



## Lecturer's Feedback and Students' Writing Performance: Social Constructivism Perspective

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### Abstract

EFL writing as the form of productive skill has been the main issue for university students in Indonesia. Therefore, to maintain EFL students to be a good writer, lecturer's feedback is necessary. The aims of this study were to find out whether there is any relationship between lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance, and to find out in what ways the lecturer's feedback given seen from social constructivism. The researcher employed mixed method which took the data from 60 third-semester students in two Essay Writing Classes, and it was collected by using questionnaire, students' writing score, and interview guide. The findings showed that correlation coefficient was .273 which indicates that the correlation between lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance was positive. While, seen from the significant level, it showed the number .042 which means there was statistically significant relationship between those two variables. The qualitative finding asserted that the lecturers always gave feedback frequently in the two forms, both were oral and written feedback. Other than that, although only one of the lecturers who used elaborated feedback, they both provide the assistance and objectivity during the assessment process. Based on the results of this study the lecturers must give feedback continuously towards students' work and it should be given together with an explanation. Moreover, the future researcher can find the similar topic from another learning theory such as behaviorism or cognitivism.

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## INTRODUCTION

As the form of productive skills, EFL writing has been the main issue for university students in Indonesia. Even at the college level, learners still find it difficult to comprehend writing skill. According to the study conducted by Ampa and Quraisy (2018: 2), the fifth-semester students of the English Department in Indonesia still have the low ability in writing English essays.

Learning writing in English proficiency course is considered to be difficult for students. Some previous studies had investigated the Indonesian EFL students' problems in writing. EFL students experienced the difficulties mostly from grammar and vocabulary, while in terms of writing, the students have difficulties in finding the topic and constructing the sentence (Setyowati and Sukmawan, 2016; Prastyo, 2014). In addition, Ariyanti and Fitriana (2017)

reveal the common problems faced by students in essay writing are in terms of using grammar, choosing appropriate diction, and compiling cohesive and coherent paragraphs.

Hamamah (2016) emphasized that higher education students are still not ready in terms of academic writing skill and writing discourse to fulfill the requirements of having journal publication as one of writing products. The finding of this previous study supports the idea that reading and writing skills are desperately needed to increase the number of publications in UB. Therefore, to maintain EFL students to be good writers, lecturer's feedback is necessary.

Indeed, students' learning and achievements can be affected by feedback given, either positive or negative. Harmer (1998) argued that over-correction towards students' writing work can have demotivating effect for the students. It is supported by Pourmandnia and Behfrouz (2014), who stated that feedback can be more constructive when it focuses on what learners do well instead of highlighting the failure. That is why, the researcher tried to analyze the feedback according to social-constructivism theory.

Since the aim of this study is to find out the relationship between lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance, the researcher refers to the study conducted by Bijami et al. (2016) and Pratiwi (2013). According to both previous studies, those only explained the teacher's and students' perspectives toward feedback and discussed it from a socio-cultural perspective. Besides, the feedback given is investigated from students'

perspectives in the secondary level. Therefore, this current study aims to reveal the correlation between lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance and describe how lecturer's feedback is given in students' writing performance seen from different learning theory, which is social-constructivism perspective. In addition, the researcher involved students in higher education level as the participants who are considered to have the ability to understand something more complex. This present study is considered important to be conducted as the findings of this study should be beneficial for the lecturer in developing their teaching writing techniques by providing feedback in the process of learning.

### **Writing**

Writing is defined as the process of gathering ideas and working with them until they are presented in a manner that is polished and comprehensible to readers. Related to writing, many studies show that Indonesians are still lack writing skills, not only ordinary people who do not deal with books or science every day, but also the intellectuals (Alwasilah, 2001).

As one of the writing products, an essay contains ideas from the writer's perspective. Essays, UK (2018) defines essay as a piece of work that aims to appraise writers' understanding of specific ideas by giving an explanation or argument. There are several types of essay writing distinguished from the purpose: (1) Narrative Essay, which aims to make the reader feel involved in the story; (2) Descriptive Essay, that is used to describe something particular (person, thing, place, or even moment); (3) Expository Essay

which makes the writer consider only based on facts, statistic or real example; (4) Persuasive Essay which requires more supporting ideas to convince the readers of their point of view. The writer's argument is also needed, but the aim is to persuade the reader that the writer's argument cannot be refuted.

In the process of writing, the teacher as a guide and facilitator should be fair and explicit when to take an account in evaluation of students' performance in developing their written work (Brown, 2000). Table 1 shows categories that often become the basis for the evaluation of students' writing.

