SCOPE
Journal of English Language Teaching
| p-ISSN 2541-0326 | e-ISSN 2541-0334 |
https://journal.lppmunindra.ac.id/index.php/SCOPE/

Research Article

Students' Preferences on the Lecturers' Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) on Their Writing Tasks: A Study at the English Language Education Study Program (ELESP), Faculty of Education, Universitas Jambi

Adrefiza[1], *Habizar*[2]

[1,2] *Universitas Jambi (UNJA), Jl. Raya Jambi-Ma Bulian KM. 15 Jambi 36361, Indonesia*

KEYWORDS

Written corrective feedback (WCF);
Autonomous learning;
Writing;
Preferences.

CORRESPONDING AUTHOR(S):

E-mail: adrefiza@unja.ac.id
habizar@unja.ac.id

A B S T R A C T

This study analyzes students' preferences on the lecturer's written corrective feedback (WCF) on their writing tasks. It looks at how the students want WCF to be written, delivered, and focused on to fulfill the students' expectations. It also analyzes the students' preferences on the use of English or Bahasa Indonesia in the WCF to accommodate their learning needs and styles. Through an internet survey delivered to 100 students' emails, using 5 levels of Likert scales on preferences range, the results show that the students' preferences varied in terms of types, focuses, and ways the WCF are provided and delivered. It is an evident that many students want the lecturers to provide the correct forms of the errors, to mark and to underline the errors with corrections, and to provide explanations for every single error in their writing tasks. A significant number of the students have a low preference for the use of indirect feedback through cues and prompts. Another interesting result is the fact that many students prefer WCF to be written in Bahasa Indonesia rather than in English. It is recommended that the lecturers flexibly provide WCF according to students' preferences and expectations to increase their writing skills.

INTRODUCTION

Studies on Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) in EFL contexts continue to spark ideas and controversies among practitioners and academicians. As claimed by (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a), issues on WCF provided by language instructors have never declined over time and they even tend to increase in the last few years. WCF is not only a central aspect of ESL teaching but also time and energy-consuming to prepare (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Corpuz, 2011). Some of the prominent issues exposed include the efficacy, types, focus, and effects on the learner's learning or motivation. There have been also a growing number of studies on students' preferences or expectations towards types of WCF in its links to the students' learning. Providing WCF in response to students' errors is one of the most critical routines of the instructors in teaching and learning practices. They argue that the effectiveness of WCF has become controversial among language educators and practitioners, and it has sparked debates on how WCF should be addressed and delivered. Sakrak-Ekin and Balcikanli (2019) asserted that corrective feedback from the instructors is always controversial in terms of whether it should be addressed directly or indirectly to avoid students' learning demotivation.

DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.30998/scope.v7i2.14764
Copyright ©2023

Despite the above controversies, the provision of WCF is still regarded as an essential part of teaching and learning practices. WCF is beneficial in accelerating students' independent learning and encourages personal interaction between students and the instructors, especially when it is appropriately delivered and addressed following the students' expectation and preferences (Stracke & Kumar, 2010; Adrefiza & Fortunasari, 2020). The inappropriate practice of WCF, however, is said to potentially account for discouragement in the students learning (Adrefiza, Fortunasari, & Hidayat, 2021).

Much research has addressed the effect and the efficacy of WCF on the students' achievement and goals, but there has been very little information on how WCF should be written and delivered to address and to fulfill the students' preferences and expectations. This study is designed to investigate the lecturers' WCF based on the learners' preferences in terms of types, focuses, uses of language, and ways of its delivery. Through an internet survey, involving 100 English Language Education students at the Faculty of Education, Jambi University, this study examines the learners' preferences and expectations on the WCF provided by the lecturers as a response to their writing errors and mistakes. The results are expected to increase the development of the students' writing skills and performance through preparing suitable types, focuses, and ways of WCF to be addressed and written according to the students' preferences. This study is conducted to answer the question: "How do the students want WCF to be written, focused on, and delivered to fulfill their preferences?"

Writing in either L2 or foreign contexts is no doubt a complex process. The provision of WCF by the instructors plays an essential role in accelerating the students' skills and performance. However, WCF needs to be carefully planned and delivered in such a way that the learners are happy and encouraged to respond and make changes to their errors. Inappropriate ways of provision such as ineffective types, content, and focus as well as the demand from the instructors may discourage the learners from learning. This is in line with Irwin's (2017) claimed that WCF often shows teachers' dominance, and the students are likely to play a passive role in the learning process, especially when it fails to accommodate the students' expectations and preferences.

