



UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF LECTURERS WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN THE PROCESS OF WRITING UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

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abstract

This survey study aims to identify EFL undergraduate students' perception of the practice of written corrective feedback (WCF) for their undergraduate thesis drafts. 60 students enrolling in Thesis Proposal Defense coursework agreed to participate in this study. This study used a 31-item questionnaire adopted from Marrs' (2016) Perceptions of Writing Feedback Scale (PoWF) questionnaire which describes four aspects: views/expectations of feedback, experiences with feedback, usefulness/value of feedback, and affect/emotions associated with feedback. The result of the mean score of the items indicates that students' perception is generally positive. The participants perceived written feedback as important in their writing. They also perceived that even though they have a good score, feedback is still meaningful. They value writing feedback and perceive it useful to help them to be better with their writing. Finally, in terms of affect and emotions associated with writing feedback, the findings revealed that the participants felt happy and confident when they were given writing feedback in their undergraduate thesis proposal draft. For further research, the researchers recommend further investigation into the relationship between students' self-efficacy in writing and their perception of writing feedback.

INTRODUCTION

In writing coursework, corrective feedback from a teacher or a lecturer is important to help the students enhance the quality of their writing. According to Ellis (2005), feedback helps students' language learning and acquisition by allowing them to detect faulty forms of their outputs and giving them with proper forms or strategies for correcting these forms. Interactionists emphasized feedback as a part of input in second language acquisition theory and as Ellis (2009) argued feedback aids acquisition by helping learners notice their errors and creating form-meaning connection. Corrective feedback (CF) refers to remarks or comments on the appropriateness or correctness of a second language learner's production or comprehension (Li & Vuono, 2019). They explained that Oral CF entails the encoding and decoding of information supplied audibly, whereas written CF is often provided visually. Oral CF is frequently delivered online during speech development, whereas written CF is normally delivered after a written task has been accomplished. Lee (2018) argued a distinction has also been noted in the research on written CF between focused and unfocused CF, which refers to whether CF targets one or numerous language structures. Although this distinction may also apply to oral CF, it appears to be more essential for written CF, because extensive error correction is a common pedagogical practice in L2 writing classes (Lee, 2018). Pedagogically,

offering feedback on students' errors is typical of writing classes, and research has shown that WCF is well-liked by teachers, students, and other stakeholders such as school officials (Chen, Nassaji, & Liu, 2016; Lee, 2009).

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, corrective feedback is effective in helping the students proceed with their English paragraph writing (Sari, 2019; Hapsari & Ratu, 2019). Meanwhile, in academic writing coursework, there are several benefits that EFL students get from corrective feedback, such as: being able to identify their writing errors; feeling motivated to improve their writing; and training their critical thinking skills (Wahyuningsih, 2020). A lecturer's corrective feedback can be categorized into written or spoken comments to improve EFL undergraduate students' writing skills and correct grammatical errors (Ramadhani, Muth'im, & Febriyanti, 2021). Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) with a clear message improved L2 writing especially in grammatical aspects (Lim & Renandya, 2020). Additionally, although differences were not statistically significant, direct feedback showed a bigger effect size than indirect feedback, and the strongest mitigator was learner proficiency (Lim & Renandya, 2020). Sheen (2011) categorizes written feedback as follows: (1) Direct non-metalinguistic textual correction: Students are given the proper form by, for example, crossing out the incorrect word and replacing it with the correct word or adding something that is missing. (2) Direct metalinguistic textual correction: Students are given the proper form and are asked to offer a written explanation of some kind, such as numbering the errors and providing the answer with an accompanying explanation at the end of the page. (3) Indirect written correction (non-located error): Students are given a signal that an error has occurred but are not allowed to find or rectify it; these indicators appear only in the margin. (4) Indirect written correction (located error): This type is more visible because the mistakes are identified. The teacher highlights where students commit errors by emphasizing, circling, or crossing out the faults. (5) Indirect written correction using error codes: This sort of feedback includes underlining or circling the errors, as well as coded feedback to show the "nature" of the error (for example, "sp" for spelling or "w.c" for incorrect word choice); (6) This feedback type is similarly offered as a list of errors with a metalinguistic explanation but in the form of a question to withhold the proper form. For example, in a passive statement, what form should the verb take?