**Table 1.** Evaluation Categories for Students' Writing

Components	Criteria
Content	Thesis statement, subject knowledge, consistent focus, development, and extension of ideas
Organization	Logical sequence, coherence, appropriate length
Vocabulary	Richness, appropriate register, word form mastery
Mechanic	Paragraphing, spelling, punctuation, citation
Language Use / Grammar	Sentence structure, accuracy, word order, tenses used

Source. Klimova (2011).

### Lecturer's Feedback

In language teaching, feedback is an important role that focuses on all aspects of language such as grammar, vocabulary, writing, and speaking (Aridah, 2003). The result of the study conducted by Ismail (2008) shows that there is a significant improvement that students made after they were given end-note feedback. Based on social-cognitive theory, students will construe teacher's feedback, peer feedback and other contextual features according to their individual differences.

### Feedback and Social-Constructivism Perspective

Social constructivism sets education's priority on critical concepts inside the numerous disciplines, such as point of view in literature. Social constructivism recommends that feedback should be adequate (Gibbs & Simpson,

2004), constructive (Colasante, 2011; Weaver, 2006), and challenging (Fund, 2010). The excellent social constructivism serves as the basis for expressing EFL writers' main argument and their identity. According to this theory, feedback processes are more beneficial for students when it is goal-directed, focused on the learning process, specific, frequent, positive, unbiased, non-judging, constructive, holds elaborations and/or justifications, and encouraging dialogue (Thurlings et al., 2013).

Social constructivism made a distinction between Knowledge of Correct Response (KCR) and Elaborative Feedback (EF) (Van der Kleij et al., 2012). Knowledge of Correct Response informs the learner of the correct answer to a specific problem with no additional information. It means there is still no explanation of why their answers are right

or wrong, and no chance to improve their performance. While, different from KCR, Elaborated Feedback refers to provide an explanation about why a specific response was correct, and it might allow the learner to review part of the instruction. It also might present the correct answer. In conclusion, in KCR, students acknowledge that their answers are correct or not, whereas EF is considered as an encouragement for students to try self-correction and provides a clue (Thurlings et al., 2013).

## METHOD

The researcher used a mixed method that includes both qualitative and quantitative methods (Creswell, 2012). This study was conducted as part of an explanatory design to find out the correlation between lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance. According to Fraenkel et al. (2012), explanatory design undertakes the quantitative method then uses the qualitative method to strengthen the quantitative findings.

The population for this study included all students in the third semester of the English Language Teaching Program at Universitas Brawijaya. This study took data from students in two different writing classes, including 56 students. The researcher used a simple random sampling method to select the participants. Since the purpose of this study was to explore the relationship between lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance, so the appropriate tools were students' questionnaire, student writing scores, and interview guides.

The questionnaire used was adapted from Rowe (2008). The adjustment process generated a new questionnaire with six parts consisting of two (2) questions related to respondent's demographics data, forty (40) questions related to the views of respondents to teacher's feedback, and one (1) question regarding suggestions in terms of giving feedback in their writing work. By using this questionnaire, the researcher obtained data from the participants on the general overview of feedback, perceptions about feedback, the value of feedback, and preferences of feedback. In addition, student questionnaires were analyzed along with students' scores collected from the writing lecturers. Students' writing scores were used to check if the lecturer's feedback had associated with student writing performance. The students' writing scores were obtained from the final writing score in the third semester.

While the researcher also used semi-structured interview which consists of a list of question that designed to obtain clear answers from the respondents. The researcher conducted the interview towards writing lecturers from two different classes.

In the data analysis, the features of questionnaire and student writing scores were analyzed using a descriptive statistical test for quantitative data. The data obtained from the questionnaire was transferred to the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). According to Sarwono (2012), if the results show a significant level of less than 0.05, it means that it is statistically significant. However, if the result shows a level of significance greater than 0.05, it means that there is no

statistical significance. While for the interview results, the information was analyzed by repeatedly reading the interview transcripts. Interview responses were recorded and interpreted to guide the features of the questionnaire.

To ensure the validity of the study, the researcher referred it to the instrument adapted from Rowe (2008) and Pratiwi (2013). Before distributing the questionnaire and applying the interview guide to the respondents, the tools were validated by Yulia Hapsari, M.Pd., as the expert validator. In this study, the triangulation procedure was also applied to avoid subjectivity and bias. The researcher examined the information obtained from the interviews and questionnaires and found supporting evidence.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The results of this study were generated by using two methods of collecting data which are questionnaire and interview.

