

THE EFFECTS OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT FEEDBACK ON THE STUDENTS' WRITING

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ABSTRACT

Written teacher's feedback is highly required to improve students' writings. This study sought to find out whether (i) direct feedback can significantly improve students' writing and (ii) indirect feedback can significantly improve students' writing. Employing a quasi-experimental design, the research involved 40 of 8th grade students at SMPN 1 Gantarangkeke in 2017/2018 academic years. The participants were divided into two classes; experimental class A and experimental class B. Each class consisted of 20 students. The researcher provided the two experimental classes with different treatments; direct feedback for the experimental class A and indirect for the experimental class B. The research data were the students' writings in the pre-test and post-test. The result of the study reveal that overall, direct feedback is more significant in improving student's writing; the class provided with direct feedback committed slightly fewer errors than that provided with indirect. Thus, it can be inferred that direct corrective feedback has a more significant impact on the students' writing improvement, even though the improvement was not too significant.

Keywords: Writing, direct feedback, indirect feedback

INTRODUCTION

In learning a foreign language, making error is an indispensable part of learning process. Finely tuned and pertinent feedback is an important tool for teachers to prevent their learners' errors from getting fossilized and help them progress along their inter-language continuum. In EFL situation, responding to learners' writing production is very important. Comments create the motive for doing something different in the next draft; thoughtful comments create the motive revising. Without comments from their teachers or from their peers, students writing will revise in a consistently narrow and predictable way. Furthermore, the teachers comment on students' writing help the students to evaluate what they have written and develop control over their writing. Feedback can be defined as writing extensive comments on students' texts to provide a reader response to students' efforts and at the same time helping them improve and learn as

writers. The teacher provides feedback to enable students to read and understand the problems and use it to improve future writing.

Feedback in general refers to that specific information teachers provide to their students related to the task or learning process. The purpose is to fill in the gap between what the student understands at the moment and what is aimed to be finally understood (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Furthermore a distinction has to be made between *direct* and *indirect* feedback, as the different effects of these two types of feedback is what is aimed to be investigated. One easily understood definition of these two is: “While indirect corrective feedback only consists of an indication of an error (i.e. by underlining the error or providing an error code), direct error correction identifies both the error and the target form” (Van Beuningen, 2008, p. 282).

The researcher has realized that many students do not appreciate the process of feedback and do not care about the feedback. The researcher also has experienced how some teachers use feedback when the work is already finished. This leaves no time for revisions in order for the students to develop their English languages skills. Due to these experiences with feedback, the researcher finds it interesting to study teacher’s usage of written feedback. Furthermore, it is interesting to study whether or not the direct and indirect feedback effectively improve the students’ writings.

The following are two research questions formulated based on the above description:

1. Does the direct feedback significantly improve the students’ writing?
2. Does the indirect feedback significantly improve the students’ writing?

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Writing is one of the language skills it is used to express ideas in written form. It is also a way that people use to convey their idea and intent in order to be able to communicate with others. Writing is a complex process that requires knowledge of what will be written and how to express the idea into a text. It cannot be done at one action, but it needs to be practiced in order to master it. As Harmer (1992), described that writing is a productive skill, which involves thought and emotion. Writing skill is usually claimed as a difficult skill to be taught because its complexity. As Heaton(1988:135), stated that teaching writing requires mastery not only of grammatical and rhetorical devised but also conceptual and judgmental elements. In addition, he classified the components of writing into five areas: content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanic.

Feedback function is important for student achievement. It gives description and avoids evaluation or judging on student’s work. For example, teacher can identify student’s strengths and weakness and also express the task of students. The target of feedback valence indicates that feedback maybe positive comments or negative comment. Positive comment, teachers praise to their students on their good work. While negative comment is the teacher will find out the error and suggest where improvement is needed and then give enough amount of information so that the students will get the idea how they complete the work successfully. Of course, feedback must be clear and understandable to the students, called clarify of feedback. Teacher should use those vocabularies and concepts which are more understandable to the students. UK. Essay (2013) stated some major types of feedback: positive feedback & negative feedback, direct feedback & indirect feedback, marginal feedback & end feedback.