Studies claiming the positive effects of WCF on student learning, on the other hand, have also been tremendously proliferating. Some researchers have given rise to how WCF improves the students' independence in learning (Kumar & Stracke, 2007; Stracke & Kumar, 2010). They state that WCF provides opportunities for both learners and the instructors to increase the students' writing through a dynamic interaction in a mentor or supervisory practice. They affirm that students learn significantly from the teachers' WCF in many ways such as through its main contents such as comments, corrections, and suggestions on their writing tasks. Quite often, WCF provides codes or signals for students in response to their writing errors and the students need to propose the revisions according to the teachers' feedback or responses. This is obviously what Stracke and Kumar (2010:19) claimed as a "journey of discovery" that the students experience through mentors' or instructors' WCF. In this respect, such an experience may account for a greater benefit to the students' learning compared with conventional or formal teaching practices in which activities and contents have been carefully structured and formatted.

A few studies have attempted to make links between WCF and students' self-regulated learning. Zimmermann (2001), for example, suggested that with WCF students are engaged with a dynamic learning process in which they experience an active metacognitive process through self-generating thoughts, feelings, inquiries, and mental work in their attempts to respond to WCF provided by the instructors. In this process, the students are psychologically and mentally encouraged to employ their self-efforts to learn and to respond to their errors and to propose corrections and revisions. Boekaerts (1999) claimed that students need extra effort and time to revise their writing without external guidance from other persons. Butler and Winne (1995) stated that WCF promotes students' autonomy in learning as it shows a reflection of an inherent catalyst in their self-regulated learning.

Studies on students' preferences on teachers' WCF in its relation to developing benefit of students' writing skills have been extensively conducted by many researchers. These include studies by (Leki, 1991; Corpuz, 2011; Nanni & Black, 2017). Nanni and Black (2017) came up with a result that students in Japan prefer five categories of WCF from the teacher; they are content, grammar, organization, spelling, and vocabulary. Corpuz (2011) found that a great number of students prefer two types of WCF from the teachers (content and form), while Leki (1991) suggested that the students want the teachers to correct all types of students' errors to improve their writing. A study by Adrefiza, Hidayat, and Fortunasari (2021) found that many students prefer direct to indirect types of WCF from the lecturers with more emphasis on content rather than on other types. They also find that praise was the most preferred type of WCF by the students, while criticism was the opposite.

Irwin (2017) in his study on Japanese University students found that the students' preferences were various and divergent, suggesting that the lecturers should prepare

various kinds of WCF to accommodate the students' expectations as an attempt to increase the students' active roles in learning. He proves that the types of WCF are often student-centred in nature, thus with the variety of WCF provided by the lecturers, the students' active roles in the learning process can be achieved. It was also argued by Irwin that students were likely to be more benefitted from direct WCF compared with the indirect type as it made the students discouraged to correct the errors in their writing. It is suggested that teachers should consider which types of WCF to be provided and to be addressed to suit students' preferences and expectations.

There have been several WCF classifications proposed by experts. A remarkable one was proposed by Holmes (2001) who classified WCF into three types according to linguistic expressions as Referential; Directive; and Expressive. This classification was then developed further by Kumar and Stracke (2007) with a few subcategories for each main category. Table 1 below shows the categories.

Table 1. WCFs and Speech Acts Categorization

Referential	Editorial	*Please get rid of spaces.*
	Organization	*This does not belong in the literature review.*
	Content	*Are you sure you can make such a claim?*
Directive	Suggestion	*Maybe this is not necessary.*
	Question	*Whose term is this?*
	Instruction	*Please clarify.*
Expressive	Praise	*Good, nice example.*
	Criticism	*This table…does not add to the text.*
	Opinion	*I would be interested to explore what triggered this*

(Kumar & Stracke, 2007)

The use of codes or symbols characterizes a metalinguistic type of WCF. With these codes and symbols, students are expected to grasp the meaning of the codes or symbols and to decide the corrections. Some forms of acknowledged abbreviations can also be used in this type. Focused and unfocused WCF are characterized by the election of the errors being responded to.

