THE IMPACT OF FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING AT THE SIXTH SEMESTER OF STATE COLLEGE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES (STAIN) AT KEDIRI

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This article aims at investigating the impact of feedback on students' writing. In relation to this objective, this paper reviewed a research article written by Marzban and Arabahmadi (2013), and supported it by giving more empirical findings. Twenty four students were randomly selected and assigned into four groups: three experimental groups and one control group, and were asked to write a narrative paragraph. On the students' writing, different types of feedback were given to the experimental groups, and no feedback was given to the control group. One week later, the writings were returned back, and the students were asked to understand the feedback given. Several minutes later, the students were asked to write the second writing on the same topic. All students' writings were assessed using the ESL Composition Profile. A comparison of the first and second writing using descriptive statistics showed that all components of students' writing: content, organization, and language use, improved. The writing improvement of the experimental groups outperformed the control group. Furthermore, through ANOVA calculation, there was significant difference between group 1 and group 4 for the overall score. The result of this study seemed to support the benefit of feedback in improving students' writing.

Key words: feedback, writing quality, narrative paragraph.

INTRODUCTION

The provision of feedback in the process of writing has been increasingly highlighted. Feedback on students' writing is widely believed that it has positive effect. It is kind of a language input for students guiding them to the areas for improvement (Lewis, 2002: 4). By giving feedback, students can identify their strengths and weaknesses on their writing, and it leads to have writing improvement. A study on the effect of feedback on EFL students' writing has been conducted by Marzban and Arabahmadi (2013). They argue that giving feedback on students' writing is one of the best ways to teach L2 writing. They also argue that feedback on writing would help students more easily in understanding English grammar rules. Based on the arguments, Marzban and Arabahmadi investigated the effect of written corrective feedback on Iranian EFL students' writing (p. 1000). More specifically, the purpose of the study was to examine whether indirect written corrective feedback affected the students' accuracy in the use of 'conditionals' and 'wish' statement, fluency, and

complexity of writing, and also affected the students' understanding in a certain grammar rule.

The Marzban and Arabahmadi's study involved 32 EFL students out of 49 female students who were from two intact intermediate classes at the private institute in Iran. The participants were randomly assigned into two groups: the treatment group which consisted of 17 students, and the control group which consisted of 15 students. The participants of the study received writing and grammar classes during the co urse of the study. Both classes met twice a week with 105 minutes of language instruction for each session.

Writing tests and multiple-choice grammar tests were administered to the students for both the treatment and the control groups before and after getting feedback. From the analysis using statistics computation, the study revealed that the provision of indirect corrective feedback improved the students' writing. More specifically, the results showed that the provision of the feedback:
▪ improve the accuracy of students' writing significantly.
▪ did not improve significantly the fluency and the complexity of students' writing.
▪ significantly better than the traditional approach in grammar instruction. It helps students to understand English grammar ruler more easily from their own mistakes by applying their grammar knowledge in writing.

The results of study conducted by Marzban and Arabahmadi have inspired the present study. It tried to investigate further the effect of corrective feedback on students' writing. However, it differs from the previous study in the feedback provision. Unlike Marzban and Arabahmadi's study, this study involved different types of feedback. If the previous study examined only indirect corrective feedback on students' writing, the present study examined direct and indirect corrective feedback. Moreover, two more types of feedback were also examined. The first is the addition form of direct corrective feedback, i.e. direct corrective feedback and comment, and the second was type of student self-correction.

Like Marzban and Arabahmadi's study, the present study is experimental pretest-treatment-posttest research design. It was intended to examine the impact of different types of feedback as the treatment on the writings of some groups of students. However, unlike Marzban and Arabahmadi's study which focused on a certain linguistics errors, i.e. the accuracy, fluency and complexity of the use of 'conditionals' and 'wish' statements, the present study focused more on overall performance of students' writing. The use of an analytical scoring rubric as the measuring instrument would show the students' overall performance in English writing. Based on the differences, the research question of the present study was formulated as follows:

"To what extent do types of feedback determine students' overall performance in English writing?"