In the context of EFL writing for undergraduate students in Indonesia, no studies focus on investigating undergraduate EFL students in the English Language Education Department who were proceeding in completing their undergraduate thesis manuscript (Sari, 2019; Hapsari & Ratu, 2019; Wahyuningsih, 2020; Kencana, 2020; Mulati, Nurkamto, & Drahati, 2020; Saragih, Madya, Siregar, & Saragih, 2021). Therefore, to fill the existing gap, the researchers aimed to identify the profile of undergraduate students' perceptions of writing feedback in the Thesis Proposal Defense Coursework. In terms of context, the students who participated in the study were students who enrolled in Thesis Proposal Defense coursework – in which the students were proceeding to finish their undergraduate thesis proposals, currently finishing their undergraduate thesis writing, and experiencing the practice of WCF from their undergraduate thesis supervisor. This research is expected to fill the gap in the practice of written corrective feedback (WCF) in the process of writing an undergraduate thesis. This study aims to find out about students' perception on WCF practices from their thesis supervisors. As a result, the supervising lecturers will be able to assess the significance of WCF use in the thesis draft writing session.

METHOD

This survey study aims to identify EFL undergraduate students' perception of the practice of written corrective feedback (WCF) for their undergraduate thesis drafts. The study was conducted in the academic year 2022/2023 from September 2022 until June 2023. The participants of this study were 60 EFL undergraduate students of the English Language Education Department who at the time data were collected were enrolling in Thesis Proposal Defense coursework. Student perception is how students comprehend and evaluate their educational experiences (Qualtrics, 2023). Perceptions among students are thoughts, convictions, and sentiments regarding other people, situations, and events (Schunk & Meece, 1992). A student survey is one approach to obtaining student perceptions to give institutions an accurate understanding of the experience on their campus. Aspects of writing that were given feedback refer to Jacob (1981): writing content, structure, language use, mechanic use, and vocabulary. First, the content aspect refers to the presentation of knowledge, "substantive", relevance of concepts to the topic, and evidence in support of the ideas (Jacob, 1981). Second, organization is the presenting of concepts in a clear, logical, and consistent manner (Jacob, 1981). The third is grammaticality which is formed by "subject-verb agreement, tenses, articles, prepositions, and other grammatical elements that construct sentences grammatically" (Jacob, 1981). Mechanic use emphasizes spelling, punctuation, citation, and referencing in the text (Jacob, 1981). Finally, as supported by Brown (2007), language use refers to the choice of vocabulary, expressions, and the appropriateness of words to convey the desired messages."

This study adapted the Perceptions of Writing Feedback (PoWF) questionnaire (Marrs, 2016). The instrument was translated into Bahasa Indonesia and distributed to the participants via Google Form. The adapted PoWF instrument consists of 31 items with a measure 5-point Likert scale which ranges 1). "Strongly disagree"; 2). "Disagree"; 3). "Neutral"; 4). "Agree"; 5). "Strongly agree". The reliability value of the instrument was Cronbach Alpha 0.880, which means that the instrument is consistent. The data were analyzed using SPSS version 25, and a descriptive statistics method was employed. The domains and items of are described in Table 1.

Table 1. Marrs (2016) Domains and Items of PoWF

Domain	N	Items Number
Views/Expectations of Feedback	9	1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8,9
Experiences with Feedback	8	10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17
Usefulness/Value of Feedback	7	18,19,20,21,22,23,24
Affect/Emotions associated with feedback	7	25,26,27,28,29,30,31