METHOD

Following Irwin (2017), this study analyzed the students' preferences on types and ways WCF are provided by the lecturers in their academic writing tasks at the English Study Program, the Faculty of Education, Jambi University. A few adjustments in scope and focus were proposed to suit the context of the study. A total of 100 undergraduate students were involved as the respondents to provide their preferences on types, ways, and focuses of WCF provided by the lecturers on their writing tasks. A questionnaire, consisting of ten items each with five levels of Likert scales on preferences (least preferred–most preferred) was sent to the students' emails, and they were requested to select one of the five options which suit their preferences. The students' responses were then grouped and analyzed to see the general picture of the students' preferences.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The findings show a few remarkable phenomena in the students' preferences. As shown in Table 2, the highest rate in the students' preference (strongly preferred) fell into item (1), providing the correct forms of the errors clearly, with a total rate of (77%). There were only (23%) of the responses in this item fell into preferred and neutral categories. Item (3) marking and underlying the errors with the corrections also shows a positive response from the students, comprising a total rate of (65%) in the strongly preferred category. Providing explanations for every single error (item 7) received a significantly high or positive preference from the students with a total of (48%) in the strongly preferred category, although the rate for the strongly not preferred category was slightly high (26%).

The reverse picture is noticeable in item (4) providing indirect feedback through cues and prompts, where (56%) of the responses were addressed to negative preference (the strongly not preferred). There were only less than (10%) of the responses given to positive preferences (the preferred and he strongly preferred). The same is true for item (2), where the highest rate was also given to negative preferences. A total number of 51 (51%) of the students' responses were addressed to the strongly not preferred category, with only (9%) given to the strongly preferred category.

An interesting result is shown in item (10) "always use Bahasa Indonesia in WCF". The trend looks positive with more than half of the students addressing their choice towards strongly preferred and preferred with a total of (45%) and (37%) respectively. There were only (16%) of the students' responses given to the negative pole (strongly not preferred and not preferred) categories. The use of English or the combination of English and Bahasa Indonesia (items 8 and 9), receives relatively moderate responses from the respondents. The rate looks flat in these items with a slightly larger percentage given to the neutral (cannot decide) category.

 DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.30998/scope.v7i2.14764

Students' preferences on the focus of WCF (Item 5 and 6) also show an interesting phenomenon. It is evident in Table 2 that the two items received an unsymmetrical trend of responses. Item 6 (focusing WCF only on ideas and content) was not preferred by the students, indicated by a significantly larger rate given to positive preferences (strongly preferred and preferred) categories. Item 5 "focusing on linguistic features such as grammar, words, and mechanics only", on the other hand, was on the opposite pose, where the greater proportion of the responses was given to negative choices (strongly not preferred and not preferred) categories.

Table 2. The Distribution of Students' Preferences on Lecturers' WCF

No.	WCF	1		2		3		4		5	
		No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
1.	Providing the correct forms of the errors clearly.	0	0	0	0	6	6	17	17	77	77
2.	Marking and underlying the errors without giving the corrections.	51	51	19	19	7	7	21	21	9	9
3.	Marking and underlying the errors with the corrections.	4	4	1	1	3	3	27	27	65	65
4.	Providing indirect feedback through cues and prompts.	56	56	34	34	2	2	4	4	3	3
5.	Focusing on linguistics features such as grammar, words, and mechanics only.	23	23	20	20	10	10	16	16	31	31
6.	Focusing only on ideas or content	34	34	22	22	29	29	14	14	11	11
7.	Providing the explanation for every single error.	26	26	7	7	9	9	10	10	48	48
8.	Always using English in WCF	20	20	15	7	30	30	23	23	32	32
9.	Using English and Bahasa Indonesia in WCF	25	25	10	10	26	26	18	18	21	21
10.	Always using Bahasa Indonesia in WCF	9	9	7	7	12	12	37	37	45	45

Note:
1 = Strongly not Preferred;
2 = Not Preferred;
3 = Neutral (Cannot decide);
4 = Preferred;
5 = Strongly Preferred

The posture of students' preferences in Table 2 above reveals a few remarkable trends. First, in terms of the provision of corrections, it is evident that students preferred to have direct and clear forms rather than indirect ones. This is indicated by the distribution of positive and negative responses given to items (1) and (2) in the table above, showing a non-parallel proportion trend in the two aspects. Whenever many students wanted the lecturers to provide clear corrections clearly, the number of those who did not want the corrections through marking and underlying the incorrect forms without direct corrections was also high. Such a phenomenon discloses a passive learning behaviour in the students that they have been accustomed to a spoon-feeding tradition in which the lecturers usually provide clear explanations so that the learners' creativity and dynamicity are not challenged in the learning processes. This is presumably what Irwin (2017) claimed most WCF provided by the instructors are likely to be teacher-centred and students often play a passive role in learning. This trend has also been supported by a study, claiming that direct forms of WCF were popular and most preferred by tertiary students (Adrefiza, Hidayat, & Fortunasari 2021; Adrefiza & Fortunasari, 2020). Data distributions in items (3) and (4) further support the phenomenon where students' greater responses displayed their preferences towards WCF with real correction and not the one with cues and prompts.

