

## **WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN WRITING SKILL: A BRIEF REVIEW**

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**Abstract.** The study presented here includes collectively selected research papers that emphasize written corrective feedback, particularly Direct Written Corrective Feedback and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback. Writing is considered the most challenging task for students because writing needs the student's creativity to form ideas of their minds into a form of a text. Some difficulties that EFL students in writing usually find are the lack of the knowledge to choose the appropriate vocabulary, and they also have some problems in grammar and syntax. To overcome these, Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) has been used widely to show students grammatical errors in EFL students' writing works and help EFL students minimize their errors. The Written Corrective Feedback also shows students' performance in enhancing their writing accuracy. Five selected research papers have been selected to give some enlightenment about the effectiveness of Written Corrective Feedback. The feedback was given by EFL teachers and lecturers who teach in Indonesia, China, Iran, Malaysia, and Thailand. The method that is used in this literature review study is thematic analysis design. These are divided into five themes. The themes are Participants, Treatment, The Treatment Length, Instruments and Writing Prompt, and The Effectiveness of The Written Corrective Feedback. The findings reveal various results in the use of Direct Written Corrective Feedback and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback.

**Keywords:** Written Corrective Feedback, Writing Skill, English learning

### **Introduction**

Reading, Writing, Listening, and Speaking are the four foundational skills to learn English. Mastering the four skills for students are quite challenging. One of the productive skills which are considered as the most crucial to be mastered and the most difficult one by English foreign language students is writing. Richard and Renandya (2002:303) propose that to produce writing is describing and forming ideas of our minds and being able to transform these ideas into something that can be read, which is in the form of a text. So, based on their proposes, it seems very common that many L2 students and English foreign language students have some degree of difficulties in writing.

Some difficulties that students in writing usually find are the lack of knowledge to choose the appropriate vocabulary. The students are also difficult to express their thoughts in the form of text. Remarkably, they also have some problems in grammar and syntax. Due to the incompetence of mastering grammar and syntax, they still make some mistakes in some even basic sentence structures, such as subject-verb agreement, pronouns, prepositions, tenses, and articles. So, the question is how to overcome the students' problems.

There is another study implemented to find the best way to teach writing better. Miftah (2015:17) found that implementing a Writing Process Approach (WPA) can improve the L2 learners, particularly in writing a descriptive essay. He elaborates that the WPA consists of five stages. The first one is prewriting, which is meant to assist the learners in gathering ideas and points of view related to the theme being discussed. Second, it is drafting that is meant as a mind-mapping for the learners' ideas. Third, it is revising intended for the learners to revise by emphasizing content and organization. Fourth, it teaches learners to

edit and proofread for accuracy and correctness in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and grammar. The last one is publishing that gives the learners to publish their final writing.

Therefore, some efforts need to be made to overcome or even improve the learners' writing skills. There have been many efforts to improve learners' writing skills. Not only researchers but also teachers have searched some ways to do that. They investigate and practice one method after another, one teaching approach after another. Sabarun (2011:46) implemented a Classroom Action Research. A Cooperative Learning strategy was used to enhance students' writing skills, and the result was satisfactory. He also emphasized that teachers must correct the students' written works by marking the grammatical errors, giving feedback, and scoring the students' written work. The most common practice is usually practiced in the L2 or foreign language writing classroom in Written Corrective Feedback (WCF). Teachers expect that by using Written Corrective Feedback, they can help their students correct their grammar errors and improve students' writing ability.

Several written corrective feedback strategies can be implemented in the classroom. According to Ellis (2009:98-99), there are six strategies that teachers can implement in the classroom, so the strategies are beneficial. The first one is Direct Written Corrective Feedback; the strategy is the teacher marks the error and provides students with the correct form. The second is Indirect Written Corrective Feedback by indicating and locating errors; the teacher's strategy indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction. This takes underlining, marking, circling, crossing, and using cursors to show omissions in the students' text. The third is Metalinguistic Written Corrective Feedback by using the error code; the strategy is to use metalinguistic clues as to the nature of the error. The teacher writes codes in the margin (e.g. ww= wrong word; art= article; v= verb error). The teacher numbers the errors in the text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text. The fourth is The Focus of the feedback; the strategy concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the student's errors or select one or two specific error types to be corrected. The fifth is Electronic Written Corrective Feedback; the teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to an adjustment file that provides examples of correct usage. The sixth is Reformulation; the strategy consists of a native speaker's reworking of the student's entire text to produce the language that seems as nativelike as possible while keeping the content of the original coherence.

Consequently, based on the findings in Written Corrective Feedback, many options make L2 teachers overwhelming in choosing the best option to be implemented in their language class. Because if we see the Metalinguistic feedback, both learners and teachers should master a great deal of metalinguistic knowledge. The electronic feedback requires that both teacher and students work with a computer that not all students could afford to have their computer or even not all school could provide the computer for all students. Furthermore, a reformulation needs a native to be the analyst.

