

## The English Teacher's Written Corrective Feedback on the Students' Writings in Vocational High School

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**Abstract:** This study was aimed to find out the types of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) given by the English teacher to the students' writings, the reason of the teacher in giving certain types of WCF, and the contributions of the WCF for the students. This study employed a case study design which involved one English teacher and three students from different acquisition levels. The data were obtained from documentation and interview. The types of WCF given by the teacher were classified by using the theory from Ellis (2008). The data from the interview were analyzed by using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006). The results showed that the teacher used Direct WCF, Unfocused WCF, and Electronic Feedback in correcting the students' errors. It was found that the teacher gave those types of WCF in order to make the students understand about the mistakes that they made in their writings. It was also found that high and medium achieving students stated that WCF from their teacher were beneficial for them in order to avoid the same mistakes in the future while low achieving student did not get the benefit of feedback.

**Keywords:** students' writings, vocational high school, Written Corrective Feedback (WCF), teacher's reasons, the contributions

### 1. Introduction

Writing has become one of the fundamental skills that must be mastered by the students. Renandya and Richards (2002, p. 303) argue that "writing is considered as the most difficult skill to master for the English learners". The students are expected to be able to express their feeling, idea, thought, and their opinions through writing by applying all the aspects of writing appropriately. There are many strategies to overcome the students' problems in writing a text. The use of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) may become one of the strategies to overcome the students' problems in writing. Teacher's WCF, namely comments, questions, or error correction given by the teacher in the written form on students' assignment (Mack, 2009). There are eight types of Teacher's WCF proposed by Ellis (2008). Those types are: (1) Direct WCF, (2) Indirect WCF, (3) Metalinguistic WCF by Using Error Codes, (4) Metalinguistic WCF Using Explanation, (5) Focused WCF, (6) Unfocused WCF, (7) Electronic Feedback, (8) Reformulation.

Teacher's WCF has become the current issues among the foreign language researchers in the last ten years. The previous studies were conducted in Indonesia, Malaysia, China, Saudi Arabia, and Hong Kong. The specific issues being investigated were the practice of WCF to the students' writings (Aridah, Atmowardoyo & Salija, 2017; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Mahmud, 2016; Lee, 2011) and the teacher's preference in providing certain types of WCF (Li & He, 2017; Hammouda, 2011). The findings of those previous studies found that that Indirect WCF was become the most frequent type of WCF given by the teacher to the students' writings. In addition, regarding to the research participants and research design,

most of the studies were conducted at university level by applying survey design. Therefore, in order to fill the gap of the previous studies, the present study investigated the types of WCF on the students' writings in Vocational High School and explored the contributions of the WCF for the students.

## 2. Literature Review

### **The Teacher's Written Corrective Feedback**

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is widely used in the teaching and learning process of writing. WCF has played an important role as it can help the students to have improvement on their writing performance (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). There were several studies (e.g.: Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener and Knoch, 2010) have found that WCF is beneficial for the students' accuracy in writing performance. From these statements, it can be concluded that the role of WCF is quite important in improving the students' writing performance. The students could become aware of their mistakes and able to correct the incorrect production in their writing draft.

### **The Types of Written Corrective Feedback**

There are several types of WCF that proposed by some researchers. Ellis (2008) proposed the typology of WCF into eight types. This study used the typology of WCF proposed by Ellis (2008) because it was the most complete of typology of WCF and easy to follow. Besides, most of the researchers used this typology of WCF in classifying the types of WCF. The types of WCF by Ellis (2008) will be described as follows:

#### 1) Direct WCF

In providing Direct WCF, the teacher does not only indicate the mistakes on the students' writing drafts, but also provide the correct form of it (Ellis, 2008). Likewise, Bitchener and Ferris (2012, p. 148) define Direct WCF as "correction that not only points out the errors but also provides the solution of the problem".

#### 2) Indirect WCF

Ellis (2008) states that in providing Indirect WCF, the teacher only indicates the students' errors by giving the symbols in codes, highlighting, crossing, and underlining the errors without providing the correct forms.

#### 3) Metalinguistic WCF Using Error Codes

Error codes are abbreviated label for different kind of errors that can be placed over the location of the error in the text (Ellis, 2008). Thus, Metalinguistic WCF using error codes refers to a method which the teacher points out the exact location of the error and use error codes to indicate the types of students' mistakes in order to encourage the students to correct their mistakes by themselves.