Written feedback is complementary to the evaluative process. Its main role in the assessment process is to facilitate student learning. There are two primary ways that written feedback helps to facilitate student learning:

- Written feedback provides concrete explanations for grades received. The student has an opportunity to reflect on and understand the specific reasons for their current level of achievement.
- Written feedback provides a bridge from current performance to future performance by allowing students to understand how they are performing now, and how they can improve performance on their next assessment, whether in the same course or a different course. They can use the feedback to reflect on their current work, examine how constructive feedback might have changed or improved the current work, and then use this feedback in the future. As Bijami M, *et al.* (2016), stated that teacher written feedback on the students' writing indicates the problems and provides a good suggestion for improvement of future writing task.

Study about the impact and efficacy of written teacher response to students writing has been investigated by Alqurashi (2015), about perspective of Saudi EFL learners toward teacher response in writing courses found that students were willing to read their essays again after the teacher commented on them which could indicate that they attached a great value to their teacher's written comments to facilitate developing the necessary skills of writing in a foreign language. Moreover, most of the surveyed students asserted that they thought carefully about teacher's comments and corrections, which is an indication that those students were interested in learning from their teacher response to help them gain confidence in themselves as good writers. The fact that participating students mentioned that they paid attention to teacher response on both surface-level errors and meaning-level errors implies that they found their teacher response effective in helping them produce better writing with fewer mistakes. The participants mentioning that all types of teacher response are important to them and may be considered a sign of positive attitudes toward such responses on their writing and their role developing the necessary skills to improve their writing proficiencies.

Beuningen (2008), carried out an experimental study investigating the long-term effects of direct and indirect feedback on second language learners (SL) of Dutch. The results of this study showed that student's accuracy in writing can be effectively improved by corrective feedback. The study showed short-term effects for both the direct and indirect feedback groups. Significant long-term effects on the other hand, were only found for the direct feedback group measured on a completely new writing task. All three groups with an opportunity to revise their texts produced fewer errors in their revised texts than in the original production. As they all showed improvement in their revisions but only the direct and indirect feedback group showed significant accuracy effects on the new writing.

Direct feedback is teacher's explicit written corrections in response to students' errors. With direct feedback, students are expected merely to transcribe the teachers' suggested corrections into their texts. Direct feedback can be termed as correcting all the mistakes committed by the students where the teachers underlined all the errors in spelling, structure, grammar etc. and directly wrote the correct answers above the underlined words. Direct feedback has the advantage that it provides learners with explicit guidance about how to correct their errors. This is clearly desirable if learners do not know what the correct form is (i.e. are not capable of self-correction the error). Ferris and Roberts, (2001) suggest direct feedback is probably better than indirect feedback with student writers of low levels of proficiency. However

a disadvantage is that it requires minimal processing on the part of the learner and thus, although it might help them to produce the correct form when they revise their writing, it may not contribute into long-term learning.

Indirect feedback can be done by underlining the errors or using cursors to show omissions in the student's text or by placing a cross in the margin next to line containing the error. Beneficial as indirect feedback to students, for mistakes that are too complicated, direct feedback proves better than indirect one because it saves students from discouragement when they could not solve the problems on their own.

Jamalinesari et.al. (2015), has investigated the effectiveness and efficacy of teacher's direct vs. indirect feedback on students' composition writings in an EFL context. Two classes (each class 10 students) of female intermediate students in a private English language learning institute were given writing assignments for ten class sessions. The students in every class provided with either direct or indirect feedback. The results were recorded and later analyzed. The data revealed that the class with indirect feedback improved better compared to the class with direct feedback. Moreover, the study has insights and implications for teachers.

Revising written work is not a simple task: the very presence of an extant text may constrain the options available to a writer, especially a relatively unskilled one. Not only must writers have the ability to evaluate the text, but they also need the skills and knowledge to make the necessary changes; those who lack this may even resort to simply cutting sections they have identified as problematic. Thus, identifying and remedying a problem are two distinct steps in the process. To revise is also to make a text more coherent, more descriptive, less repetitive, or clearer.

Learners, however, do not necessarily share this view, with many conceiving of revision as mainly an editing task. Finally, revision is not a one-size-fits-all activity. Writers who plan more carefully and in greater detail may have less need to revise than those who adopt a stream-of-consciousness approach to text generation (Casanave, 2004). Certainly when considering only between-draft revision, amount is not the crucial factor: some papers will require less work than others; moreover, it is far from true that all revisions lead to better writing.

METHODS

The method that the researcher applied in this research was quasi-experimental design. It was aimed to investigate the effects of written feedback on students' writing with pre-test and post-tests. The location of this research was at Eighth Year Student of SMP Negeri 1 Gantarangkeke.

