

# Written Corrective Feedback and Its Effects on English Department Students' Writing Drafts

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis investigates the teacher's Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) strategies used in the students' writing drafts and the effects analyzed from the comparison between the first and final drafts. It consists of fifty eight students' writing drafts as the source of data limited to language use (LU) and vocabulary. The theories applied were the WCF strategies by Ellis (2009a); the effects of written feedback to students by Hyland (2003), and supported by Ferris (2006). The qualitative approach was used in this study. The finding revealed that the strategies used in the class were Direct CF (430 times), and Indirect CF (329 times). The effects were Error corrected, Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text. Moreover, it was revealed that LU problem was more noticed by the students to be corrected. In conclusion, WCF can guide the students to be more aware of their mistakes and to improve their writing.

**Keywords:** Feedback, Written Corrective Feedback, Language Use, Vocabulary

## INTRODUCTION

According to Tangpermpoon (2008), writing is the most difficult skill, especially for students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Therefore, in the writing process, feedback may be given from the teacher. Gabrielatos (2002) believes by giving feedback, students are invited to identify their mistakes in their drafts, understand the reasons of their mistakes, and later discuss the mistakes for their improvement in writing. Thus, feedback plays an important role to produce a good writing. This study focuses on Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) as proposed by Ellis (2009a), and types of students' revision as a guidance to identify the effects of teacher's WCF proposed by Ferris (2006). Thus, this study seeks to find out the WCF strategies used in the students' writing drafts and the effects of teacher's WCF analyzed from the students' writing drafts.

## Written Corrective Feedback

WCF is "delayed corrections of the errors that students have committed in a written text" (Sheen and Ellis. 2010, p.593). Ellis (2009a) proposed six strategies of WCF as teachers' options for correcting linguistic errors in students' drafts: the Direct CF; the Indirect CF; the Metalinguistic CF; the Focus of the feedback (Unfocused CF and Focused CF), the Electronic feedback; and the Reformulation.

According to Ellis (2009a), Direct CF happens when the teacher provides student with the correct form. Indirect CF happens when the teacher notes the error without correcting it. Ellis (2009a) describes Metalinguistic CF provides codes and signs to show students' nature of the error; for example "ww" for wrong word, and "art" for article. Another way in giving metalinguistic feedback is by giving number of the errors and writing the description at the bottom of the text, called brief grammatical descriptions. Next strategy is Focused Versus Unfocused CF. Ellis (2009a) stated that focused feedback strategy requires the teachers to select specific error types for correction; for example, the teacher only gives feedback to students in verb usage. In Unfocused CF, teacher can choose to give feedback in many kinds of mistakes, for example, in language use, vocabulary, and content. According to Ellis (2009a), Electronic feedback is the kind of feedback given when teacher indicates an error and gives comments to the file and provides examples of correct usage. According to Ellis (2009a), this feedback is the final option which consists of a

native speaker's reworking of the students' entire text to make the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original together. Therefore, in student's work, teacher rewrites all the correct sentences.

### Effects of Teacher's Feedback

First of all, as Hyland (1998), as cited in Hyland (2003), argued, that written feedback on students' revision can make them try to revise most of the mistakes according to the feedback given, especially in grammar correction. It is supported by Selman (2006) as cited in Lounis (2009) that students prefer to have feedback on the language use to the content. Moreover, the students are deleting problematic text as they are unable to come up with a suitable revision (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). Sometimes, as Hyland (2003) added, students revised their drafts with no real understanding to why it was necessary.

There was a related study by Ferris (2006) as cited in Ellis (2009a). She described and classified the types of revisions that students made. Below are the types of students' revision.

Types of students' revisions

Label	Description
Error corrected	Error corrected per teacher's marking.
Incorrect change	Change was made but incorrect.
No change	No response to the correction was apparent.
Deleted text	Student deleted marked text rather than attempting correction.
Substitution, correct	Student invented a correction that was not suggested by the teacher's marking.
Substitution, incorrect	Student incorrectly made a change that was not suggested by the teacher's marking.
Teacher-induced error	Incomplete or misleading teacher marking caused by student error.
Averted erroneous teacher marking	Student corrected error despite incomplete or erroneous teacher marking.

The theories of WCF and the effects of teacher's feedback above will be used to answer the research questions as long as they are applicable. The types of students' revisions by Ferris (2006) will be used as a guidance to categorize the effects of teacher's WCF.

