

DIRECT AND INDIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON EFL STUDENTS WRITING SKILL: A CASE STUDY IN A JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BANDUNG

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Abstract

There are some corrective feedbacks teachers can give to students in writing English text, two of them are direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback. This study is conducted to investigate the impact of direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback and which feedback is better to improve EFL students writing skill. The study was conducted at SMN N 4 Bandung. The sample of this study was 38 junior high school students and divided into two groups. Group 1 is the direct corrective feedback group and Group 2 is indirect corrective feedback group. Group 1 and group 2 were treated differently regarding their error in writing short story. Statistical analysis test revealed that indirect corrective feedback was more effective than direct corrective feedback in improving students writing skill.

Keywords: corrective feedback, direct corrective feedback, indirect corrective feedback, EFL students

INTRODUCTION

Writing skill plays important role in students' successful learning (Emilia, 2011). One of the purposes is to enter particular disciplinary communities (Prior, 1998. as cited in Coffin *et al*, 2003). However, writing is one of the most difficult skills that foreign-language learners are expected to acquire, requiring the mastery of a variety of linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural competencies (Barkaoui, 2007). Writing is a complex even in the first language. Undoubtedly, it is more complicated to write in a foreign language. Students tend to make errors while they are writing something such as grammatical error, punctuation, and typos.

There are many debates whether teacher should provide feedback on grammar in the writing assignments of EFL learners or not. Some researchers (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Truscott, 2007) claim that grammar corrections do not have a positive effect on the development of L2 writing accuracy. In contrast, other researchers (e.g. Ferris, 1999, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Chandler, 2003) claim that corrective feedback can help

learners in grammatical accuracy. Furthermore, Hymes (1966) stated the way to understand the language is much more than memorizing rules, but instead is a complex of competencies. Positive evidence (i.e. exposure to correct language use) is not enough for learners to achieve acquisition (White, 1991). In order to acquire language, students require opportunities to produce language, complete with errors, and to have occasions for self-correction through interaction with others (Swain, 1985, 1989). In interaction with other, students will begin to notice their errors and modify their language production. However, teachers must make decisions as to how to raise learners' consciousness. One common method is responding to students' errors in the classroom in a corrective manner.

A range studies have investigated the extent to which different types of written corrective feedback may have an effect on helping L2 learners improve their writing. One of the much discussed contrasts is that between direct and indirect error correction. The main factor distinguishing these two types of corrective feedback is the learner's involvement in the correction process. The

direct corrective feedback consists of an indication of the error and the corresponding correct linguistic form, whereas indirect corrective feedback only indicates that an error has been made. Instead of the teacher provides the target form, learners are asked to correct his own errors. Indirect correction methods can take different forms that vary in their explicitness (e.g. underlining of errors, coding of errors) (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Ferris, 1995). What makes this issue even more controversial is the variety of strategies for carrying out written corrective feedback. It is not just a question of whether corrective feedback is effective but also which type is effective.

This study is written to answer (1) is direct and indirect feedback effective in improving students' writing skill? and (2) which feedback between direct and indirect feedback is more effective?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Feedback

Various terms have been used in identifying errors and providing feedback in the SLA literature. Some of the most frequently used terms are: corrective feedback, negative evidence, negative feedback, treatment and repair. Feedback is 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 students understand at the moment and what is aimed to be finally understood (Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

Ur (1996) defines feedback as information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance. According to Chaudron (1998), as asserted by Tatawy (2002), the term 'corrective feedback' is used on a variety of ways. Tatawy (2002) elaborated that in Chaudron's view, the term 'treatment of error' refers to teachers' reaction to an error which tries to inform the learner about the fact of error. This treatment may be observed by student, or some treatment may be made very explicit to elicit a revised response from the student. Lightbown and Spada (1999) defined corrective feedback as an indication to the learners that his or her use of the target language is incorrect.

Attitudes toward error correction have evolved from the strict avoidance of errors and thus quick and direct error correction before the 1960s, to the condemnation of error correction as something harmful in the late 1960s, and to a more critical view of the necessity and value of error correction in the 1970s and 1980s. The controversy over the topic of error correction, however, remains unresolved in the 1990s (Lee, 1997, cited in Khatib & Bijani, 2012, p. 103).

Ellis (2009a, p. 98) gives a brief explanation of all different corrective feedback (CF) types that are being used.

1. Direct Corrective Feedback

The teacher provides the student with the correct form.

2. Indirect Corrective Feedback

The teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction.

- a. Indicating + Locating the error

This takes the form of underlining and use of cursors to show omissions in the student's text.

- b. Indication Only

This takes the form of an indication in the margin that an error of errors has taken place in a line of text.

3. Metalinguistic Corrective Feedback

The teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue to the nature of the error

- a. Use of Error Code

Teacher writes codes in the margin (e.g. ww= wrong word; art= article)

- b. Brief Grammatical Description

Teacher numbers errors in text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text.