METHOD

1. Participants

Twenty four English Department students of the State College for Islamic Studies (STAIN) at Kediri were involved in the present study. When the study was conducted, the students were at sixth semester and had already taken all

writing courses: the Writing I course which focuses on sentence building/construction, the Writing II course which emphasizes paragraph development, the Writing III course which stresses writing different kind of essay, and the Scientific Writing course which focuses on journal article writing. The reason of choosing them as the participants was that they had been familiar with all types of texts; therefore, they would not be confused about the text type used in this study.

The students were chosen and randomly assigned into four groups: three experimental groups and one control group. In the experimental groups, different types of feedback were given: direct corrective feedback and comment for group 1, direct corrective feedback only for group 2, and indirect corrective feedback for group 3. However, no feedback was given to the group 4, the control group; the students just did self-correctio. Then, the provision of feedback on students' writing was considered one way to improve the quality of students' writing. To achieve this, two writing tests were given to the students before and after the provision of feedback.

2. The First Writing Test

In the first writing test, the students were asked to write a narrative paragraph. The general topic was about an unforgettable experience in life; however, each student might have own story which might be different story with the others. The students were asked to write a paragraph of about 100 words. Ten minutes were allocated for the completion of the writing task.

3. Types of Feedback Given

Different types of feedback were given to students' writing. First, direct corrective feedback (DCF) was given by providing the correct linguistic form or structure above or near the linguistic error. It may include the crossing out of an unnecessary word/phrase/morpheme, the insertion of a missing word/phrase/morpheme, or the provision of the correct form or structure (Bitchener, 2008: 105; Ferris, 2003). For example, the sentence below was found in the student's paragraph which contained an error, and then DCF was given.

One months ago, my friend ask me to went to Kelud Mountain.

   month   asked   go
One ~~months~~ ago, my friend ~~ask~~ me to ~~went~~ to Kelud Mountain.

writing. The comment given was focused more on content and organization of the paragraphs.

Next, indirect corrective feedback (ICF) was given by indicating in some way an error had been made. The indicators may be in one of four ways: underlining or circling the errors, recording in the margin the number of errors in a given line, or using a code to show where the error has occurred and what type of error it is (Ferris & Robert, 2001). In this kind of feedback, the researcher just provided an explicit correction, and then the students were left to resolve and correct the problems/errors that had been drawn to their attention. The example of ICF given was as follow.

> One months ago, my friend ask me to went to Kelud Mountain.
>
> One <u>months</u> ago, my friend <u>ask</u> me to <u>went</u> to Kelud Mountain.

...udents' writing, the writings were returned back to the students. It was done one week after the first writing test. They were asked to understand the feedback given; however, for students in the control group, they just asked to do self-correction on their first writings.

4. The Second Writing Test

Having finished understanding the feedback given on the first writings, all of the students were asked to do the second writing test. In this test, they were asked to write another narrative paragraph about the same topic that they had written in the first writing. The same topic was chosen in order to control effects on writing that might be caused by a difference topic. Similar to the first writing test, the students in the second writing test were also asked to write a paragraph of about 100 words, and within the same period of time, ten minutes. The quality of students' writing performance was assessed using an analytical scoring rubric.

5. Measuring Overall Performance of Students' Writing

The assessment of the students' overall performance in English writing was conducted by using the analytical scoring rubric for writing adapted from Heaton's scoring rubric (1988) with some modifications. An analytical scoring rubric was taken into consideration thoroughly since the systematic application of level-appropriate, clear, and specific scoring criteria have been shown as the important factors in increasing rater reliability. It provides the raters with a standard by which to score paper consistently (Brown, 1996; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998).

The modifications were in the components used and the range of scoring. In the Heaton's scoring rubric, there were five features to be scored: content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. However, in the present study, there were three features in the scoring rubric: content of writing, organization and language use of writing. Vocabulary feature was included in the language use; however, spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and handwriting were not taken into consideration by raters since the appearance of the text or surface level features can influence judgments about writing quality (Graham, 1999). Therefore, the researcher prioritized the aspect of content, organization and language use in writing. It is in line with the statement that the EFL students must learn to write for a communicative purpose, concentrate more on how to put their message to the readers rather than concentrate on avoiding mistakes (Liu, 1991; Lopes, 1991, Ur, 2006).

