

# THE EFFECT OF DIFFERENT FEEDBACK ON WRITING QUALITY OF COLLEGE STUDENTS WITH DIFFERENT COGNITIVE STYLES

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## Abstract

Feedback provision in the process of writing has been believed that it is beneficial. However, different strategies of providing feedback may affect differently on writing quality of students. This study aimed at investigating the effect of different feedback provision on the writing quality of students having different cognitive styles. By conducting an experimental through a factorial research design, fifty-five of the fourth semester English students of STAIN Kediri were involved in this study. For analyzing the data, a two-way ANOVA was employed. The findings revealed that the effect of different feedback on writing quality of the students does not depend on the students' cognitive styles. The result of the main effect analysis revealed that there was no significant difference on writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback and those getting indirect corrective feedback.

**Key words:** *Different feedback, writing quality, cognitive styles*

## Introduction

Giving feedback in the process of writing is important to improve students' writing quality (Brown, 2001: 335). The importance of giving feedback on students' writing is equal to the importance of doing revisions and/or editing in the writing process. Feedback given is as a source of information about the students' strengths and weaknesses on their writing to do improvement. Feedback is information that is given to the learner with the objective of improving the performance (Ur, 1996: 242).

Feedback in the process of writing has been concerned by many researchers (e.g. Ferris, 2005; Truscott, 2007; Bitchener and Knoch, 2010) in second/foreign language writing. Giving feedback means telling learners about the progress they are making as well as guiding them to areas for improvement (Lewis, 2002: ii). Through feedback given, learners are expected to be able to focus and concentrate more on what is being learned. Furthermore, feedback given by a teacher makes learners more aware of their strengths and weaknesses in a learning course so that it is expected that they can use the strengths to overcome the weaknesses by understanding the feedback given.

Studies on the effectiveness of feedback on students' writing have been conducted (e.g. Bitchener, Young, and Cameron, 2005; Truscott and Hsu, 2008); however, the research findings are still conflicting and inconclusive. Some studies reveal that there is no positive effect of feedback on students' writing. Error correction or feedback has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned; it is harmful because it diverts time and energy away from the more productive aspects of a writing program (Truscott, 1999, 2007; Truscott and Hsu, 2008). Truscott (1999) states that researchers and teachers should acknowledge that grammar correction is, in general, a bad idea until further research demonstrates that there are specific cases in which it may not be a totally

misguided practice. He also states that the further research focus should give attention to investigating which methods, techniques, or approaches to error correction which lead to short-term or long-term improvement, and whether students make better progress in monitoring for certain types of errors than others. Research conducted by Truscott and Hsu (2008: 292) reveals that the corrections do not have effect on students' writing development. The improvements made during revisions are not evident on the effectiveness of correction for improving students' writing ability.

Other studies reveal that there is a positive effect of feedback on students' writing. Corrective feedback on ESL/EFL students' writing is effective to improve their writing (Ferris, 1999; Bitchener et al., 2005). In his study, Ferris (1999) claims that it is not possible to dismiss corrections in general as it depends on the quality of the correction; if the correction is clear and consistent, it will work. Bitchener et al. (2005: 191) found that the provision of feedback can improve the students' accuracy in writing. The combination of written and conference feedback can significantly improve students' writing accuracy levels in the use of the past simple tense and the definite article in a new piece of writing.

The other studies also investigate whether certain types of corrective feedback are more likely than others to help students improve their writing quality. Some of them distinguish between direct and indirect feedback techniques and the effects in facilitating the improvement of writing quality (Ferris and Helt, 2000; Chandler, 2003). Direct corrective feedback is defined as the provision of 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; Ellis, 2009: 98). In his study, Bitchener (2008: 110) also added varied forms of direct corrective feedback; those are meta-linguistic explanation and/or oral meta-linguistic explanation. Indirect corrective feedback takes place when an incorrect form is indicated, but no correct form is made available. The indicators may be in one of four ways: underlining or circling the error, 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 errors it is (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Bitchener, 2008; Ellis, 2009). Hence, students getting direct corrective feedback are expected to have better writing quality than students getting indirect corrective feedback since there is a provision of the correct forms of the errors in direct corrective feedback.

The strategies of providing written corrective feedback, therefore, require further research as whether it should be given directly or indirectly. Direct corrective feedback is a type of feedback given to students' writing by providing the correct form above or near the errors (or mistake). Meanwhile, indirect corrective feedback is a type of feedback given to students' writing by indicating an error which has been made by students on their writing, but the correct form of the error is not provided. The previous studies show conflicting findings in these two strategies on students' writing especially on grammatical accuracy. Some researchers (Ferris and Helt, 2000; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Marzban and Arabahmadi, 2013) argue that indirect corrective feedback contributes to students' writing especially on accuracy better than direct corrective feedback does. Lalande (1982) and James (1998) explain in their studies that indirect feedback requires learners to engage in guided learning and problem solving and therefore, it promotes the type of reflection that is more likely to foster long-term acquisition.