### METHOD

This study is a qualitative research. The data were gathered by analyzing students' draft of Written English 4A class. The class was chosen due to heterogeneous students' types in term of students' batch (2010 and 2011). This class consists of fifteen students taught by one teacher. The students were required to make 2 drafts (first and final) for 3 topics. We took 2 out of 3 topics. Therefore, there were 60 students' writing drafts to analyze. The analysis was limited to language use and vocabulary.

After reading and examining both drafts, we identified the WCF given. Then, we labelled the drafts by using numbers and different colours. After that, we categorized the types of WCF in the first draft. Later, we compared the first and final draft to identify the effects of teacher's WCF, following by Ferris's category on types of students' revision (2006). Then, we counted the frequency and summarized the results of the analysis.

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

First of all, the strategies used in the students' writing drafts are presented in the following table.

Table 1: The strategies of WCF used in the students' writing drafts

Strategies Types Of Mistakes	Direct	Indirect
LU	337	196
Vocabulary	93	133
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>329</b>

The table shows the WCF strategies used in the students' writing drafts in each type of mistakes. There were two types of mistakes involved, LU and Vocabulary. It was found out from six strategies proposed by Ellis (2009a), the teacher only used two strategies in the students' writing drafts, Direct CF and Indirect CF. Each strategy is presented in the following part.

Direct CF happens when the teacher provides students with the correct form. It involves both language use and vocabulary mistakes. In the examples below (data 1.1.2, 2.1.8, and 4.2.26), the mistakes are marked by **bold-underlined**. In addition, Direct CF is mostly used by the teacher 430 times (LU: 337, and Vocabulary: 93). The teacher gave all corrections in each mistake made by the students in a sentence. The examples are presented in the following:

1.1.2 "(It is stated that stated on the survey) that Indonesia **has the<sup>2</sup>score<sup>3</sup>** 3 out of 183 countries (which) means **that<sup>4</sup>** Indonesia is (perceived as highly corrupt)."

Teacher's correction:<sup>2</sup>was; <sup>3</sup>scored, <sup>4</sup>~~that~~

In the data 1.1.2, the teacher gave correction to LU and vocabulary mistakes. The word "score" is tenses problem, meanwhile the word "that" is a conjunction problem.

2.1.8 "Everyday they will use the internet to find information and as we know some **picture<sup>20</sup>** which related with pornography sometimes **was<sup>21</sup>** appeared in the screen"

Teacher's correction:<sup>20</sup>pictures; <sup>21</sup>~~was~~

In the data 2.1.8, the teacher gave correction to LU mistakes; mistake number 20 is about plural and mistake 21 is incorrect use of "be".

The table shows that Direct CF is the most frequently used by the teacher, especially in correcting LU problems (337 times).

The second strategy used is Indirect CF which was used 329 times (LU: 196, vocabulary: 133). The teacher marked the mistakes in both language use and vocabulary without giving the correction. Indirect CF in the students' writing drafts can be in the form of tick, underline, and question mark. In this writing study, those forms (tick, underline, and question mark) were represented by underline due to the marking system. In the examples below (data 1.1.4, and 1.1.8), the mistakes are the underlined words. The following are the examples of Indirect CF.

1.1.4 "Corruptors receive high quality facilities even when they are **imprison<sup>6</sup>**."

In sentence number 1.1.4, the Indirect CF was used by the teacher to indicate that there was a mistake in LU problem (passive form).

1.1.8 "For example, Gayus Tambunan who **corrupt<sup>10</sup>** for an about Rp 99.000.000,00<sup>11</sup> of <sup>12</sup>country's money can enjoy his holiday outside **the jail<sup>13</sup>** whenever he wants".

In sentence number 1.1.8, it shows Indirect CF was used to note three LU mistakes; tenses (10), number problem (11), and article (12). It was also used to note a vocabulary problem (13). From the table, it is seen that Direct CF was mainly used by the teacher to correct the students' mistakes (430 times). Moreover, in Direct CF, the teacher also mostly gave correction to LU problems (337 times).

Second, the effects of teacher's WCF on the students' writing drafts are presented in the table below. This table is used to answer the second research questions proposed. It is about the

effects of teacher's WCF which are presented in the following table. From the students' drafts, it was found out that there were only four out of eight effects proposed by Ferris (2006).

Table 2: The effects of teacher's WCF

Effects Types of Mistakes	Error Corrected	Incorrect Change	No Change	Deleted Text
LU	410	22	62	43
Vocab	158	10	41	16
<b>TOTAL</b>	568	32	103	59

The table reveals the effects of Written Corrective Feedback in the students' writing drafts and the frequency of each effect. In the table, there are four effects of teacher's WCF, referring to Ferris (2006) of the types of students' revision. Error corrected refers to the students' revision which correct each error marked by the teacher. Therefore, the students followed the feedback in accordance to the teacher's expectation. Moreover, Incorrect change refers to the change that the students made but still considered as incorrect. It means the students did not revise the mistakes in accordance to the teacher's expectation. Another effect is No change. It means that there was not any response to the correction apparent. The last effect in the students' writing drafts is Deleted text. The students deleted marked text rather than attempting correction. In each effect, there are two WCF strategies, Direct and Indirect CF.