Since others have written corrective feedback has some flaws in their implementation, there are two possible strategies: Direct and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback. Direct written corrective feedback means that the teacher marks the error and provides the correct form. There are many forms of this direct written corrective feedback (Ellis, 2008, p. 99). They are crossing out unnecessary words, phrases, or morpheme, inserting words or morpheme, and writing the correct form above or near the wrong word. However, the direct written corrective feedback hinders students' autonomous learning and may not contribute to long-term learning.

On the other hand, indirect written corrective feedback requires the teacher to mark an inevitable error without giving the correct form. Marking the error can be taken in the form of circling, underlining, and crossing. According to Lalande (1982:141), indirect Written Corrective Feedback leads to guided learning and problem-solving. It also encourages L2 learners to reflect on their linguistic form. Moreover, it leads to long-term learning. Another success story of Indirect Written Corrective Feedback was proposed by Ferris (2011:94). Indirect Written Corrective Feedback pushes L2 learners to be more reflective and analytical about their errors. The L2 learners must learn from the process, leading to their autonomous learning, which is beneficial for their long-life learning. If the goal is to sustain improvement in L2 learners' writing, indirect written corrective feedback is the best strategy. Furthermore, Ferris (2010:190) stated that the L2 learners prefer indirect written corrective feedback. Another study followed about the definition of Direct and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback; according to Van Beuningen's (2010), Direct written corrective feedback is when teachers indicate an error by providing the correct linguistic form and students respond to the feedback by correcting the error, while Indirect written corrective feedback is when teachers

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provide some clues to guide the students to produce the correct form instead of providing the target form explicitly.

The paper integrates collectively selected research papers as references to recent research and the views of Written Corrective Feedback. It determines the effectiveness of Direct Written Corrective Feedback and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback to accomplish the L2 learners' English competency.

## Method

To give some views about Written Corrective Feedback and determine the effectiveness of Written Corrective Feedback and how to accomplish the students' English competency by implementing Indirect Written Corrective Feedback and Direct Written Corrective Feedback. The collective case study is represented in this research paper. The papers related to Written Corrective Feedback, Indirect Written Corrective Feedback, and Direct Corrective Feedback have been searched and analyzed. With the keywords, the phenomenon of learning EFL writing, the phenomenon of teachers' feedback, the concept of Written Corrective Feedback, the definition of Indirect Written Corrective Feedback, and Direct Written Corrective Feedback, five papers from 2011 to 2017 have been collected. To analyze the paper, the thematic analysis design is chosen.

Table 1. Selected papers for Literature Reviews

No.	Authors	Titles
1.	Sasan Baleghizadeh, Mehdi Dadashi	The Effect of Direct and Indirect Corrective Feedback on Students' Spelling Errors
2.	Ye Han	The Intra- and Inter-Task Effectiveness of Direct and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback
3.	Fastha Bagus Shirotha	The Effect of Indirect Written Corrective Feedback on Students' Writing Accuracy
4.	Fatemeh Poorebrahim	Indirect Written Corrective Feedback, Revision, And Learning
5.	Kok Eng Tan, Apinya Manochphinyo	Improving Grammatical Accuracy in Thai Learners' Writing: Comparing Direct and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback

## Findings and Discussion

### Participant

Participants in most of the studies were university students with various background English proficiency and were in English foreign language context where the exposure for English may be more limited. The students were twelve EFL learners with low intermediate English proficiency from Chinese University English class (Ye Han,2012), one-hundred and twenty students of Thai EFL Undergraduate students from two Thai public Universities (Kok Eng Tan & Apinya Manochphinyo,2017), thirty-five Indonesian college students majoring in the non-English department (Fastha Bagus Shirotha,2016). However, despite limited exposure to English, university students have studied some basic English writing mechanics and experienced the various stages of the writing process. In two other studies, the participants still studied at Junior High School. The participants were selected from two different villages in the Znjonrood district in Iran, consisting of twenty-two male students. Each was third graders of junior high school (Sasan Baleghizadeh & Mehdi Dadashi,2011), and another one was Senior High School students. The participants consisted of twenty EFL students, ten males, and ten females, who had signed up for a general English course at a private English school in Maragheh, Iran (Fatemeh Poorebrahim,2017). It is essential to inform the study participants who studied at Senior High School were bilinguals. They spoke

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Turkish as their first language and Persians as their second language, and the students were studying English as their third language.