6. Analyses

Statistical analyses were employed to examine the improvement of the students' writing, before and after the treatment, and the differences of the improvement in the paragraphs among the groups. Descriptive statistics were used for group means and standard deviation of the means. ANOVA computation was

carried out for test of statistical significance, and Post hoc analysis using Tukey HSD was then employed as the follow up test, to know which groups of means were different.

RESULTS

From the analyses using PASW Statistics 18, the descriptive statistics revealed the means and the standard deviation of the first and the second writings (See Table 1). All students' writing, from the first to the second writing, improved. However, the writing improvement of the first group outperformed the other groups (See Figure 1). The means score of the first groups' writing improved from 5.8 in the first writing to 11 in the second writing. While the improvement of the second group was from 6.5 to 10.5; the third group was from 5 to 9.5; then the fourth group was 6 to 7.5.

Table 1. The Descriptive Statistics of Students' First and Second Writing

Groups	First Writing		Second writing	
	M	S.D.	*M*	S.D
1. DCF, C	5.8333	.75277	11.0000	1.26491
2. DCF	6.5000	1.76068	10.5000	1.76068
3. ICF	5.0000	1.26491	9.5000	1.64317
4. SC	6.0000	2.19089	7.5000	2.88097

Notes:
DCF   : Direct Corrective Feedback
C   : Comment
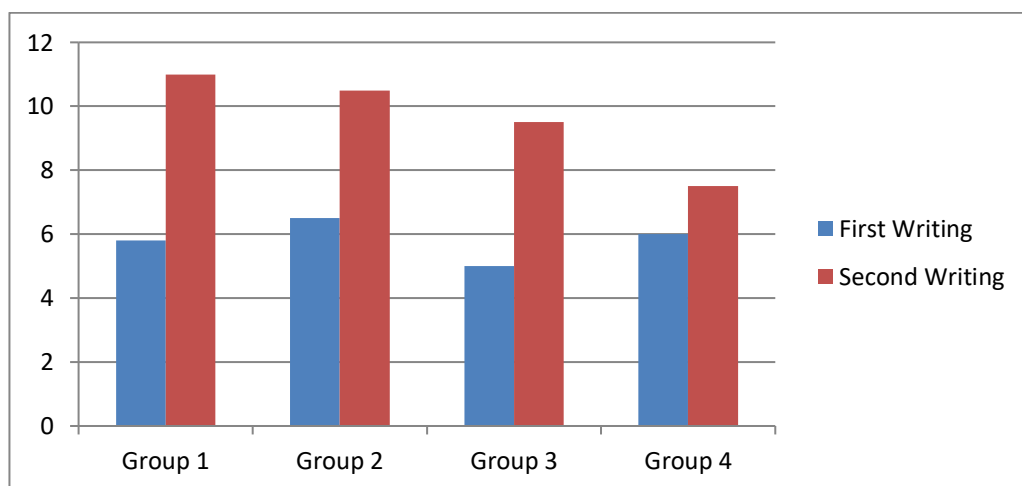ICF   : Indirect Corrective Feedback
SC   : Self Correction

Figure 1. The Writing Improvement from the First to the Second Writing

The result of ANOVA test for the overall score of writing is presented in Table 2. The significance value obtained is .030, and it is smaller than the significance level (.05). Therefore, there is significant difference among the means of the groups. From Post hoc analysis using Tukey HSD (see Table 3), it reveals that the significant difference is between group 1 and group 4. The means score of group 1 is 11, and group 4 is 7.5; therefore, the type of corrective feedback given

to group 1 is more effective in helping students to produce better writing than group 4. However, there is no significant difference among three types of feedback given to group 1, group 2 and group 3. Other test using ANOVA for each components of writing (content, organization, and language use) revealed that there was no significant difference among the means.