This study involved two classes of participants. The two classes then divided into experimental class A and experimental class B. Experimental class A, consists of 20 students that received a direct feedback while experimental class B that also consists of 20 students received indirect feedback from the researcher. There were two variables in this research, namely independent variable and dependent variable. The independent variables were direct and indirect feedback to improve students' writing while dependent variable was the students' writing ability. The procedure of collecting data consists of three steps:

1. Pre-test

In this step, the students wrote a recount text based on the title given by the researcher. It was given to see the students' prior knowledge of writing. The experimental class A was given direct feedback and experimental class B was given indirect feedback.

2. Treatment

The treatment was conducted in 6 meetings. Each meeting 80 minutes based on the English class time, including give the students' explanation and instruction about the class activities in both experimental classes. The experimental class A received the treatment by using direct feedback while the experimental class B received treatment by using indirect feedback.

3. Post test

After giving the treatment, the post test was conducted in order to know the improvement of the students' writing by using direct and indirect feedback.

In collecting the data, the researcher used writing test for the pre-test and post-test. The students were required to write recount text about their personal experience in different topics. Then the researcher analyzed by using descriptive statistic. It consisted of the sum number, mean, standard deviation number, and frequencies table. The data was also concluded the t-test value of mean score between post-test of both groups. The calculation used SPSS (*Statistical Package for Social Science*) program version 25.

FINDINGS

Data is collected from two essay writing tests. The first one is in the form of pre-test and the second one is in the form of posttest. The following table asserts the students' writing score of all writing components gained by the students in experimental group A and experimental group B on pre-test and post-test.

1) The result of students' writing score of all writing components in pre-test

The following table is the result of pre-test for both experimental group A and experimental group B.

Table 1. The Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Writing Score of all Components in Experimental Group A and Experimental Group B in Pre-test

Classification	Score	Experimental group A		Experimental group B	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent to very good	100 – 84	0	0	1	5
Good to Average	83 – 68	12	60	10	50
Fair to Poor	67 – 51	8	40	9	45
Very Poor	50 – 34	0	0	0	0
Total		20	100	20	100

Based on the table 1, it found that before having treatment, in experimental group A there was no student got score categorized as excellent to very good. 12 (60 %) students in good to average classification, 8 (40 %) got score categorized as fair to poor and there was not student in very poor category. In experimental group B, there was 1 (5 %) student had scored excellent to very good classification. In good to average category were 10 (50 %), the student got score

categorized as fair to poor were 9 (45%) and none of the students were in very poor classification.

2) The result of students' writing score of all writing components in post-test

The following table presents the result of post-test for both experimental group A and experimental group B.

Table 2. The Frequency and Percentage of the Students' Writing Score of all Components in Experimental Group A and Experimental Group B in Post-test

Classification	Score	Experimental group A		Experimental group B	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent to very good	100 – 84	6	30	3	15
Good to Average	83 – 68	6	30	9	45
Fair to Poor	67 – 51	8	40	8	40
Very Poor	50 – 34	0	0	0	0
Total		20	100	20	100

The table 2 above maintains that the students in experimental group A there were 6 (30 %) categorized as excellent to very good classification, also 6 (30 %) students in good to average category, 8 (40 %) were in fair to poor classification and no one of the student categorized as very poor.

In the post-test of experimental group B, the students gained scores as excellent to very good were 3 (15 %), the students had scores categorized as good to average were 9 (45 %), 8 (40 %) students in fair to poor category and none of the students obtained scores as very poor classification.

The difference in mean score and standard deviation of students' improvement in pre-test and post-test for experimental group A and experimental group B are presented in the following table.

Table 3. The Mean Score and Standard Deviation of Students' Writing Achievement in Pre-test and Post-test

	Group	Mean	Standard Deviation
Pre-test	Experimental Group A	69.35	7.177
	Experimental Group B	68.85	8.406
Post-test	Experimental Group A	74.40	9.864
	Experimental Group B	71.90	9.130

The table 3 above describes the mean score and standard deviation of both experimental group A and experimental group B in the pre-test and post-test. The mean score of experimental group A in the pre-test was 69.35 with standard deviation 7.177, while the mean score of

experimental group B was 68.85 with standard deviation 8.406. The result of data analysis from the table above confirms that the mean score of both groups was almost before having the treatment. Based on the scoring classification of writing those scores were in good to average classification.