#### 4) Metalinguistic WCF Using Explanations

It is a kind of feedback which the teacher gives number to the students' error and provide explanation about the errors. It is categorized as less common feedback which is used by the teacher because it is much more time consuming than the other types of

WCF. The teacher should be able to write clear and accurate explanation for a variety of errors which can be understood by the students (Ellis, 2008).

5) Focused WCF

In providing Focused WCF, the teacher only chooses one or two specific types of errors to correct (Ellis, 2008). Thus, in Focused WCF, the teacher will focus on a single type of error (e.g. articles; prepositions; spelling) to be corrected.

6) Unfocused WCF

In providing Unfocused WCF, the teacher gives correction to all the types of the students' errors (Ellis, 2008). This type of feedback can be viewed as 'extensive' because it treats multiple kinds of errors on the students' written work

7) Electronic Feedback

In Electronic Feedback, the teacher will indicate and correct the students' errors by using technology. The teacher can use software or website to insert the comments on the students' writing or provide a hyperlink which provides the example of the correct form of the students' errors (Ellis, 2008).

8) Reformulation

In reformulation the teacher can rewrite the learners' piece of text, trying to be as faithful as the original text, with the corrections being made. This type of WCF requires more cognitive effort as learners need to understand the changes have been made.

### **Previous Studies on WCF**

For the last ten years, there were several previous studies dealing with the issue of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF). First, Aridah, Atmowardoyo & Salija (2017) investigated the types of WCF preferred by the students and the types of WCF given by the teacher to the students' writings. The results showed that the students' preference on Direct WCF was higher than Indirect WCF. Meanwhile the teacher mostly used Indirect WCF instead of Direct WCF on the students' writing. Second, Li and He (2017) investigated the students' preferences for the types of WCF and the factors which encouraged the teachers to employ these WCF to the students' writings. The results showed that Indirect WCF not only became the most preferably feedback by the students, but also became the types of WCF that was mostly provided by teachers. It was in line the study of (Hammouda ,2011; Mao and Crosthwaite, 2019; Mahmud, 2016) which found that the teachers mostly gave Indirect WCF on the students' writings to give chance for the students to reflect their mistakes. Then, Lee (2011) investigated the practice of WCF in second language writing classroom. The results showed that the teachers mostly gave Direct WCF on the students' writings which required the teachers to indicate the errors and provide the correct form.

Based on the findings of previous studies above, Most of the findings of the previous studies found that Indirect WCF became the most frequent type of WCF given by the teacher to the students' writings. Regarding to the research participants and research design, most of studies were conducted at university level by applying survey design. There had not been previous studies that focused on the types of teacher's WCF and the teacher's reasons in applying certain types of WCF in wider context in Indonesia, especially in Vocational High

School level. Besides, the study explored the contribution of WCF for the students. Therefore, the researcher conducted a case study entitled “The English Teacher’s Written Corrective Feedback on the Students’ Writing in Vocational High School”.

### 3. The Research Method

Yin (2003) states that there are three categories of case study. Those are an exploratory, a descriptive and an explanatory case study. This research applied a descriptive case study as the research design. Yin (2003, p. 5) states “a descriptive case study presents a complete description of a phenomenon within its context”. It means that in a descriptive case study, the researcher had to describe the natural phenomena as it occurs. This study was conducted in Vocational High School 2 Jember which involved one English teacher and three students who categorized as High, Medium, and Low achieving students.

This study used documentation and interview to collect the data. The documentation in this research was used to get the data about the types of WCF given by the teacher to the students’ writings. After the teacher had finished in giving WCF to the students’ writings, the researcher copied the students’ writings from the teacher and classified the types of WCF given by the teacher to the students’ writings based on Ellis’s (2008) theory and calculated each types of WCF given. Meanwhile, the purpose of the teacher’s interview was to find the information about the types of WCF given by the teacher and the reasons of the teacher in giving certain types of WCF. Then, the purpose of the students’ interview was to get the information about the contribution of WCF given by the English teacher. The results of the interview were analyzed by using thematic analysis proposed by Braun and Clarke (2006).

### 4. Findings and Discussion

From the results of documentation analysis, it was found that the teacher gave several types of WCF in giving feedback to the students’ writings. The teacher gave three of the eight types of WCF; they were Direct WCF, Unfocused WCF, and Electronic Feedback. The English teacher did not give five types of WCF, namely Indirect WCF, Metalinguistic WCF by Using Error Codes, Metalinguistic WCF by Using Explanation, Focused WCF, and Reformulation. The results of the use of each type of the teacher written corrective feedback will be presented in Table 4.1.