In terms of the focus of WCF, it seems that the students' responses showed a fairly moderate trend. The proportion of preferences addressed towards focusing WCF on linguistic aspects such as grammar, words, and mechanics was somewhat similar to that given to focusing WCF on ideas and content only. This data posture reflects that the students needed and wanted the lecturers to take all of these matters into account thoroughly in the WCF. This is in line with what Adrefiza and Fortunasari (2020) found that aspects such as grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, content, and organization of ideas are those the students feel benefited from the lecturers' WCF.

Finally, the use of English and Bahasa Indonesia in the lecturers' WCF is interesting to be noticed in the present study. Although students' preferences showed a greater number towards the use of Bahasa Indonesia rather than English or the combination of the two, this trend may reveal two interesting phenomena. First, the students might find that they wanted an instant process of proposing revisions, without a further burden to translate

or grasp English WCF for corrections. The use of Bahasa Indonesia in WCF made them easier to proceed with the corrections

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion demonstrate that students' preferences on the ways the lecturers provide and write WCF, the focuses of WCF, and the use of the languages in WCF, are unique and complex. The lecturers are expected to put an extra effort to plan and prepare a variety of ways, types, and focuses of their WCF to accommodate the students' preferences so that the students learning results can be achieved in maximum ways. WCF should be organized in such a way that it encourages the students' motivation and creative learning, promoting students' autonomy in learning. As suggested by Sakrak-Ekin and Belcinkanli (2019), learner autonomy plays an important role in the success of the learners. Inappropriate types and focuses of WCF may result in the students' passive learning behavior, reflecting a teacher-centred learning practice.

Overall, the types and focuses, as well as the ways how WCF are provided and delivered by the lecturers should be critically viewed as an essential part of the teaching and learning processes. They cannot be separated from an integral part of the teaching and play an important role in accelerating students' English writing improvement. WCF is often remarked as a reflection of an intent communication between the lecturers and the learners which supports the students' autonomous learning.

REFERENCE

Adrefiza & Fortunasari. (2020). Written corrective feedback on students' thesis writing: an analysis student-supervisory interactions. *Journal of English Language Teaching Innovations and Materials (JELTIM)*, *2*(1), 14-24.

Adrefiza, Hidayat, & Fortunasari. (2021). Students' voices on lecturers' written corrective feedback in their writing tasks. *IJEE*, *8*(1), 18-30.

Bitchener, J., & Knock, U. (2009). The value of written corrective feedback for migrant and international students. *Language Teaching Research Journal*, *12*, 409-431.

Bitchener, J. (2008). Evidence in support of written orrective feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *17*, 102–118.

Boekaerts, M. (1999). Self-regulated learning: where we are today? *International Journal of Education Research*, *31*, 445-457.

Butler, D. L., & Winne, P. H. (1995). Feedback and self-regulated learning: A theoretical synthesis. *Review of Educational Research*, 65, 245-281.

Corpuz, V. A. F. (2011). Error Correction in Second Language Writing: Teacher's Beliefs, Practices, and Students' Preferences (Master's thesis). Queensland University of Technology.

Ferris, D. R., & Hedgcock, J. S. (2005). *Teaching ESL Composition: Purpose, Process, and Practice*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Holmes, J. (2001). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Harlow: Pearson Education Limited.

Irwin, B. (2017). Written corrective feedback: student preferences and teacher feedback practices. *IAFOR Journal of Language Learning*, *3*(2), 35-58.

Kumar, V., & Stracke, E. (2007). An analysis of written feedback on a PhD thesis. *Teaching in Higher Education*, *12*(4), 461- 470.

Leki, I. (1991). The preferences of ESL students for error correction in college-level writingclasses. *Foreign Language Annals*, *24*, 203–218.

Nanni, A., & Black, D. A. (2017). Student and teacher preferences on written corrective feedback. *The Journal of ASIA TEFL*, *14*(3), 540-547.

Sakrak-Ekin, G., & Balcikanli, C. (2019). Does autonomy really matter in language learning?. *Journal of Language and Education*, *5*(4), 98-111.

Stracke, E., & Kumar, V. (2010). Feedback and self-regulated learning: insights from supervisors' and PhD examiners' report. *Reflective Practice*, *11*(1), 19-32.

Zimmermann, B. J. (2001). *Theories of Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement: An Overview and Analysis*. In B. J. Zimmermann and D. H. Schunk (Eds.), Self-Regulated Learning and Academic Achievement: Theoretical Perspectives, (2nd ed), 1 – 37, Mahwah, NJ/London: Lawrence Erlbaum

 DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.30998/scope.v7i2.14764