The mean score of the students' post-test of experimental group A after the treatment was 74.40 with standard deviation was 9.864 and classified in good to average category. Furthermore, the mean score of the students' post-test for experimental group B was 71.90 with standard deviation 9.130 and categorized as good to average classification. The table above also shows that the mean score of experimental group A is higher than experimental group B ($74.40 > 71.90$).

The result above gave information that the students in experimental class A achieve better progress than students in experimental class B. It proved that the treatment by using direct feedback gave improvement on the students' writing skill even though it was not too significant.

DISCUSSION

Relating to the findings on students' writing improvement in the previous section maintained that after the treatment the result of post-test for both experimental class A and experimental class B shows an improvement on the students' writing, even though there was not too significant different. The pre-test of writing was administered to make sure that the participants' writing ability at the beginning of the study in both groups was the same. The students were asked to write narrative essay based on the title given by the researcher. Then, the treatment period began and was continued for 6 sessions. The learners attended the class two meetings a week. Each session lasted for 80 minutes in both groups. Two different treatments were included in this study; direct corrective feedback for experimental class A and indirect corrective feedback for experimental class B.

Direct feedback provided some form of correction or structure or the error made in writing and usually involved the crossing out of unnecessary word/phrase. In direct feedback, the researcher omitted any wrong addition from students' original texts. The researcher rewrite a word, phrase or a sentence, providing the correct spelling. Also added any missing items on students' original texts (e.g. prefix, suffix, article, preposition, word, etc)

Indirect feedback, the researcher only underlined, circled or highlighted errors on students' original texts, indicating the location of the errors without correcting them. So the students understood that there was a problem that should be fixed. In this case, the researcher asked the students to study their errors and correct them. Using indirect feedback for the students who did not know how to correct their writing or had low ability in grammar could not finish their writing well. Otherwise, for the students who were given direct feedback, they could correct their writing as the researcher helped them correct their writing.

After applying types of corrective feedback, the researcher had assumption that this strategy was one way to assist the students to practice and improve their writing skill. Here some advantages of this strategy:

- a. Facilitated the development of self-assessment in learning.
- b. Encouraged teacher and peer dialogue around learning.
- c. Helped clarify what good performance is (goals, criteria, and expected standards).
- d. Provided opportunities to close the gap between current and desired performance.
- e. Delivered high quality information to students about their learning.

- f. Encouraged positive motivational beliefs and self-esteem.
- g. Provided information to teacher that can be used to help shape the teaching.

The information of teaching using direct and indirect feedback could be seen from the difference percentage of the students' writing ability in experimental class A and experimental class B. The mean score gained by experimental class A has improved from 69.35 in pre-test to 74.40 in post-test. While the mean score of experimental group B in pre-test was 68.85 becoming 71.90 in post-test. The data showed that both experimental group A and experimental group B had an improvement after having corrective feedback on students' writing. The post-test result shows that the experimental group A got higher mean score than experimental group B ($74.63 > 71.90$). These figures claims that students in experimental group A who had direct feedback performed better than the students in experimental group B who had indirect feedback. But the result of *p value* of the posttest shows score 0.411 which is higher than 0.05 ($0.411 > 0.05$). Therefore, from this score the researcher concludes that the H_0 hypothesis is accepted and H_1 hypothesis is rejected. In other words, there is no significant improvement on the students' writing through direct feedback and indirect feedback.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above the researcher concludes that in teaching writing and giving feedback, whether in direct feedback or indirect feedback, the students can improve their writing even though there was not too significant effect. The reason can be referred to lack of enough time since the participants got the instruction of corrective feedback in just three weeks (six meetings). Therefore, there is a need to do this research in a longer run of time i.e. three months to six months. In this case, the findings have more reliability and the researcher can be sure that the result of treatment is indeed related to the error correction instructions which were given to participants. The use of corrective feedback improved the students' writing ability in Eighth Grade at SMPN 1 Gantarangkeke. It proved by the score of experimental class A in pre-test to post-test (69.35 to 74.40). While, in experimental group B was 68.85 for pre-test and post-test was 71.90. Two types of corrective feedback (direct and indirect feedback) had improvement on the students' writing but the change from pretest to posttest was not too significant, it proved by the findings of the *p-value* which is higher than α (0.05). Related to the problem statement, the researcher concludes that through direct feedback and indirect feedback the students could improve their writing even though it was not too significant.

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