Furthermore, other studies also support the previous findings. Ferris and Helt (2000) conducted their study in investigating the effect of direct corrective feedback,

indirect corrective (coded and non-coded), and notes (marginal and end-of-text) on text revision of students' writing. This study was conducted on ninety two ESL university students in the USA. They found that indirect corrective feedback is more effective than direct corrective feedback. Marzban and Arabahmadi (2013) conducted a study with Iranian university students revealing that the provision of indirect written corrective feedback on students' writing has a significant effect on students' writing accuracy, especially on the use of 'conditionals' and 'wish' statement.

However, other studies do not arrive at the same conclusions. Some researchers (e.g. Chandler, 2003; Bitchener et al., 2005; Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener and Knoch, 2010; Alroe, 2011)) believe that direct corrective feedback and also its variation are effective in improving accuracy on students' writing. In his study, Chandler (2003) reveals that direct corrective feedback is more effective than indirect corrective feedback in improving students' writing. Meanwhile, Bitchener (2008: 115) found that the accuracy of students who receive direct written corrective feedback in the immediate post-test outperforms those in the control group, and this level of performance is retained two months later. Alroe's study (2011) also found that error correction can produce significant benefits.

The findings of the above studies support the theories that the provision of direct corrective feedback gives better effect on students' writing. Therefore, the present study attempts to provide an answer to the existing conflicting findings about the two strategies (direct or indirect) and presents a clear result which is relevant to Indonesian EFL learners' context. It investigates the effect of different feedback (direct and indirect corrective feedback) on students' expository writing.

Some other studies on feedback investigate not only the development of grammatical competence, but also the various dimensions of feedback as a pedagogical tool, from the perspective of both teachers and learners. The studies contribute to give a clearer picture of not only what feedback is used for (improving grammatical or rhetorical competence, encouraging students to write, etc.), but also how it is administered by the teachers and how it is perceived by the students (Guénette, 2007). Guénette (2007: 50) states that feedback is ineffective partly because it is inconsistently provided by teachers. In their study, Hyland and Hyland (2001) found that even teachers offer praise, it is often perceived by students as a way to soften criticism rather than encouragement to keep trying and writing which may lead or not to more fluency and accuracy. Another factor is the ability (or inability) of students to engage in revisions after receiving feedback from the teacher.

Other studies also have similar findings to the previous research in terms of the learners' perception on feedback. A study conducted by Hyland (2003) found that among the reasons cited by the students for not correcting their errors in their writing, is the fact that they often misunderstand their teachers' comments or suggestions. He also found that the types of errors as well as the level of proficiency of students are important variables in their ability to do self-correction. Lee's study (2008b) found that high proficient students are more positive than low proficient students in terms of their understanding of the teacher feedback, the ability to correct the errors, and the view of the usefulness of the feedback. The merit of the studies mentioned above is that they reveal other dimensions of feedback, such as students' ability to engage with feedback, the type of errors that benefit from feedback, the inconsistency of feedback provided by

teacher, students' perceptions and preferences, and individual differences (Guénette, 2007: 50).

Studies on the effect of individual differences in perceiving and understanding feedback have been conducted (e.g. Guénette, 2007; Lee, 2008b); however, studies including students' cognitive styles as the individual differences have not been clear yet. Cognitive styles discuss the preferred way in which individuals process information or approach a task (Larsen-Freeman & Long, 1991: 192). Cognitive styles are information transformation processes whereby objective stimuli are interpreted into meaningful schema (Goldstein & Blackman, 1978: 4). It is a consistent way of functioning that reflects underlying causes of behavior, and a way in which an individual student acquires, retains and retrieves information, and in this study is feedback, to learn.

Concerning the notion of feedback as "information" given to the students, the way the students perceive and understand the "information" (students' cognitive styles) would influence the effectiveness of the feedback given. A certain strategy of feedback provision might be more appropriate for certain type of students' cognitive styles. As a consequence, then in the present study, the researcher extends the line of the research exploring the effect of different feedback and students' cognitive styles as well on students' writing quality.

However, there is not enough empirical evidence to support the theoretical claim of the effect of cognitive style on students' learning, especially on EFL writing. To the researcher's best knowledge, no studies have investigated the effect different feedback and students' cognitive styles on students' writing quality in a single controlled study. Ultimately, this is the first of such an investigation.

In the present study, there is an expectation that by knowing the students' cognitive styles, teachers can provide the more appropriate strategy of providing feedback (directly or indirectly) for their students to improve their writing quality. The strategy of feedback given can be matched to accommodate the students' need. Therefore, this study gives further research-based information about the effect of different types of feedback and the students' cognitive styles on the students' writing quality. With this regard, the present study was designed to address the research questions as follows.