Table 2. The Result of ANOVA test on Overall Score of Writing

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	43.125	3	14.375	3.662	.030
Within Groups	78.500	20	3.925		
Total	121.625	23			

Table 3. The Result of Post Hoc Analysis Using Tukey HSD

(I) VAR00016	(J) VAR00016		Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
1,00	dime	2.00	.50000	1.14382	.971	-2.7015	3.7015
	nsion	3.00	1.50000	1.14382	.567	-1.7015	4.7015
	3	4.00	3.50000*	1.14382	.029	.2985	6.7015
2,00	dime	1.00	-.50000	1.14382	.971	-3.7015	2.7015
	nsion	3.00	1.00000	1.14382	.818	-2.2015	4.2015
dime nsion 2	3	4.00	3.00000	1.14382	.071	-.2015	6.2015
3,00	dime	1.00	-1.50000	1.14382	.567	-4.7015	1.7015
	nsion	2.00	-1.00000	1.14382	.818	-4.2015	2.2015
	3	4.00	2.00000	1.14382	.326	-1.2015	5.2015
4,00	dime	1.00	-3.50000*	1.14382	.029	-6.7015	-.2985
	nsion	2.00	-3.00000	1.14382	.071	-6.2015	.2015
	3	3.00	-2.00000	1.14382	.326	-5.2015	1.2015

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

DISCUSSION

The results of the study confirmed those in the previous studies on the effect of corrective feedback on students' writing. In line with Ashwell (2000) and Ferris and Roberts (2001), the study revealed that corrective feedback gives positive effect on students' writing. A comparison between the first and the second writing using descriptive statistics showed that all types of corrective feedback can improve students' writing.

In relating the result of the study to Marzban and Arabahmadi's findings, it is found that written corrective feedback were effective in improving students' writing, especially on accuracy. The possible cause is the benefit of feedback in which it is a kind of information and language input for students to improve their writing (Lewis, 2002). Feedback helps students' to identify their strengths and weaknesses on their performance (in general and specific components) (Straub,

1997). The feedback given also can be an advice and motivation for students to do revision on their writing.

Furthermore, Marzban and Arabahmadi's findings also showed that written corrective feedback did not improve significantly the fluency and complexity of the students' writing. Even though there were improvement of students' writing in terms of fluency and complexity, before and after the treatment, they were not significant. However, there was significant difference between written corrective feedback and traditional approach in grammar instruction. Written corrective feedback was significantly better than the traditional approach.

Unlike Marzban and Arabahmadi's study, the present study indicated the overall performance of students' writing. This study revealed that there was significant difference among the means of the groups in term of overall performance (which included components of content, organization, and language use). The significant difference was between group 1 and group 4. This result was in line with the previous studies that students' who received corrective feedback outperformed those who did not receive corrective feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sheen, 2007). However, the study also showed that there was no significant difference among the three types of feedback given: direct corrective feedback and comment, direct corrective feedback, and indirect corrective feedback.

The study, however, found that there was no significant difference among the means of the groups in term of writing components: content, organization and language use. Although there was improvement of the components from the first to the second writing, the improvement was not significant in term of writing components. The possible causes were about the length of time in doing the research and unfocused corrective feedback given. The short-term effect research could not see the significant difference among the means of the groups; moreover, when the type of corrective feedback given was unfocused, but in general: the content, organization and language use. This result actually confirmed what Ferris (1999) and Bitchener (2008) stated that corrective feedback given should be clear, consistent, on a certain linguistics error, and in limited contexts.

Finally, both studies had the same limitations in that the time duration of giving treatment was very short. The treatment was just in the form of feedback given on the students' writing, and they understood the feedback at several minutes, then they directly did the second writing. In addition, another limitation especially of the present study is concerned with the involvement of only one rater in the scoring process. The results would be more reliable if two raters involved in the scoring. These limitations might be addressed by further research on the relevant issues.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The findings of the study concluded that different types of feedback gave positive impact on students' writing. The descriptive statistics indicated the writing improvement of all the groups from the first writing to the second writing. Further analysis then indicated that there was significant difference among the writing performance of the groups in the second writing. The combination of direct corrective feedback and comment on students' writing gave greatest

positive impact on the students' overall performance. The present study and the earlier study by Marzban and Arabahmadi had been achieved the purpose of investigating the impact of feedback on students' writing. The findings might be useful for teachers who would like to provide feedback on their students' writing, either by using direct feedback, indirect feedback or by using the modification of them (e.g. included comment). The existence of feedback would also provide a chance for the students to have self-autonomous learning. They would be more aware on their strengths and weaknesses in writing, and it would be more beneficial in their further learning.

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