### ***Treatment***

The treatments that have been implemented in the studies were Written Corrective Feedback with two types of Corrective Feedback; Indirect Corrective Feedback and Direct Corrective Feedback. Direct Written Corrective Feedback involved teachers or lecturers correcting students' errors and helping the students by providing the correct grammatical form and language form. In Indirect Written Corrective Feedback, the teachers indicated the students' errors using a list of codes known to both teachers and students. Some studies' feedback was given by Direct Written Corrective Feedback and Indirect Corrective Feedback (Kok Eng Tan & Apinya Manochphinyo, 2017; Sasan Baleghizadeh & Mehdi Dadashi, 2011; Ye Han, 2012). Although the same treatment has been applied for previous studies, the type and frequency were different. Nevertheless, the most crucial of these studies feedback was nurtured; it was implemented by giving several writing pieces throughout a certain length of time. The two other studies were implemented by Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (Fateme Poorebrahim, 2017; Fastha Bagus Shirotha, 2016).

Based on the treatments implemented in these studies, some consideration is whether Indirect Written Corrective Feedback is more effective than Direct Written Corrective Feedback. For sure, both Indirect Written Corrective Feedback and Direct Written Corrective Feedback were effective when the students needed to revise the writing texts. While the differences between Indirect Written Corrective Feedback and Direct Written Corrective Feedback are in Indirect Written Corrective Feedback, students are assumed to comprehend and master the grammar or structure in Direct Written Corrective Feedback students are treated by teachers providing clues to guide students.

### ***The Treatment Length***

The length of Written Corrective Feedback treatment has become a consideration in the studies. The most compelling rebuttal of Written Corrective Feedback proposed by Truscott (1996:354) referred to the studies that consisted of short-term treatment. Because it was considered as a one-shot treatment, it also used one-shot designs with the feedback was provided only on one occasion and only to one single text. He also argued that Written Corrective Feedback should be banned because it could harm the students' writing.

On the contrary, according to Mitchener and Knoch (2009:208), written correct feedback continued the effect for over ten months. They found out that the students who studied and were treated with Written Corrective Feedback outperformed students who did not treat Written Corrective Feedback, and the effect could continue for over a ten-month period. The study implied that Written Corrective Feedback has a long-term effect. In the selected research papers, most of the researchers mentioned the limited length of treatment effect on most EFL students. Most of the researchers implemented the treatment for the length of about four to five weeks. The treatments were given in five meetings. The first meeting was used as the pre-test. The second, third, and fourth meetings were purposed to implement the treatment. The final meeting was used as the post-test meeting. Most of the studies had good results; even the treatment was implemented in a limited length of time. Further research and investigation should be done in a much longer time; it would create the results of the findings to be more persuasive and convincing.

### ***Instruments and Writing Prompt***

The instruments used in all selected research papers were pre-test and post-test writing. The writing tests have been designed based on the students' needs and levels. The tests were also purposed to measure the students' accuracy in writing. Then, the researchers designed a writing prompt that had some instructions. According to Putra (2011:11), the instruction should be designed as straightforward as possible, particularly on how many paragraphs should be made and timed controlled. The instruction of writing prompt has been designed for the students to produce the writing essay that consists of three paragraphs, namely introductory, body, and concluding paragraph. Next, the writing prompt also provided the students with a score based on the organization, relevant vocabulary, language use, and the usage of accurate mechanics.

Despite the similarities in the instrument's usage for the selected research papers, the different writing prompts have been selected. Therefore, writing is one skill that is very crucial for university students

who need to fulfill a range of written assignments and sit for written examinations. University students find writing task is challenging since it pushes them to think critically and creatively. Simultaneously, the EFL students experience some difficulties in producing sentences that grammatically correct and accurate to deliver the students' thoughts. The two selected research papers from the University EFL students used Narrative essays (Fatha Bagus Shirotha,2016; Ye Han,2012). Others consisted of university EFL students, and EFL senior high school students used Argumentative essay (Fatemeh,2017; Kok Eng Tan & Apinya Manochphinyo,2017). Another selected research paper was emphasized dictation (Sasan Baleghizadeh & Mehdi Dadashi, 2011).

### ***The Effectiveness of the Written Corrective Feedback***

Based on Van et al. (2012:31), written correct feedback effectively activates students' writing accuracy on the new text. He found out that comprehensive corrective feedback activates students to boost their linguistic correctness of a particular text during the writing revision and on a new piece of writing. The positive effect of comprehensive written corrective feedback was indicated to be sustained. Even the students' accuracy was achieved on a new piece of writing. They also stated that even a single written corrective feedback treatment profoundly has a long-lasting positive effect four weeks later. To answer the question of this study, the selected research papers have been examined to determine whether Written Corrective Feedback is effective enough to enhance students' writing ability, particularly in the usage of Indirect Written Corrective Feedback and Direct Written Corrective Feedback.