1. Is there any significant difference between the writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback and that of those getting indirect corrective feedback across their cognitive styles?
2. Is there any significant difference between the writing quality of field independent students getting direct corrective feedback and that of those getting indirect corrective feedback?
3. Is there any significant difference between the writing quality of field dependent students getting direct corrective feedback and that of those getting indirect corrective feedback?
4. Is there any significant difference between the writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback and that of those getting indirect corrective feedback?

### **Teaching of Writing in Indonesian Context**

Writing as one of English language skills, is widely believed by most Indonesian learners as a difficult skill to be acquired. There are some reasons why writing is considered as a difficult language skill for most of EFL learners. Firstly, in writing, learners do not only have to initiate the idea but also have to develop the idea into unified

thought. Next, writing is also believed to be the most complex skill among other language skills (Richards and Renandya 2002). Moreover, writing as the language skill is rarely done or at least used by most people even in their native language.

Referring to the complexity of the writing, learners in writing an essay will rely on at least four types of knowledge (O'Malley and Pierce, 1996: 136-137). The first type is knowledge of the content which means conducting a memory search and calling on prior knowledge and experience. In this case, the learners generate the idea through what they see and hear. The second is knowledge to organize the content. The learners group the ideas and sequence the ideas in ways that match the purposes of the writing. The third type is knowledge of convention of writing. They have to be familiar with the various ways of organizing different types of writing and expressing meaning through syntactic construction and writing convention (e.g., formatting and mechanics). The last type is procedural knowledge to require applying the three other types of knowledge in composing a written product.

### **Feedback in the Process of Writing**

Referring to the complexity of writing, an appropriate approach of teaching writing is un-doubtedly important, and process-oriented instruction is the appropriate one. In the process-oriented approach, writing is viewed as a creative process consisting of a series of stages occurring recursively throughout the process and building on one another. This approach focuses on what goes on when learners write, and what the teacher can do to help the learners acquire the natural writing process (Cahyono, 2002: 57). Writing as a process means that teachers focus more on the process of writing in which consists of some stages: prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing. Then, the importance of giving feedback on students' writing is equal with the importance of doing revision and/or editing in the process of writing.

Feedback is as a source of information about the students' strengths and weaknesses on their writing to do improvement. Feedback, actually, has two distinguishable components: assessment and correction (Ur, 1996: 242). In assessment, the students are simply informed how well or badly they have performed, for example, by giving a percentage grade on an exam, the response 'No' to an attempted answer to a question in class, or a comment such as 'Fair' at the end of a written assignment. In correction, some specific information is provided on aspects of the student's performance, for example, by giving explanation, or provision of betterment or other alternatives, or by eliciting of these from the student. Feedback on learning is kind of ongoing correction and assessment, directed at specific bits of student-produced language with the aim of bringing about improvement.

Feedback is crucial for both encouraging and consolidating learning in education. It needs learners to be more active and proactive in the feedback. Without understanding how students feel about and respond to teacher feedback, teachers may run the risk of continually using strategies that are counter-productive. As teachers give feedback on student's writing, it is crucial that students' responses to the feedback are fed back to teachers as a heuristic to help them develop reflective and effective feedback practices (Lee, 2008b: 144-165).

### **Types of Written Feedback**

Some experts classify the type of feedback based on the ways or strategies used in providing feedback. Ferris and Roberts classify types of feedback into two namely direct and indirect feedback (Ferris and Roberts, 2001: 161-184). The other types of feedback are focused and unfocused feedback proposed by Ellis, Sheen, Murakami and Takashima (2008: 353-371). Furthermore, Ellis (2009b: 3-18) did not only proposed the two classifications of feedback but also other classifications namely, direct and indirect corrective feedback, metalinguistic corrective feedback, and electronic corrective feedback. All types of feedback will be discussed more in the following part.

#### **a. Direct Corrective Feedback**

Direct corrective feedback (DCF) may be defined as the provision of 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. Direct corrective feedback (DCF) may also have additional forms that are meta-linguistic explanation and/or oral meta-linguistic explanation. Meta-linguistic explanation means the provision of grammar rules and examples at the end of student's writing with a reference back to places in the text where the error has occurred. Then, oral meta-linguistic explanation means a mini-lesson where the rules and examples are presented, practiced, and discussed; one-on-one individual conferences between teacher and student or conferences between teacher and small groups of students (Bitchener, 2008: 105).

Ferris (2005) argues that directive corrective feedback is appropriate to be used if one of the following conditions is met. The first is when students are at beginning levels of English language proficiency. Then the errors are "nontreatable". The last is when the teacher wishes to focus student attention on particular error patterns but not others. In summary, direct corrective feedback can reduce the kind of confusion that can result when students fail to understand or remember the meaning of error codes used by teachers.

#### **b. Indirect Corrective Feedback**

Indirect corrective feedback (ICF) is a type of written feedback in which teacher indicates an error has been made by students on their writing, but the teacher does not give or provide the correct form of the error. The teacher just gives explicit correction on students' writing. Indirect corrective feedback is commonly presented by giving indicators. The indicators may be in one of four ways: recording in the margin the number of errors in a given line, using a code to show where the error has occurred and what type of error it is or underlining or circling the errors (Ferris and Roberts, 2001: 161-184).