The following procedures were used for data gathering and analysis: (1) reviewing the literature to comprehend the construct and content of the instrument; (2) using a 5-Likert scale to assess participants' perceptions of writing feedback as an instrument in this study; (3) translating the instrument's content into Indonesian; (4) reviewing the translated content and obtaining the thesis advisor's approval; (5) giving out questionnaires to English Language Education students who were writing their proposal for undergraduate theses and collecting the responses via WhatsApp groups; (6) using SPSS to conduct validity and reliability tests; (8) using Excel to perform data analysis; and (9) displaying the data in diagrams and tables.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to identify undergraduate students' perception of writing feedback in thesis proposal defense coursework in which they were also proceeding in completing their undergraduate thesis drafts. The findings describe four aspects of the participant's perception of writing feedback which was measured by the perception of writing feedback scale: views/expectations of feedback, experiences with feedback, usefulness/value of feedback, and affect/emotions associated with feedback which is elaborated as followed:

Table 2. Views/Expectation with feedback

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Feedback makes me feel like I am a good writer	60	4.28	.761
I think I should get feedback even if I don't try very hard in my writing	60	4.27	.821
Feedback is not important if I get a good score	60	1.83	1.181
I look forward to feedback on my writing	60	4.53	.747
Feedback I get on writing makes me want to become a better writer	60	4.40	.718
Feedback on my writing encourages me to do better next time	60	4.57	.647
Feedback on my writing makes me feel like I am a bad writer*	60	2.05	1.064
Feedback on my writing is important	60	4.65	.547
Feedback on my writing should explain my grade*	60	3.88	.976

Table 2 shows that in terms of students' perception of expectation with feedback, the highest score goes to the item that states that feedback is important (M= 4.65, SD=.547), and the lowest is on the item that states that feedback is not important if the students have a good score (M= 1.83, SD= 1.181). It means the participants perceived that feedback is important even though they have already got a good score. This also aligns with the item that states that the participants perceived that feedback is necessary even when they don't put effort into their writing (M= 4.27, SD=.821). The participants tend to disagree that feedback makes them feel like they are bad at writing (M= 2.05, SD= 1.064). The last item describes that the participants tend to agree that feedback must describe their value/score, with (M= 3.88, SD= .976). From this finding, it should be noted that even though the lecturers can deliver the feedback, for further study, there should be more investigation on whether the types of feedback the students deal with. Ellis (2008) categorizes error correction as direct, indirect, metalinguistic, and focused or unfocused feedback. He explained that he unfocused feedback corresponds to what may be called standard practice in writing teaching (though not necessarily what L2 writing scholars suggest); teachers correct all (or at least a range of) problems in students' written output. This sort of CF is considered 'comprehensive' because it addresses several issues. Focused CF, on the other hand, chooses specific faults to fix while ignoring others. Highly targeted CF will concentrate on a single type of error. CF that is less targeted will target more than one error type while still limiting correction to a small number of pre-selected kinds (e.g. simple past tense; articles; prepositions). Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima (2008) compared the effects of focused and unfocused written CF on the accuracy with which Japanese university students employed the English indefinite and definite articles to denote first and anaphoric reference in written narratives using a pre-test-immediate post-test-delayed post-test design. The focused group had only article errors corrected on three written narratives, whereas the unfocused group had article errors corrected together with other problems. They found that both groups improved from pre-test to post-test on an error correction test and a test requiring a new piece of narrative writing, and on the second post-test, they outperformed a control group

that got no correction. The CF worked as well for both the focused and unfocused groups. However, Bitchener & Ferris (2012) contended that the longer a writing sample is, the more likely the writer is to make mistakes and hence receive criticism in reaction to those mistakes. The amount of feedback obtained on longer pieces can either stimulate or obstruct learning. When opposed to shorter pieces of writing, larger compositions may receive more input, resulting in higher noticing via the use of focused feedback or cognitive overload through the use of unfocused feedback.