4. The Focus of The Feedback

This concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the students' errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correct. This distinction can be applied to each of the above option.

- a. Unfocused Corrective Feedback

- Unfocused CF is extensive
- b. Focused Corrective Feedback
 - Focused CF is intensive
5. Electronic Feedback

The teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to a concordance file that provides examples of correct usage
 6. Reformulation

This consists of a native speaker's reworking of the students' entire text to make the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original intact.

Ashwell (2000) indicated that teachers believe that correcting the grammar of the student writers' work will help students improve the accuracy of subsequent writing. Research evidence on error correction in L2 writing classes showed that students who receive error feedback from teachers improve in accuracy over time (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). There is also research evidence which proves that students are eager to receive error feedback and they think that it helps them improve their writing skill in the target language (Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Leki, 1990).

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.

Direct Feedback

Direct Feedback means the teacher provides the students with the correct form of the errors students made (Lalande, 1982 and Robb et al. 1986). Guenette (2007) defines direct feedback as teacher's correction of errors. Direct error correction identifies both the error and the target form (Van Beuningen, 2008, p. 282).

Direct corrective feedback has the advantages that it provides learners with explicit guidance about how to correct their errors (Rod Ellis). Ferris and Roberts (2001) suggest that direct corrective feedback is probably better than indirect corrective feedback with students having low levels of proficiency in writing. The study by Sheen (2007) indicated that direct corrective feedback can be effective in promoting

acquisition of specific grammatical features. According to Lee (2004) direct or explicit feedback occurs when the teacher picks out errors and gives the correct forms (Lan Anh, 2008, PP 126-127).

Indirect Feedback

Indirect feedback indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction. According to Lee (2004), indirect correction refers to situations when the teacher marks the errors that have been made but does not provide the correct forms, requiring the learners to diagnose and correct their errors. The students were asked to find and correct the errors they made (Zaman & Azad, 2012), while the teacher provides the correct form in direct error correction (Ellis, 2009A).

Lalande (1982) suggested that indirect feedback is indeed more effective in enabling students to correct their errors. Teacher indicates the errors by underlining, highlighting or coding the errors and then let the learners do the corrections (Guenette, 2007). Further, Lee distinguishes indirect feedback strategies with a code from those without a code. Coded feedback refers to instances when the teacher points out the locations of the errors and the types of errors are marked with code, for example:

Verb Tense – VT
 Subject Verb Agreement – SV
 Word Form – WF
 Wrong Word – WW
 Word Order – WO
 Spelling – SP
 Insert Word – ^

Uncoded feedback implies situation when the teacher marks the errors with circles underlines or puts a tally in the margin to offer learners a chance to diagnose and correct errors (Lan, 2008, pp 126-127). For editing a paper with indirect feedback, the student is required both to identify the type of error and to self-correct the error whereas in direct feedback what the student does is only to transcribe the teacher's corrections onto the paper (Ferris, 2003).

Error correction researchers have reported that indirect feedback as compared to direct feedback is more beneficial in helping students to make progress in accuracy over time (Ferris et al., 2000; Ferris & Helt, 2000) as well as improving their ability to edit their own composition (Bitchener, 2005; Chandler,

2003; Ferris, 1995b, Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982; Lee, 1997). In addition, based on the findings of a longitudinal design, it was revealed that verbal feedback in the form of brief explanation on error patterns together with in-text underlining if examples of these error types could lead to successful revision in 73% of the cases (Ferris, 1997). Other studies also revealed that about 80% of the errors marked by their teachers could be successfully edited by the students (Chaney, 1999; Ferris et al., 2000; Komura, 1999).

Ferris stated indirect feedback tends to provide the students with a greater cognitive engagement and reflection on linguistic forms which, in turn, may promote language acquisition. Underlying the errors or highlighting the error would encourage the students to look more critically at their own L2 performance and “notice” their language problems. Moreover, according to Swain (1998), “noticing” is a conscious act of attention to language form in one’s own output which serves to raise the awareness of “holes” in the interlanguage. In other words, it may lead the students to become more aware of their own linguistic problems. Exists but does not provide the correction

METHOD

Research Site and Participants

This study will be conducted in a SMP N 4 Bandung. The participants are 38 second grader students in middle school. In choosing the site, researcher considers some aspects such as time, cost, and geographic condition. In addition, the researcher chooses the second grade students. Students at that grade have learned English for more than one year and does not busy with national exam. The subjects were assigned to two equal groups of 19 as follows:

- Experimental group 1 who received direct corrective feedback
- Experimental group 2 who received indirect corrective feedback

Data Collection

This study will use quantitative method to answer the research question. The data are gathered through experiment and the data from document form

Experiment

To know the effect of direct and indirect feedback the researcher will conduct the experiment to one class in second grade of middle school. 19 students will be given direct feedback and 19 students will be given indirect.