Getting indirect corrective feedback, the learners need to discover their own error and correct it by themselves. In line with Ferris and Roberts, Lalande sees the importance of self-discovery and the impact it has on long-term sustainable improvement in writing (Lalande, 1982: 140-149). Ellis (2009a: 100) also claimed that indirect feedback where the exact location of errors is not shown might be more effective than direct feedback where the location of the error is shown. The reason is because the students would have to engage in deeper processing.

#### **c. Metalinguistic Corrective Feedback**

Metalinguistic corrective feedback is the process of providing a linguistic clue for the targeted error(s). It can be in the form of error codes or a brief grammatical

explanation. Studies applied metalinguistic corrective feedback are conducted by some experts e.g. Bitchener et al. (2005), Bitchener (2008), Lalande (1982), and Ellis (2012).

Bitchener's study (2008) revealed that the group receiving metalinguistic feedback (both oral and written) outperformed the other groups receiving metalinguistic feedback written only, no metalinguistic feedback, and no corrective feedback. Therefore, it can be proposed that the greater amounts of linguistic knowledge which are available to students provide greater benefit. It is also in line with Bitchener et al.'s study (2005: 191-205). However, both studies do not address the efficacy of the direct approach they employed. In reality, most classroom teachers may feel reluctant to correct written work entirely, without students first trying to solve their problems in a scaffolded manner. Ellis said that metalinguistic corrective feedback is favoured more by the students than by the teacher since metalinguistic explanations require the teacher to work harder on his/her part (Ellis, 2012).

#### **d. Focused and Unfocused Feedback**

The other types of feedback are focused and unfocused corrective feedback. Focused corrective feedback entails providing feedback on a small number of preselected forms, for example, on the verb use only or on the use of definitive or in-definitive article. Then, unfocused corrective feedback involves giving feedback on all or an array of errors. The corrective feedback is given not only on specific kind of the error but in all of the errors made by students (Ellis et al., 2008).

The other terms used to show focused and unfocused corrective feedback are selective and comprehensive corrective feedback. These types of feedback deal with the extent in which the language features in students' composition are targeted. Selective corrective feedback concentrates on one specific linguistic feature, regardless of the other errors that may occur in the writing. Meanwhile, comprehensive corrective feedback addresses all of the errors in the students' writing.

#### **e. Electronic Corrective Feedback**

Electronic corrective feedback is a strategy of providing feedback via computer-based means to draw attention to written errors. It is automated feedback provided by computer through sophisticated software system (hyperlink) which is readily available (Ellis, 2009a: 98). It can generate immediate evaluative feedback on students' writing. This type of feedback will surely follow suit in that the use of technology in the language class continues to grow. However, to keep up with this growth, there is a need for students to have consistent access to computer for their writing and subsequent analysis. It also becomes an issue for majority of teachers with limited resources or desire in using computer.

### **5.6 Reformulation**

Reformulation is a strategy of providing feedback or error correction through rewriting the second language student's composition by a first speaker of targeted language who maintains the general tone and content of the original work (Pariyanto, 2014: 36-37). Through seeing a native speaker's version of the text with proper syntax, lexical choices, and rhetorical structure, the second language writer is expected to learn from the correct(ed) model and appropriate the forms and approaches into his/her own work. However, it is obvious that this type of feedback as a widespread practice in error correction is impractical, if not possible. The teachers would need extra hours rewriting the entire compositions.

## Method

This study employed an experiment with a factorial design with random assignment. This research design was chosen since there were three variables employed (independent variable, dependent variable, and moderator variable). The provision of different types of feedback became the first factor (the main independent variable) affecting the dependent variable (the writing quality); meanwhile, the students' cognitive style was the second factor (moderator variable) which was also assumed to affect the dependent variable.

The subject of this study were fifty-five fourth semester students of the English Education Study Program of STAIN Kediri (thirty field independent students and twenty-five field dependent students). The subjects were randomly selected and assigned into different treatments (getting direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback) based on the research questions; however, they got all the treatments in different orders.

The instruments used in this study were the Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) and writing test. The Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) was used to collect the data about the students' cognitive styles. Then the writing test was used to collect the data about the quality of students' writing. The writing test was validated and tried out to the similar potential students. In scoring the students' writing, an analytical scoring rubric was used in this study. In the rubric, a piece of writing was rated on the basis of the quality of each feature that made-up the quality of the whole. It was also related to the feedback focus which was given to all components of writing (content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics).

To obtain the data needed, some procedures were taken by using the instruments. First, prior to the treatment, the students were asked to answer the Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) in nineteen minutes. Next, the students were asked to do the first writing test. After the students finished writing and submitted the essay, different types of feedback were given to students' writing as the first treatment. On their writing, field dependent students got direct corrective feedback, and field independent students got indirect corrective feedback. In the next meeting, the students were asked to revise their writing based on the feedback given. The revision versions of students' writing were as the effect of the first treatment. To collect the data in the next treatment, the same activities were carried out as the first treatment but in different orders of the feedback given.