Based on the result of the analysis, it was found out that the students mostly corrected the mistakes in accordance to the teacher's expectation by 475 times. In the error corrected, Direct CF occurred 350 times (including LU: 278 and Vocabulary: 72); while Indirect CF occurred 218 times (including LU: 132 and Vocabulary: 86). It is considered as error corrected whenever the students revised the mistakes in accordance to the teacher's expectation. However, other effects (incorrect change, no change, and deleted text) are considered as revisions which were not in accordance to the teacher's expectation. The detailed explanations presented in the following.

In the Error corrected, the students revised the mistakes according to the teacher's marking. It means that the students made correction in accordance to the teacher's expectation, this includes LU and vocabulary matters. The first two examples are the student's response of Direct CF (data 2.1.3, 2.2.19, and 5.2.1)

2.1.3 "On 9 April 2010 that 97 % of respondents of teenagers had been exposed in<sup>7</sup> teen pornography."

Teacher's correction: <sup>7</sup>to

The sentence above was revised into:

"On 9 April 2010 that 97 % of respondents of teenagers had been exposed to<sup>7</sup> teen pornography."

In data 2.1.3, it is an example of Direct CF in preposition matter (LU). The preposition "in" is wrong which should be revised into "to". Teacher gave Direct CF to correct students' mistakes in her draft. As a result, the student revised it into "to". The student followed the feedback given by the teacher which may due to its clarity. As the result, they revised to the correct preposition as it was suggested by the teacher.

2.2.19 "In our work, there are ~~so~~<sup>31</sup> many things that we can do to get a job, such as finding a job in many ways like searching for jobs in the newspaper, internet or Job fair. Or might be follow workshop or seminar."

The sentence was revised into:

"In our work, there are many things that we can do to get a job, such as finding a job in many ways like searching for jobs in the newspaper, internet or Job fair. Or might be follow workshop or seminar."

In data 2.2.19, mistake number 31, it can be seen that the word “so” was crossed out by the teacher, indicating that the word was unnecessarily written by the student. Therefore, in the student’s final draft, the word “so” was deleted. The feedback was stated explicitly, and it helped the student to recognize which part should be corrected and how it should be corrected. The Direct CF can be easily followed by the student due to its clarity.

The next example is related to the student’s response to Indirect CF (data 1.1.11, and 3.1.6).

1.1.11 *“Many corruptors in Indonesia are being punished only for<sup>18</sup> four until<sup>19</sup> ten years.”*

The sentence was revised to this:

*“Many corruptors in Indonesia are being punished only from four to ten years.”*

In data 1.1.11, particularly in mistakes number 18 and 19, Indirect CF was used to indicate student’s mistake in LU (preposition). In this sentence, the teacher gave the feedback by underlining the mistake. In the final draft, the words “for” and “until” were revised into “from” and “to” which indicate that the student followed the feedback given by the teacher. The revised sentence is considered as error corrected effect, since it fulfilled the teacher’s expectation.

3.1.6 *“They tend to not really pay attention to their language accuracy, like<sup>9</sup> grammar skills.”*

The sentence was revised to this:

*“They tend to not really pay attention to their language accuracy, such as grammar skills.”*

Moreover, the example of Indirect CF in vocabulary (single words) is presented in data 3.1.6. In the first draft, the feedback was in the form of underlined word. In the sentence above, particularly in mistake number 9, the word “like” was revised to “such as” by the student. It means that the student followed the feedback given, even though there was not any explicit correction given by the teacher.

From the examples above, it can be seen that students mostly corrected the errors commented by the teacher, especially in LU matters. As Selman (2006) cited in Lounis (2009, p.34) argued, “students prefer to have feedback on the language use than those given in the content”. Therefore, mostly the students revised the mistakes as the teacher instructed.

Moreover, Error corrected effect is a kind of students’ revision which is considered as a positive response. Meanwhile, the other three effects as taken from Ferris (2006): Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text are considered as negative responses since the students did not revise the mistakes in accordance to the teacher’s expectation. Further explanation on the negative responses is presented in the following. According to Ferris (2006), Incorrect change is a revision in the students’ drafts whenever they revised the mistakes but was still considered incorrect. In this part, partially revised, misplaced the word order, and misunderstanding the teacher’s meaning were considered as incorrect change revision.