Table 4.1 The percentage of the types of written corrective feedback which given by the teacher to the students’ writing drafts

No	The types of WCF	Frequency	Percentage
1	Direct WCF	135	67,1 %
2	Indirect WCF	0	0 %
3	Metalinguistic WCF using error codes	0	0 %
4	Metalinguistic WCF using explanation	0	0 %
5	Focused WCF	0	0 %
6	Unfocused WCF	51	25,3 %
7	Electronic Feedback	15	7,2 %
8	Reformulation	0	0 %

<b>TOTAL</b>	201	99,6 %
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According to Table 4.1, it was known that the English teacher gave three types of the eight types of WCF. They were Direct WCF, Unfocused WCF, and Electronic Feedback. It was found that the frequency of Direct WCF given by the teacher to the students' writing drafts was 67,1 % from the total feedback given. The frequency of Unfocused WCF was 25,3 % from the total feedback given, and Electronic feedback was 7,2 % on overall students' writing drafts. Then, it was found that the teacher did not use the other types of feedback. They were Indirect WCF, Metalinguistic WCF by Using Error Codes, Metalinguistic WCF by Using Explanation, Focused WCF, and Reformulation.

From the results of the data above, it was found that Direct WCF was the most frequent type of WCF given by the teacher to the students' writings followed by Unfocused WCF and Electronic Feedback. All these types of WCF were given by the teacher to revise the students' writing drafts dealing with the use of tenses, spellings, punctuations, etc. This finding was in line with the finding of the previous research done by Lee (2011) who found that Direct WCF was the most frequent type of WCF used by the teacher in correcting the students' writings.

Then, the result of the teacher's interview revealed that the teacher gave Direct WCF to the students because this type of feedback was understandable by the students. Thus, the students were not confused to understand their errors and revised their writing drafts. This fact supported the finding of the previous research done by Lee (2011) that the teacher has to point out and correct the errors because the students can learn from their mistakes. The second type of WCF given by the teacher was Unfocused WCF. The teacher gave the correction to all the students' errors rather than focused on just one or two types of errors. It was because the teacher wanted to make the students understand about all their errors that they had made although it was time consuming. It was in line with Ellis's study (2008) which stated that Unfocused WCF could encourage the students to reflect much on their errors. The last was Electronic Feedback. The teacher also gave feedback to the students through the website called Google Classroom. The teacher tried to keep giving feedback although they had to do the online teaching and learning process in order to make the students understand about their mistakes in their writing drafts.

Based on the results of the interview with the students, it was found that high and medium achieving students always read the WCF from their teacher in order to know the errors that they had made and asked the teacher explanation if there were unclear WCF. In contrast with low achiever student who rarely read the teacher's WCF given. It seemed that low achiever students less motivated to learn. This finding was in line with Lee's study (2008) which found that lower proficiency students less paid attention to the teacher's feedback than high and medium achiever students. Furthermore, high and medium achieving students stated that WCF was useful for them. They could understand about the mistakes that they made and how to correct it through the WCF given. Meanwhile, low achieving student stated that WCF was not quiet useful because he rarely read the feedback given by the teacher. It could be said that those who actually read the WCF from their teacher and tried to



understand their errors actually got the benefit from the Teacher's WCF. However, those students who did not even read the WCF did not get the benefits of the Teacher's WCF itself.

### 5. Conclusion and Suggestion

This present study was investigated the types of WCF given by the teacher and the reasons of the teacher in applying certain types of WCF. This study also explored the contribution of WCF for the students. Based on the findings and discussion of this study, it could be concluded that the teacher gave three of the eight types of WCF to the students' writing drafts. Those were Direct WCF, Unfocused WCF, and Electronic Feedback. The Direct WCF was the most frequent type of WCF given by the teacher. The teacher gave those types of WCF in order to make the students understand about their mistakes on their writings. Meanwhile, high and medium achieving students stated that WCF from their teacher were beneficial for them in order to avoid the same mistakes in the future while low achieving student tended did not pay attention to the feedback given, therefore low achieving student did not get the benefit of the feedback itself.

It is suggested for the English teacher to give WCF to the students' writing drafts. It can help the students to understand about the errors that they have made in their writing drafts in order to avoid the same mistakes in the future. Regarding to the feedback for the future researchers, the future researchers are suggested to conduct a further research about WCF by using another research design, such as experimental design and a classroom action research with different levels of the students such as Junior High School students.

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