Two raters were involved to score the students' writing, and Pearson Product Moment correlation was used to estimate the reliability of the scores. Then the inter-rater reliability coefficient obtained for the overall scores of indirect corrective feedback was .922 and .905 for the overall scores of direct corrective feedback. It indicated the very high positive correlation. In other words, the scores produced by the two raters were consistent (not significantly different). Consequently, it did not need to reassess the students' writings; then one of the products was reliable to be used for further data processing. In this sense, the scores produced by the first rater (the researcher herself) were chosen for the hypotheses testing.

In analyzing the data, all data obtained from the instruments were used to answer the research problems. The data obtained from Group Embedded Figure Test were scored by the researcher. Then Cronbach alpha reliability testing on the Group Embedded Figure Test (GEFT) was employed. The result of the computation showed



that the reliability coefficient was .907, which indicated a very high level of internal consistency. The data from the writing tests were scored by using an analytical scoring rubric, and an inter-rater method was employed. Two raters scored the students' writing anonymously and independently. In analyzing the data, a two-way ANOVA was employed; however, if there is no interaction between different feedback and students' cognitive styles, t-test would be employed to test the effect of different feedback on students' writing quality. The data of this study was computed by a means of SPSS 16.00 for Windows.

## Analysis and Findings

Before conducting an ANOVA, some statistical assumptions need to be fulfilled, namely the dependent variable needed to be normally distributed, and it had homogeneity of variances.

### 1. Normality Testing

The criteria of the data normality testing in this research used the general level of significance in Kolmogorov-Smirnov scale (Dornyei, 2011). The data distribution was normal if Sig.  $\geq$  .05. The summary of the computation result can be seen in Tabel 1.

**Table 1. The Summary of the Result of the Normality Testing**

Group of Treatment	First Writing	Second Writing
ICF	.204	.122
DCF	.398	.114

Notes : ICF : Indirect Corrective Feedback

DCF : Direct Corrective Feedback

Table 1 shows that the highest obtained value was .398, and the lowest obtained value was .114. Since all of the obtained values exceeded .05 (the level of significance in Kolmogorov-Smirnov), it revealed that the data did not deviate from the normal distribution. In other words, all the data produced by the samples looked like a bell-shaped curve. As the data distributions were normal then the data fulfilled the criteria to be used for testing the hypotheses.

### 2. Homogeneity of Variances Testing

The second statistical assumption was performing testing for homogeneity variances. In the present study, to fulfill the assumption of homogeneity of variance, Levene's test for equality of variances was employed (Dornyei, 2011). The variances of the data were equally homogeneous if Sig.  $\geq$  .05. The test result of homogeneity variances in the present study is presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. The Result of Homogeneity Testing of Variance**

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1.929	3	106	.129

Table 2 shows that the result of homogeneity testing of variances was .129; it is higher than .05 (the significance level of Levene's Test). Therefore, there was not enough evidence to state that the variance was not homogenous. In other words, the underlying assumption of homogeneity of variance had been met. From the results of data normality testing and homogeneity testing of variance, all of the assumptions were fulfilled. Based on these findings, parametric test using two-way ANOVA would be used to analyze the data

### 3. The Result of Statistical Analysis Using Two-Way ANOVA

As stated previously, parametric statistical analysis using two-way ANOVA was employed for testing the hypothesis of the study since all the statistical assumptions had been met. It was aimed at testing whether the mean scores of the groups of treatment were significantly different. The result of the analysis is presented in Table 3.

**Table 3. The Result of Statistical Analysis Using Two-Way ANOVA**

Dependent Variable: post test score

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	131.059	3	43.686	2.311	.080
Within Groups	2004.113	106	18.907		
Total	2135.173	109			

Table 3 shows that the value of the obtained level of significance was .080. It was greater than .05 level of significance ( $\alpha > p$ ). It meant that there was not enough evidence to reject the null hypothesis. As the null hypothesis could not be rejected, the alternative hypothesis could not be accepted. There was no interaction between types of feedback given and the students' cognitive styles on the students' writing quality. This meant that there was no significant difference in quality of writing between students getting direct corrective feedback and students getting indirect corrective feedback across their cognitive styles. It implies that the provision of different feedback, direct and indirect corrective feedback, did not make the writing quality of students significantly different across their cognitive styles. The effect of different feedback did not depend on the students' cognitive styles.

As the null hypothesis could not be rejected, the analysis could not go further to do post hoc analysis, to analyze the other hypothesis for the effect of students' cognitive styles. The next analysis would focus on the main effect (different feedback) on dependent variable (students' writing quality).

### 4. The Result of the Main Effect Analysis Using T-Test

As there was no significant difference on writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback and those getting indirect corrective feedback across their cognitive styles, the next analysis focused on the main effect (different feedback) only on the students' writing quality. Since there were two groups of treatment (DCF and ICF) the analysis using t-test was employed.