Table 3. Experiences with Feedback

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
I get feedback on my writing	60	4.40	.669
Feedback I get on my writing is too critical*	60	3.07	.861
Feedback is very specific	60	3.88	.825
Feedback on my writing is positive	60	4.00	.902
Feedback on my writing is confusing	60	2.92	.869
Feedback explains what I did wrong in my writing	60	4.05	.872
Feedback tells me what I did well in my writing	60	4.12	7.15
I receive feedback soon after I turn in a writing assignment	60	3.73	1.087

Table 3 shows that the highest score ($M= 4.40$, $SD= .669$) which means, most of the students agree that they get feedback during the coursework. Meanwhile, the lowest score ($M= 2.92$, $SD= .869$) is on the item that states that feedback on the student's writing makes them confused, which means the students tend to disagree feedback makes them confused. Another interesting finding is that the participants perceive that the lecturers' feedback on their writings is overcritical. This can be due to that in EFL writing, students may have problems with English logic, citation techniques, English grammar, and mechanics (Wahyuningsih, 2020; Linh, 2018). According to Chen et al. (2016), learners preferred feedback that locates the error, explains the nature of the error, and provides the correct form (with average ratings of four out of five on a Likert scale), but they did not prefer feedback that simply indicated the presence of an error with no elaboration. According to Lee (2008), when asked, "Which area do you want your teacher to emphasize more in the future?" high-proficiency learners wanted more feedback on content (51.4%) than language (34.3%) and organization (11.4%), while low-proficiency learners' responses varied between 20% and 30% for content, organization, and language. Surprisingly, 28% of low-proficiency learners did not want any additional input, but 100% of high-proficiency learners wanted more feedback in at least one of the specified categories. Jamoom (2016) examined EFL instructors' feedback beliefs and practices in their writing classrooms, focusing on the elements that shape teachers' feedback beliefs and practices, as well as the instructional principles that guide teachers' feedback practices. The data imply that a variety of factors influence teachers' views and practices. These factors include contextual factors (time allotted for writing classes, classroom size, writing course objectives, and resource availability), teacher factors (teachers' experience as teachers and learners, knowledge, and training), and student factors (students' needs, preferences, writing quality, and types of errors).

Table 4. Usefulness/Values of Feedback

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Feedback helps me write better next time	60	4.55	.595
Feedback on my writing is useful	60	4.53	.596
Feedback makes me a better writer	60	4.35	.755
I read the feedback I get on my writing	60	4.53	.596
I use feedback to help me write better next time	60	4.50	.676
Feedback on my writing is helpful	60	4.43	.810
Feedback tells me how to make my writing better	60	4.47	.676

Table 4 describes what participants perceive of the usefulness/value of feedback. The highest score is the students' perception that feedback helped them to write better next time, ($M= 4.55$, $SD= .565$). This finding is in line with the finding which demonstrated that EFL students want more interactive activities on corrective feedback in their revision process and had neutral or negative opinions on WCF of explicit grammar instructions (Chen, Nassaji, & Liu, 2016). Nonetheless, comments and error corrections are welcome if it is well-addressed. There are two main reasons why students do not benefit from dealing with feedback: first, they may not be willing to deal with it or interested in understanding how the corrective feedback could work and help them improve their writing; second, they may not understand the feedback, which may cause some anxiety and discouragement and ultimately prevent them from being able to fix the errors (Wang, 2017). Although the students' perception was generally positive, it should be noted that larger scopes of study are still needed to further investigate whether what the lecturer claimed to be appropriate corrective feedback to what they actually did. Lee (2009) compared the findings of a survey distributed to 206 secondary teachers from the same demographic to the feedback provided by 26 secondary teachers on 174 student works. She discovered eleven discrepancies between what the teachers claimed and what they actually did. Teachers, for example, understood that good writing requires more than grammatical components; nonetheless, 94.1% of the comments teachers provided were form-oriented, showing that less than 6% of feedback was related to meaning, content, structure, and genre. Teachers favored selective feedback while providing complete WCF, with one correction for every seven words of student work on average. Finally, while the teachers Lee polled acknowledged that students should write numerous drafts to learn from WCF, they consistently gave single-draft projects in their writing seminars.