Document

The types of data will be collected by individual performance data which the types of the test wishes to see how well the participants did with a large group of test takers (Vogt, 2005; as cited in Cresswell, 2012)

Procedure

For the sake of this study, the researcher divided the subject into two error corrective feedback group and assigned them to write three short stories. Moreover, to correct the grammatical inaccuracies in their text, the researcher benefitted from two different approaches.

While one group was provided with direct corrective feedback on every single error in their text, the other group was provided with indirect corrective feedback. In indirect corrective feedback, the researcher only marked the errors with underlining the errors. Moreover, the indirect corrective feedback group was also required to further self-edit their errors based on the feedback marked by the researcher. Their self-edited short stories were further rechecked by the researcher in an attempt to make sure that the subjects has properly corrected the grammatical inaccuracies the researcher had marked in their short story on their first correction of the short story.

FINDINGS

The test is analyzed using Paired sample t-test because the data is normally distributed. The researcher analyzed the result of both pre-test and post-test using SPSS Statistical Software. The researcher will analyzed 19 samples from both experimental group (direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback).

Table 1 shows that the mean of the pre-test in direct corrective feedback group is 70.42 and the mean of the post-test is 79.32. The difference between pre-test and post-test is 8.9. While in indirect corrective feedback, the mean of the pre-test is 66.97 and in the

post-test is 79.58. The difference between the pre-test and post-test in indirect corrective feedback is 9.79. From the result above we

can conclude that both direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback improve students ability in writing skill.

Table 1. Table of Paired Sample Statistics

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	dipre-test	70.42	19	4.181	.959
	dipost-test	79.32	19	8.360	1.918
Pair 2	inpre	66.79	19	9.247	2.121
	inpost	76.58	19	9.209	2.113

Table 2 shows that the correlation in direct corrective feedback between pre-test and post-test is 0.160 and in indirect corrective feedback is 0.003. The correlation

in both direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback is near zero, it shows that the correlation between pre-test and post-test is weak.

Table 2. Table of Correlation

		N	Correlation	Sig.
Pair 1	pre-test & post-test	19	.160	.514
Pair 2	inpre & inpost	19	.003	.989

Table 3 shows that the Sig. (2-tailed) in direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback is lower than 0.05. Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05, it means there is a significance changes before the treatment and after the treatment. This is indicated that H₀ is rejected

and H_a is accepted. The difference between mean on pre-test and post-test is direct corrective feedback is 8.9 while in indirect corrective feedback is 9.8, it indicated that indirect corrective feedback is more effective in improving students writing skill.

Table 3. Table of Paired Sample Test

		Paired Differences				t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference Lower Upper				
Pair 1	pre-test	-8.895	8.730	2.003	-13.102	-4.687	-4.441	18	.000
	post-test								
Pair 2	inpre	-9.789	13.028	2.989	-16.069	-3.510	-3.275	18	.004
	inpost								

DISCUSSION

The aims of the present study is to investigate whether direct and indirect corrective feedback is effective for improving students writing skill or not and which feedbacks (direct corrective feedback or indirect corrective feedback) is more effective in improving students' writing skill.

The data result above (Table 4.7) shows that both direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback are improving students writing skill and answered the first question "Is direct and indirect feedback effective in improving students' writing skill?". The result proves that H₀ has been rejected and H_a is accepted. The result of Statistical analysis (Table 4.7) about the effect

of direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback shows that the two group performance is statistically significant, Sig. (2-tailed) < 0.05.

To answer the second question, which one of the feedbacks between direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback is more effective in improving students wiring skill, the mean difference between pre-test and post-test can answer to the question. The result shows that between direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback, indirect corrective feedback is more effective in improving students writing skills. It can be conclude from the increasing of the mean from pre-test and post-test. The findings of the study are in line with Esfandiar *et al*

(2014), Maleki and Eslami (2013) and Lalande, Ferris, and Helt (1982), Lee and Ridley (1999) and Kepner (1991) who found that indirect corrective feedback and proved that indirect corrective feedback is more effective in improving students' writing skill.

Low number of participants is due to the lack of access to other students and the lack of time of the researcher. And also due to the fact that if the researcher wanted to increase the number of the participants, some other factors came to affect the results.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This study shows a beneficial role of self-correction in improving students' writing skill. The study reveals that receiving indirect feedback, understand the error and do a self-correction is more effective than the direct feedback. As cited in Sivaji (2012) indirect error correction induces the learner to become self-activated and responsible for their learning process. Further, Ferris (2002) stated that indirect error correction stimulates learners' responsibility in correction, and improves their writing accuracy in the long term. Therefore, it is fruitful to design additional classroom activities in which students engagethemselves in the process of revision and self-correction. This is possible if teachers find efficient ways of correction and students receive indirect corrective feedback. Furthermore, teachers should determine their own priorities; that is to say, the first priority should be to invite students to correct their own spelling errors because they benefit from correcting their spelling errors in such a way that they become aware of their recurring errors.

The researcher hopes that this study can give contributions to the development of teaching in writing English for EFL students. However, the fact that the presents study did not include a language proficiency test could be researched in the future.

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