The result of the analysis using t-test revealed that the obtained level of significance was .653. It was greater than significance level .05 ( $\alpha > p$ ). The null hypothesis could not be rejected. It meant that statistically there is no significant difference on writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback and those getting indirect corrective feedback. In other words, the writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback was not better than those getting indirect corrective feedback. It meant also that the writing quality of students getting indirect corrective feedback was not better than those getting direct corrective feedback.

## Discussion

The lack of evidence of interaction between different feedback and students' cognitive styles on students' writing quality could be accounted for in part by the design of the experiment. As presented in the previous research design, the experiment consisted of students' cognitive styles which consisted of field dependent students and field independent students and also different feedback which consisted of direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback. Cohen (2001: 479) highlights that such pattern findings are due to the greater power of the within-subjects factor.

The insignificant difference on the writing quality of the four groups of treatment in this study proves that students' cognitive styles do not significantly influence the way students perceive, understand the feedback given, revise or improve their writing quality. In relation with the participants of this study as foreign language learners, they might not be aware with their cognitive styles. As adult learners, they could adapt any instructions they received. They could be flexible enough to cope with whatever type of instruction is on offer (Ellis, 1993b: 188). Other factors such as the learners' proficiency level took more roles on the way they understand the feedback and the ability to engage with the feedback given (Lee, 2008b).

The finding of this study seems to support the theories that students' cognitive styles do not have relation with the way of students' learning. It seems to agree with Ellis' study (1993a) which reveals that cognitive styles are not significantly related to any of the measures of linguistic knowledge. The students' cognitive styles do not affect the mastery of students' linguistics knowledge.

Unexpectedly, the result of the main effect analysis (different feedback on students' writing quality) revealed that there was no significant difference between the writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback and those getting indirect corrective feedback. The mean for students getting indirect corrective feedback was 18.3636 with standard deviation 4.62026; meanwhile, the mean for students getting direct corrective feedback was 18.7455 with standard deviation 4.25666. Based on the result of t-test computation, the value of the obtained level of significance was .653; it was greater than .05 level of significance ( $p > \alpha$ ). This means that the null hypothesis "there was no significant difference on writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback and those getting indirect corrective feedback" could not be rejected.

The insignificant difference found in this study means that the writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback was not better than the writing quality of students' getting indirect corrective feedback. It also means that the writing quality of students getting indirect corrective feedback was not better than the writing quality of students getting direct corrective feedback. Even though the mean score of students' writing getting direct corrective feedback was higher than the mean score of students' writing getting indirect corrective feedback, the difference was not significant.

The finding of this study seems to support the theories that there is no positive effect of feedback on students' writing. It seems to agree with what Truscott (1996) had believed that error correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned. It is harmful because it diverts time and energy away from the more productive aspects of a writing program (Truscott, 1999). The finding of this study also matches with the result of Truscott's study (2007) which revealed that correction has no better than a small beneficial effect on accuracy, and that any beneficial effects were too small to even qualify as small effects. The finding of this study also seems to support the result of Truscott and Hsu's study (2008) which found that the corrections do not have effect on students'

writing development; the improvements made during revision are not evidence on the effectiveness of correction for improving students' writing ability.

The finding of the present study seems to contradict with the finding of some previous studies which reveal that there is significant effect of feedback on students' writing. It contradicts with the finding of Chandler's study (2003) which revealed that the provision of direct corrective feedback was effective in improving students' writing. It is different from Sachs and Polio's study (2007) which found that the participants performed significantly better in the error correction condition than in the reformulation condition. The finding of this study also contradicts with Bitchener's study (2008) which found that there was a significant effect of direct corrective feedback on accuracy of students' writing; the writing accuracy of the treatment groups in the immediate post-test outperformed those of the control group, and this level of performance was retained two months later.

Other studies also reveal contradictive finding with the finding of this study. Different from the finding of this study, Bitchener and Knoch's study (2010) revealed that there is a significant difference in the level of accuracy between the treatment groups and the control group. The finding of this study also contradicts with Alroe's claim (2011) that error correction can produce significant benefits. It also contradicts with the finding of Marzban and Arabahmadi's study (2013) which revealed that the provision of indirect corrective feedback on students' writing has a significant effect on students' writing accuracy. The finding of this study is different from the finding of Suseno's study (2014) which revealed that there is significantly different achievement of students in writing before and after feedback.

Those contradictive findings may result from the research itself which is conducted from different perspective. Ferris (2004: 50) states that we are at present unable to confirm that error correction works, as the existing research is "fundamentally incomparable because of inconsistencies in design". Guenette's study (2007: 40) found that the (conflicting) findings can be attributed to the research design and methodology, as well as to the presence of external variables that were beyond the control and vigilance of the researcher.

