit feedback is considered to be more effective, but the

needs of the learning to create a student to have self-correction is decreasing. This case indeed can affect their independency as a student.

Couple with this finding is supported by Cole and Chan (1994: 224) who state that the aim of the learning where the activities occurred should encourage students to become independent learners and not be overly dependent on teacher assistance (Cole and Chan, 1994: 224). In order to solve this problem, Cole and Chan (1994: 229) suggests that the corrective instruction during the class activities can provide through peer tutoring. In this case peers help one another to achieve learning goals. A peer acts the role of the teacher and the student being helped is given assistance. Generally, the peer provides feedback and a teacher is less involved in interacting with students. Consequently, the result of the implementation of feedback given by the teacher can be seen where a half of the students feel the dissatisfaction of the one-to-one discussion in writing activities.

Considering the findings of the research, it can be seen that the implementation of feedback given in writing class do not meet students' needs in some matter of things. It refers to the way of the teacher when giving the personal discussion during the class activity. The belief of both of the teachers to conduct this strategy is that feedback should reach all the students in the class. How to assist all students' learning becomes their main purpose to conduct this activity. However, what students' need in giving feedback is not appropriate with the implementation of the teachers when giving feedback. In addition to that, the teachers often give more implicit written feedback instead of giving explicit feedback. They believe that how to encourage students to become independent students is more important to achieve. The use of symbol feedback in students writing theoretically can trigger students' curiosity of the errors they make (Treglia, 2008).

On the other hands, students do like to do personal discussion with the teacher if it is done out of the class activity. The one-to-one discussion can give more harm than benefit for students. It is also mentioned by Cole and Chan (1994: 229) where giving personal discussion cannot help the students to achieve learning objectives. The personal discussion conducted during the classroom

activity will create a noise which can affect the students' concentration in the class. The students believe that the results will be different if it is implemented out of the class.

In addition to that, students need more explicit feedback to be given more often instead of giving implicit feedback. The explicit feedback can help them to revise their works since it explains how to revise it. Moreover, it assumes that the explicit feedback given by the teacher can decrease the number of students who wants to do personal discussion with the teacher. The explicit feedback will tell students exactly which aspects of their responses are correct and which are incorrect. As a result, if the teachers give more implicit feedback to the students, the feedback will not be informative and uneasy to understand.

Analyzing the data collected from the teachers and the observation, it has been explained that the students' level proficiency of writing do not significantly affect their attitudes towards the feedback given by the teacher in writing class. Though the students having good writing proficiency tend to be indicated as positive attitudes, but there are some students indicated as trends to positive attitudes towards the corrective feedback. The result of interview with the teacher reveals that some of the students having not-so-good writing proficiency are more engaging actively in the learning activities. On the other hands, the students having trends to negative attitudes tend to be passive during the learning activity. The interview with the student discovers that they do not like the way of the teacher in giving feedback in writing class.

Considering the discoveries above, it is undeniable that the students' behavioral engagement is playing a role in determining the students' attitudes on a certain object in learning activity. As stated by Aiken (1997: 251) that the three aspects of cognitive, affective, and performance (behavioral or action) is necessary to measure the general attitudes of someone to certain object. From this aspect, the teacher can determine what aspect of the students that they are not able to respond well. In addition to that, it can be seen that the students' attitudes can affect their achievement in writing. Most of the students having not-so-good proficiency and trends to negative attitudes have low score in writing. It contrasts

to the students indicated as not-so-good level but having trends to positive attitudes. Those students tend to have higher score on the second test than those with trends to negative attitudes. It is also strengthened by the statement of the teacher who said that those students having positive and trends to positive attitudes are more actively engaging in the teaching and learning activity to reach their learning goal.

This finding is in line with the research conducted by Singh (2002) in Michelli (2013: 9) which reveals that academic engaging in someone positive attitudes gives effect on the students' learning achievement. The students having positive attitudes tend to be more motivated and confidence in themselves. Moreover, it positively affects the students' achievement with two existing in the cycle so that one increases the other increases (Ellis in Michelli, 2013: 10). However, the researcher realizes that this study still has some weaknesses during the completion of this research. It is due to the very limited source of data gained by the researcher. The limitation source of data gained by the researcher gives effect on the findings which cannot be concluded in general way.

In addition to that, the findings of the research are still limited to the students' and teachers' attitudes towards the corrective feedback given in writing class without revealing in depth whether there is another factor out of the school which possibly affects the students' attitude in learning writing. Moreover, the findings still cannot discover the effectiveness of using certain corrective feedback in writing class. Despite the weaknesses above, the researcher believe that the conclusions made in this research are credible and reflect the students' and teachers' attitudes towards teachers' corrective feedback in teaching writing of English since the data gained from the participants are factual. Furthermore, by considering the weaknesses of the research, therefore, further studies need to be conducted in order to fill the gap of this research.

## **CONCLUSION**

The first, this study primarily aims to capture the attitudes of students in different levels of writing proficiency towards teachers' corrective feedback in

teaching writing. The findings result that the different levels of students' proficiency in writing do not significantly affect the students' attitudes towards corrective feedback given by the teacher. The data shows that students indicated as having high proficiency level get lower score of attitudes than those having not-so-good proficiency level of writing. It is caused by some factors, such as their feeling when accepting corrective feedback and their dissatisfaction with the implementation of the corrective feedback which affects the students' engagement in writing class activity. Nevertheless, the data shows that most of the informants are indicated as trends to positive attitudes, two of them indicated as positive attitudes, and three of them indicated as trends to negative attitude.

The second, the results of the data show that both of the teachers have positive attitudes towards the corrective feedback in teaching writing. They believe that corrective feedback is important to be applied in order to help students to achieve the learning goals. It is due to the aims of the teachers' corrective feedback which is used to make individuals to think about giving better quality responses. In addition to that, the feedback given is aimed to trigger students' curiosity so that it leads them to be engaged actively during the learning process. In this regard, they explain that the feedback given should encourage the students to become independent learner and not be overly dependent on teacher assistance. The third, it shows that the implementation of corrective feedback given by the teachers does not match with the needs of the informants. Both of the teachers often apply one-to-one discussion with the students. It is hoped by them that this strategy will assist all of the students' works in the class. Moreover, the use of symbol is more often used by the teacher instead of explicit feedback to encourage their curiosity. In fact, almost a half of the students do not satisfy with the way of the teacher when applying this kind of feedback. The need of getting more direct feedback is believed by the informants to be more effective to be given instead of having implicit feedback on their writings. Finally, it can be seen that the students' attitudes towards corrective feedback significantly affect the students writing achievement. It can be seen from the data that the students having trends to positive and positive attitude have higher mean of score rather

than those indicated as trends to negative attitudes. It discovers that academic engaging in someone positive attitudes gives effect on the students' learning achievement. The students having positive attitudes tend to be more motivated and confidence in themselves. Moreover, it positively affects the students' achievement.

Regarding with the conclusion of the research, it shows that the implementation of indirect feedback can be ineffective to be implemented if it is not be applied properly. However, the use of indirect feedback more often instead of giving direct explanation on the students' works can create misunderstanding which affect the students' motivation and eagerness. Moreover, the personal discussion done by the teacher also gives harmful instead of beneficial for the students. The impact of this strategy during the class activity creates problem for the students to keep their attention to the class. The students indicated as negative attitudes tend to neglect the teacher. Moreover, they become more passive during the class activity.

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