The example of Incorrect change is partially revised. It means that the students revised the sentence commented partially. Below are the examples in data 6.1.15.

6.1.15 *“For example, when he has a problem with singer Inul Daratista, he commented on how she dress and dance. He said that her dance ruining the name of Dangdut. In 2006, they met again at the meeting held by the committee to discuss the Draft Law (in Indonesia called Rancangan Undang-Undang (RUU)) of Pornography and Porno-action. There, Rhoma indirectly criticized Inul by telling her dance, which is known as “Goyang Ngebor”, includes pornography’s sections that should be banned.”<sup>26</sup>*

Below is the student’s revision:

*“For example, when he has a problem with singer Inul Daratista, he commented on how she dress and dance. He said that her dance ruined the name of Dangdut. In 2006, they met again at the meeting held by the committee to discuss the Draft of Law of pornography and porno-action. There, Rhoma indirectly criticized Inul by telling her dance, which is known as “Goyang Ngebor”, included pornography’s sections that should be banned.”*

In data 6.1.15, the student was asked to change the tenses which should be in past tense. Yet, the student partially revised a few past tense verbs in the sentences. This probably happened due to the location of the feedback. The feedback only stated “past tense” beside the sentences. It may make the students confused which part/word to revise. Another example of partially revised occurred in

data 12.2.8. In this sentence, the words were underlined by the teacher, indicating that the words were not suitable.

12.2.8 “This is an injustice<sup>10</sup> that the government should fix through giving feasible<sup>11</sup> of wage for the laborers.”

Below is the student’s revision:

“This is an injustice that the government should fix through giving suitable of wage for the laborers.”

The student revised the vocabulary mistakes in number 10 and 11 partially. The word “injustice” was not revised; yet, the word “feasible” was revised to “suitable”.

From both examples above, it can be seen that the teacher used WCF to indicate the students’ mistakes. Thus, it triggered the student to come up with suitable revision when they knew the revision. Sometimes they did not know the suitable revision; therefore, they ignored the mistakes. That may be the cause why partially revised sentences occurred.

The second example of incorrect change revision is a revision where the student incorrectly arranged the word order. The following is the example (data 2.2.1).

2.2.1 “Unemployment is the big problem that must be solved because this problem will give an effect for<sup>1</sup> many people <sup>2</sup> especially people who are unemployed in<sup>3</sup> 30 until 40 years old<sup>4</sup>”

The sentence was revised into:

“Unemployment is the big problem that must be solved because this problem will give an effect to many people especially, people who are unemployed at around 30 up to 40 years old.”

In data 2.2.1, especially mistake number 2, the student was asked to put comma before the word “especially”. Instead of putting the comma before the word “especially”, she put the comma after “especially”. The sentence was revised incorrectly because of the misplacement of the comma. This effect might happen because the students did not pay attention to the details after revising the first drafts and they ignored the organization of the writing.

After the first negative effect in the students’ revision, the second is called No change. In this effect, the students did not revise the mistakes which were given feedback by the teacher. The first example is seen in sentence number 1.1.1.

1.1.1 “According to corruption perceptions<sup>1</sup> index by Transparency International in 2011, (the survey gives score one hundred to a country that is very clean from corruption, and zero to a country with the highest corruption.)”

The sentence was revised to this:

“According to corruption perceptions index by Transparency International in 2011, Indonesia was scored 3 out of 183 countries.

The student did not revise the word “perceptions” to “perception”. Here, the brackets words are feedback likely in content. The subject verb agreement in mistake number 11 was actually clearly stated by the teacher. However, the student ignored it and rephrased the sentence. From the example of no change revision, it is assumed that the students did not pay attention to the WCF given, and/or the students did not know which part to be revised.

The third negative effect is Deleted text. It includes a situation whenever the students deleted the whole sentence. It might happen because it was the simplest way to revise the mistakes when they did not know the correct revision. The following are the examples (data 3.2.9, and 1.1.17).

3.2.9 “(In fact), in this program the government gives them money, as much as 300 thousand rupiahs in<sup>20</sup> every three months, but now it does not exist anymore.”

Teacher’s correction: <sup>20</sup>for

In data 3.2.9, the student replaced the sentence commented with the new sentence. The teacher used Direct CF to correct the student’s mistake. The word “in” is supposedly revised to “for”. However, the student did not revise the mistake, yet she replaced the whole paragraph, including the particular sentence commented above.