Another study also reveals similar findings to the findings above. A study conducted by Hartshorn, Evans, McCollum and Wolfersberger (2010) found that the contradictive findings may result from three different contexts: the learner, the situation, and the instructional methodology. The variables that originate from the learner include first language (L1), nationality, culture identity, learning style, values, attitudes, beliefs, socioeconomic background, motivations, future goals, and many additional factors. Then the variables that derive from situation include everything that shapes the learning context beyond what can be attributed specifically to the learner or to the instructional methodology, such as the teacher, the physical environment, the learning atmosphere, or even political and economic condition. Last, methodological variables consist of the features of the specific instruction design and include what it is taught.

There were some possible causes of the insignificant results in this study. The possible explanation for the insignificant results may be found by considering the following variables: the administration of feedback provision, the participants, the study itself, and the quality of the instructor.

The first possible reason why the feedback given did not make the quality of students' writing significantly different could be the administration of feedback provision.

The students were not familiar with the provision of direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback on their writing. They were still confused with the feedback given and need more time in understanding the feedback before revising their writing. Moreover, the types of feedback were given to all components of writing, not on a specific of language feature (unfocused feedback). In his study, Hyland (2003) found that among the reasons cited by the students for not correcting their errors in their writing is the fact that they often misunderstand their teachers' comments or suggestions (feedback). He also found that the types of errors as well as the level of students' proficiency are important variables in their ability to do self-correction. Guenette (2007: 50) states that feedback is ineffective partly because it is inconsistently provided by teachers. Hence, in the present study, the students' revised essays sometimes improved and sometimes did not. Hartshorn, et al. (2010) found that the situation of the research including everything that shapes the learning context beyond what can be attributed specifically to the learner or the instructional methodology contributes to the effectiveness of the study.

The next possible source of the insignificant difference comes from the participants of the study. The number of sample (participants) and their proficiency level influence the results of the study. If the number of the participants is greater (more than 100 participants), the results of the study (the interaction effect between types of feedback and students' cognitive styles and the main effect of types of feedback on students' writing quality) will be significant.

Moreover, the proficiency level of the participants could become the cause of the insignificant result of this study. Lee's study (2008b) found that high proficient students are more positive than low proficient students in terms of their understanding the teacher feedback, the ability to correct the errors, and the view of the usefulness of feedback. Studies conducted by Sheen (2007) and Rustipa (2014) found that the effectiveness of direct and indirect corrective feedback depends on a learner's level of (meta) linguistic competence. The lower proficient learners might be unable to correct their own errors based on indirect corrective feedback. In the present study, the higher mean scores obtained by the students getting direct corrective feedback than the students getting indirect corrective feedback is more likely because the participants of the study are low proficient learners who might be unable to correct their own errors based on the indirect corrective feedback. Hartshorn, et al. (2010) found that the learners' background including the first language, nationality, culture identity, learning style, values, attitudes, beliefs, socioeconomic background, motivations, future goals, and others contributes to the effectiveness of the study.

The low mastery of students on components of writing could also become the source of the ineffectiveness. Sometimes, the scores of some students in the first writing were higher than their scores in the second writing. This means that their mastery was not stable and established yet, and the rules of English had not been internalized yet by the students. Muth'im (2013) found that the low mastery of students on components of writing influences the effectiveness of feedback given.

Furthermore, Cahyono (2002) found that there were five major grammatical errors on the students' writing namely verb phrases, subject-verb agreement, determiners, pluralization, and sentence structure. Ferris (2005) claims that ESL writers are struggling with a range of issues related to verbs (e.g. errors in verb tense, errors in form including target-like formation of tenses, passive constructions modal constructions and so forth)

and subject-verb agreement. Suseno (2014) found that there are eight identified grammatical problems encountered by the students. They are consistency of subject and verb tenses, consistency of plural and singular forms, consistency of parallel construction, tautologies and redundancies, misplaced modifier, misplaced pronouns or faulty references, passive construction, and choice of verb forms. If the students knew the rules, as Krashen (1985) states in his Monitor Theory, they would be able to correct the incorrect language production.

The next possible reason of insignificant difference of the students' writing quality is the study itself. Lewis (2002) claims that the feedback given provides information for teacher and students; it provides students with language input; it is a form of motivation, and it can lead students toward autonomy. Hyland and Hyland (2001) state that the role of feedback is widely seen as crucial for both encouraging and consolidating learning in education. However, in the present study, the students were just asked to write the first writing based on the topic given, received feedback from the researcher, and revised the corrected draft to become the second/final writing. Although the feedback given was to improve the writing quality of students, there was no instruction that took place in the study; there was no question rose in the class, and there was no discussion among the students and between students and the teacher. The researcher just let the students understand by themselves the feedback given by the researcher and revised their writing. Therefore, their revised writings sometimes were improved and sometimes were not.