Table 5. Affect/Emotions Associated with Feedback

Statement	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Feedback on my writing makes me want to give up*	60	2.20	1.132
Feedback on my writing makes me feel hopeless*	60	2.10	1.053
Feedback on my writing makes me feel nervous*	60	2.65	1.022
Feedback on my writing makes me feel frustrated*	60	2.38	.993
Feedback on my writing makes me feel proud	60	3.18	.892
Feedback on my writing makes me feel confident	60	3.35	.860
Feedback on my writing makes me feel happy	60	3.50	.966

Table 5 shows that in the context of the Affect/Emotions associated with feedback, the students tend to agree that feedback makes them feel happy ($M= 3.50$, $SD= .966$). The lowest score is shown ($M= 2.10$, $SD= 1.053$) with the statement about students feeling hopeless when

getting feedback. Another students' emotions are shown in three other statements which say that feedback makes them want to give up ($M= 2.20$, $SD= 1.132$) also makes them feel nervous ($M= 2.65$, $SD= 1.022$) and lastly, feedback makes them frustrated ($M= 2.38$, $SD= .933$). Regarding students' emotions when dealing with written feedback, it is revealed that regardless of their skill and foreign language enjoyment (FLE) level, EFL undergraduate students favor more explicit types of WCF (i.e., overt correction and metalinguistic explanation) for most error types (Zhang, et.al, 2021). Less explicit WCF types (such as underlining and error code) were thought to be somewhat useful by high proficiency level learners but not by their low proficiency level counterparts. Additionally, it appeared that the FLE level affected how people perceived the breadth and utility of WCF. The results of follow-up interviews revealed that the primary determinants of variation in learners' preferences were their first language's linguistic characteristics, prior exposure to the target language, affective states, and the role of the teacher. Despite the many positive emotions represented such as confidence and pride, and they are happy when they receive feedback, students may experience negative emotions at times that do not interfere with their positive opinion of WCF (Salami & Khadawardi, 2022). Hyland & Hyland (2001) argued teachers should use constructive criticism and praise in moderation to assist students understand their strengths and weaknesses and motivate them to strengthen their strengths and overcome their problems. They argued that while they recognize the necessity of mitigation methods in reducing the force of critiques and improving effective teacher-student relationships, they equally recognize that such indirectness involves the very real risk of misunderstanding and misunderstandings.

This study offers a novelty in the context of the study which is very specific in Thesis Proposal Defense coursework in which the participants were in the process of finishing their proposal for their undergraduate thesis. The findings can be a reference for the lecturers who became the undergraduate thesis supervisor during the academic year 2022/2023 on how the students enrolling Thesis Proposal defense perceived writing feedback from the lecturers. This research shows how feedback is important to students even if they have a good score in their writing. Most of the students got feedback during the coursework, which didn't make them feel bad or confused. Yet, due to students' problems with English logic, citation techniques, grammar, and mechanics, they tend to perceive that lecturers' feedback is overcritical. Moreover, students agree that feedback helps them to write better next time because of the value and usefulness of feedback after they get it and read it. They tend to feel happy about the feedback practices and do not show any negativity about the feedback such as feeling nervous, hopeless, or even frustrated. Instead, they are proud and confident about the feedback practices. However, the finding of this study was limited to the context because it was a small-scale study involving one batch of students attending the Thesis Proposal Defense Coursework at a university. This study also did not investigate deeper on students' competency, fluency, and writing ability. In WCF research, Liu and Brown (2015) highlighted the significance of defining text length. They discovered that half of the studies examined failed to indicate the average length of writing or the average word count of the writing samples gathered. They urge that future research incorporate this aspect since word count could provide an index for the student's competency, fluency, and writing ability.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, participants tend to have positive perceptions of writing feedback on their process in writing an undergraduate thesis in Thesis Proposal Defense coursework. Regarding views/expectations of feedback, it was found that the students agreed that feedback was important for them. They also perceived that even though they have a good score, feedback is still important. They value writing feedback and perceive it useful to help them to be better with their writing. In terms of affect and emotions associated with writing feedback, the findings revealed that the participants tend to agree that they feel proud, happy, and confident when they are given writing feedback and tend to disagree that feedback makes them have negative emotions such as hopeless, nervous and frustrated in writing their undergraduate thesis proposal drafts.

However, the findings of this study are limited to the context of the study and may not be generalized to other contexts. A follow-up interview can be beneficial to learn why the participants tend to agree with positive emotions and disagree with negative emotions. For further research, the researchers recommend further investigation into the relationship between students' self-efficacy in writing and their perception of writing feedback.

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