1.1.17 “For example, Indonesia has become the country that has many<sup>28</sup> corruptors in the world according to a survey from transparency international”.

Moreover, in data 1.1.17, there was a mistake in vocabulary matter (“many”). However, the student did not revise the mistake, instead, she deleted the whole sentence. This happened due to the student’s confusion to come up with a suitable revision as this sentence was indirectly commented by underlining the mistake.

What the student needed to do in this sentence was to delete the word “of” in her final draft. Yet, she deleted the problematic text. It happened because it was the simplest way to revise the mistakes when they did not know the answer.

By looking at the effects of teacher’s WCF, the students showed positive response to have correction in LU problems. LU/ Language Use covers: tenses, preposition, article, to be, plural, phrasing, parallel, passive and active sentences, subject and verb agreement, determiner, pronouns, relative pronoun, subject, superlative, restrictive relative clause, conjunction, word order, and the mechanics. It is strengthened by the percentage of errors corrected in LU is higher than in vocabulary (LU: 77% and vocabulary: 73%). It is in line with Hyland (1998), as cited in Hyland (2003), who argued that students follow the feedback in their revision, especially in grammar correction.

In summary, there were two out of six Written Corrective Feedback strategies used in the students’ writing drafts: Direct CF, and Indirect CF. In addition, there are four effects of teacher’s WCF as taken from Ferris (2006) of the types of students’ revision; Error corrected, Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text. Error corrected is considered the positive response as the students corrected the mistakes in accordance to the teacher’s expectation. On the other hand, Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text are considered as the negative responses as the students did not revise the mistakes correctly.

From the findings, it can be interpreted that feedback in LU is more noticeable as students think that the teacher has a better understanding about language use. It can be seen in Table 4.1 that the students highly follow the teacher’s WCF in LU matters by 410 times. It is in line with Hyland (1998), as cited in Hyland (2003), that students follow the feedback in their revision, especially in grammar correction. In addition, the occurrence of the negative responses - Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text -. may due to the unclear feedbacks, especially in Indirect CF, since the feedback was in the form of signs. It made the students confused how to revise it. Sometimes, they were unable to come up with a suitable revision (Hyland and Hyland, 2006). Therefore, they just simply ignored or deleted it.

In summary, there were two out of six Written Corrective Feedback strategies used in the students’ writing drafts: Direct CF, and Indirect CF. In addition, there are four effects of teacher’s WCF as taken from Ferris (2006) of the types of students’ revision; Error corrected, Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text. Error corrected is considered as a positive response as the students corrected the mistakes in accordance to the teacher’s expectation. On the other hands, Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text were considered as the negative responses as the students did not revise the mistakes accordingly

## CONCLUSION

This paper dealt with Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) and its effects on English Department students’ writing drafts. Specifically, we would like to find out WCF strategies used in the English Department students’ writing drafts and the effects of the teacher’s WCF analyzed from the students’ drafts. To get the answers, theories of WCF by Ellis (2009a) and the effects of written feedback to students by Hyland (2003) were applied, supported by the theory of writing in EFL context by Weigle (2002) and Harmer (2004), and a study by Ferris (2006) on the types of the effects of teacher’s WCF. Fifty eight students’ writing drafts coming from two topics were collected as the data.

Based on the analysis of fifty eight students’ writing drafts, the findings revealed that there were two out of six Written Corrective Feedback strategies used in the students’ writing drafts. There were Direct Corrective Feedback, and Indirect Corrective Feedback. The most frequently used strategies were Direct CF, which were used 430 times. Then, the second place was taken by



Indirect CF, which was used 329 times. Moreover, Direct CF got a positive response from the students because of its clarity.

In addition, there were four kinds of effects found in the students' writing drafts as Ferris (2006) proposed: Error corrected, Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text. In these three effects (Incorrect change, No change, and Deleted text), a few students did not follow the WCF due to the unclear instruction. This may happen because the students did not know what to revise and how they should revise it. Moreover, they could not come up with a suitable revision as (Hyland and Hyland, 2006) argued. As the result, the students did not revise the WCF given by the teacher accordingly.

In conclusion, WCF can guide the students to correct their writing mistakes in their drafts. It can make the students aware of their mistakes and improve their writing although sometimes the feedbacks given were not followed by the students in accordance to the teacher's expectation. Therefore, the students need to pay attention to teacher's feedback, since it can help them to make a good writing. By conducting this paper, we wish this study can give the readers insights related to the WCF strategies and its effects of teacher's WCF on the students' writing drafts, so that they may become more aware of the feedback given in making a good writing. In addition, we hope that further research on similar topics could be carried out in the future.

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