Shirota (2016) investigates the effect of Indirect Written Corrective Feedback on students' writing accuracy. To determine whether the feedback was effective or not, he measured using the t-test results that showed the Indirect Written Corrective Feedback had a significantly higher effect on students' writing accuracy. The author confidently suggested implementing Written Corrective Feedback for the teachers, especially Indirect Written Corrective Feedback, since Indirect Written Corrective Feedback has proven to be an effective tool in enhancing students' writing accuracy.

Poorebrahim has conducted the opposite result (2017) and compares two groups of Iranian learners in revising their papers using Indirect Written Corrective Feedback. Based on the evidence from her study, students' ability to revise the writing texts using Indirect Written Corrective Feedback resulted in students pushing out their knowledge over their limitations. In her study, it is more effective for the students to underline students' written errors.

Kok Eng Tan and Apinya Manochphinyo (2017) compare Direct Written Corrective Feedback and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback to improve Grammatical Accuracy in Thai Learners' writing. Their study has shown valuable findings that can give some information about writing instructions and written correctional feedback in the Thai EFL university context. Direct Written Corrective Feedback and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback generally could not effectively help the students to enhance the accuracy in tenses, subject-verb agreement, articles, and prepositions, in a short period and directly after treatment. However, their study shows a significant long-term improvement for the students who received Indirect Written Corrective Feedback. It showed in their study that Indirect Written Corrective Feedback has a more learner-centered approach.

In Han's (2012) studies, the Intra- and Inter-task Effectiveness of Direct and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback, the results indicate that Direct Written Corrective Feedback effectively improves and continues great accuracy in the usage of simple past tense. In contrast, the Indirect Written Corrective Feedback has improved in a short period. She also mentioned the effectiveness of Direct Written Corrective Feedback found in the present study is consistent with the previous studies that Direct Written Corrective Feedback can enhance students' writing accuracy with the same text within a short period (Ashwell,2000; Fathman & Walley,1990; Ferris,1999; 2004; 2006; Ferris & Roberts,2001)

Sasan Baleghizadeh and Mehdi Dadashi (2011) examine the effect of Direct and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback on students' spelling errors. The study presented in their research is an experiment to examine the role of Indirect Written Corrective Feedback in promoting junior high school students' spelling accuracy in English. The study shows the comparison between the effect of Direct Written Corrective Feedback and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback on students' written work dictated by their teacher who dictated from their textbooks. Their study shows that by getting Indirect Written Feedback from the teacher, the students can act on their initiative in production. In contrast, when getting Direct Written Corrective Feedback, the correct forms are provided by the teacher to be copied for the student. This act can lead the

students to be dependent on their teacher. Their study also reveals that receiving Direct Written Corrective Feedback without the students being engaged in the written tasks revision and the correction process is not effective and desirable in enhancing the students' spelling accuracy in such a classroom. Therefore, it is advantageous to construct additional classroom activities where the students can involve and engage themselves in the revision process and self-correction.

## Conclusions

The collectively selected research papers give a more transparent comprehension of what Written Corrective Feedback is. Based on the findings of this study, there are some enlightenments for teachers, especially for teachers who teach EFL students. The studies show that the teachers must choose the suitable written corrective feedback type depending on the feedback's goals. Particularly for using two types of feedback: Indirect Written Corrective Feedback and Direct Written Corrective Feedback. When the teachers' purpose is to help the students make revisions and corrections on their writing works, they could help them give and explain to them explicitly. For some students, more explicit feedback options are more advantageous. However, if the teachers' goal is to help the students enhance and improve their knowledge, the teachers could help them explain implicitly—the benefit of using more implicit feedback when the goal has two sides. For the teachers, by giving the feedback implicitly, the feedback becomes less time-consuming. The correction and revision process becomes more a problem-solving task for the students, which promotes the students to learn autonomously. Therefore, it is essential to design writing activities to involve and engage themselves in the learning process.

Nonetheless, most of the selected research studies have some limitations. First, the small sample size from specific universities or schools is highly likely to present limited value when a larger student population is needed. So, one should be cautious about generalizing the findings to other educational departments or institutions in the related countries. The future study should conclude the participation of more participants since it would have created the results of the findings to be more persuasive and convincing. Second, the variables of length and frequency of the study treatments should be done more investigations.

Following some solutions to the identified constraints could be explored. A Written Corrective Feedback study might give beneficial solutions that will investigate influential factors influencing EFL students, especially in their writing performance. In this way, the corrective feedback treatments could be improved, and even new feedback techniques could be designed. As a result of this, the present paper has tried to provide some related research papers and present a thematic approach and results from previous studies briefly. The expectation is to help the researcher set a ground for future studies on written corrective feedback to enhance student's writing performance.

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