The next possible reason is the quality of the instructor. In the present study, it was the first time for the instructor teaching Writing III course. Even though she had taught Writing I and Writing II courses in the previous courses, the different teaching method seems to make students 'shock'. In the previous writing courses, question-answer session occurred and discussion about the result of students' writing among the students or between the students and lecturer took place. However, in the present study, discussion and question-answer session are absent. The students just did the writing test, submitted the writing to the instructor, got feedback from the instructor, revised their writing and resubmitted their writing to the instructor. They did these activities in eight consecutive week meetings. Hence, the students might be bored with the way they experienced in the present study. Yet, discussion and question-answer session are important aspects in teaching and learning process.

Some studies reveal that the quality of the instructor is an important aspect in the effectiveness of feedback. Guenette (2007) states that the way teacher administers feedback and the students' perception on feedback also influence the effectiveness of feedback. As stated previously, feedback is ineffective partly because it is inconsistently provided by the teacher (Guenette, 2007: 50). In their study, Hyland and Hyland (2001) found that even teachers offer praise, it is often perceived by students as a way to soften criticism rather than encouragement to keep trying and writing which may lead or not to more fluency and accuracy.

Furthermore, Lee and Schallert's study (2008) revealed that a student who had built a trusting relationship with his teacher faithfully used her written feedback in revision, thereby improving his drafts, whereas the other student who had difficulty trusting her did not respond to her feedback positively. Consequently, his drafts did not improve as much as those of other students. Lee and Schallert (2008: 165) argue that establishing a trusting relationship between teacher and students may be fundamental to the effective use of feedback in revision. Lee's study (2008a) revealed that there are four

important issues that shed light on teachers' feedback practices: accountability, teachers' beliefs and values, exam culture, and (lack of) teacher training.

However, some studies on the perception of learners toward correction show positive responses. In their study, Greenslade and Felix-Brasdefer (2006) revealed that FL learners find a strong preference for feedback on formal features of their writing such as grammar, lexical, and mechanical errors. Katayama (2007: 289) states that student had strongly positive attitudes toward teacher correction of errors and indicated a preference for correction of pragmatic errors over other kinds of errors. In his study, Suseno (2014) found that the students are enthusiastic to join the class discussion and contented, as well, to receive feedback from both the lecturer and their peers. Similar to Suseno's, Devi's study (2014) found that the students respond positively to the teacher's corrective feedback and feel that it can improve their English skill. Hence, those findings may become strong reasons for teachers to keep on giving feedback.

In relation to SLA, the provision of feedback is still important for language acquisition, especially how feedback provision could give impact on English writing as a foreign language. Adam (2003) claims that written production and feedback are special importance for SLA. They push learners' awareness towards the gaps and problems in their inter-language. Fang and Xue-mei (2007) claims that allowing incorrect language production is believed to result in fossilized language. Gebhard (2006) states that feedback on students' language errors can provide an input for students and promoting the acquisition process especially in the EFL context where students do not receive much exposure outside the classroom. Moreover, it prevents the danger of fossilization of errors which is caused by the errors that are not corrected for too long (Lightbown and Spada, 2006: 80; Harmer, 2012: 86). Lightbown and Spada (2006) state that corrective feedback is indication to the learner that the use of the target language is incorrect. It provides information concerning of what is written versus well-established language convention (Rustipa, 2014).

In sum, the findings of this study need to be interpreted with care. In the future investigations, it might be possible to extend the experiment by including other students' characteristics such as students' proficiency level, other types of feedback, and other the test taking condition such as writing in a new text. Finally, a greater understanding of the findings could lead to a theoretical improvement on the body of knowledge on the effect of feedback on writing quality. The best conclusion that the researcher can formulate is that no matter the students' cognitive styles, field dependent or field independent students, and no matter types of feedback given, directly or indirectly, on the students' writing, they write better when they get feedback and revise their writing. The great problems that still need to be answered by the next researcher related to students' cognitive styles and types of feedback are the effect of those variables on the new text of writing (not on revision) and on the other language skills especially on speaking.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the data presented in the research findings and the discussion in the previous chapter, some conclusions can be drawn. First, the obvious findings appearing from this study are that the effect of feedback provision does not depend on the students' cognitive styles. It implied that types of feedback and students' cognitive styles do not affect the students' writing quality at the same time. The students who are field dependent or field independent can improve their writing when they get feedback on their writing. If

they get feedback, they write better. The empirical findings in this study could consequently assist in a better understanding that no matter the students' cognitive styles, field dependent or field independent, they write better when they get feedback. The findings of this study also implied that for Indonesian learners, teachers are considered as the important source of knowledge especially in giving feedback to improve their writing.

In relation to the effect of different types of feedback on students' writing quality, based on the result of this study, it was found that the different types of feedback given do not make the students' writing quality significantly different. In other words, there is no difference in the effect of direct and indirect corrective feedback on the students' writing quality. The students' second writing (the revision) is better when they get feedback. No matter types of feedback given on students' writing, directly or indirectly, the students write better when they get feedback and revise their writing. These findings could be exploited in foreign language education in which giving feedback on students' writing is something important.

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