The maximum score of the questionnaire is 200, and the questionnaire's results for each student would be divided into two levels, positive and negative. These levels were used to classify whether students' opinions on teacher feedback are positive or not. The result of the questionnaire calculation is shown in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Levels Category for the Result of Questionnaire

Points	Levels	Percentage
200 – 120	Positive	100%
119 – 40	Negative	0%

Based on the result of the questionnaire, it showed that 100% of the students obtained a level of positive category with the average score of the questionnaire was 145.73. It meant that all of the students had a positive impression towards lecturer's feedback in writing.

Students' writing score was collected from students' final score of Essay Writing Course. The students' score in Essay Writing Course is shown in Table 3.

**Table 3.** Students' Essay Writing Final Score

Score	Total	Percentage
< 70	5	8,9%
70 – 75	23	41,1%
76 – 80	14	25%
81 – 100	14	25%

Based on the result of the final score, it showed that most students had achieved 75. From 56 students, the average score of their final score was 75.4.

The researcher used SPSS to calculate the data using Pearson Product Moment Formula to figure out the significance between Lecturer's Feedback and Students' Writing Performance. Based on the calculation process, the result was shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Correlation Result

		Feedback	Writing Score
<b>Feedback</b>	Pearson Correlation	1	,273*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		,042
	N	56	56
<b>Writing Score</b>	Pearson Correlation	,273*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,042	
	N	56	56

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

The table shows that the correlation coefficient ( $r_{table}$ ) of Pearson Product Moment was .273, which means that the correlation between lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance was positive. In addition, seen from the significant level ( $p$ -value), it showed the number .042, which is lower than 0.05. Therefore, there is a statistically significant relationship between lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance seen from a social-constructivism perspective.

However, the number .273 indicated that lecturer's feedback and students' writing performance have a low positive correlation, and its correlation is still at a

sufficient level. It was proven that when the feedback is given more often and complex, the improvement in students' performance will not be too much but remain significant.

In general, the interviewees always provided regular feedback through face-to-face counseling. The feedback given comes in two forms, both oral and written. Additionally, although of the two types of feedback (KCR and EF) only one uses elaborated feedback, they still provided assistance and objectivity in the assessment process. More specifically, it can be seen in Table 5.

**Table 5.** Interview Result

Dimensions	Interviewees 1	Interviewees 2
Frequency	Frequently	Frequently
Forms of Feedback	Oral and written	Oral and written
Clarity	Yes	Yes
Assistance	Yes	Yes
Objectivity	Based on evaluation categories of writing	Based on students' writing process and evaluation categories of writing
Encouragement	Yes	Yes
Negative Impact	No	No

## Discussion

After knowing the students' writing scores and the results of the feedback questionnaire, the researcher tried to find a correlation between the lecturer's feedback and the students' writing performance. According to previous research, Bijami et al. (2016) confirmed a weak relationship between teacher's feedback and students' writing performance. Based on the results above, it is consistent with the results of the present study that lecturer's feedback can significantly affect students' writing performance, even though they have a low positive correlation.

According to the students, the researchers found their impressions of the lecturer's feedback to be positive as well. Indeed, Eslami (2014) pointed out that direct feedback is appropriate for under-achieving students who are unable to do self-correction. However, this finding seems to contradict the results of previous research which showed that there was no significant difference in the writing quality of students who received direct correction feedback and those who received indirect correction feedback (Wahyuni, 2017).

Then, the researcher found that the students mostly achieved more than 70 in their final writing score. This finding is in line with the result of the previous study conducted by Adisca and Mardijono (2014), which revealed that written corrective feedback could reduce students' mistakes in the next writing draft, especially in terms of the language used and grammar.

In this study, the qualitative finding examined the lecturer's views of their

essay class feedback. They stated that after giving feedback on their students' writing, they realized that the students' writing performance had improved. In addition, based on the interview, the researcher also found that the Knowledge Correct Response was used more than the Elaborated Feedback. This result corroborates the results of an earlier study by Corbalan et al. (2009), showing that KCR helps students connect what is offered to them with what they already know. Furthermore, according to Narciss and Huth (2006), when elaborated feedback also contains KCR, learners can focus only on KCR and ignore elaborated feedback elements.

Based on the result of the interview, the lecturers assist the students through direct consultation both in groups and individually. It is in line with the characteristics of a constructivist teacher who provides communication with the students both in writing and verbal response (Aljohani, 2017). When the interaction between lecturer and students comes from a deep understanding about the concept of the discussion, then the integrated learning will be achieved.

The attitude of the students towards the lecturer's feedback was good. It can be proven by students who had never had negative feelings and were bothered by the feedback. Based on the interview, students are even more motivated to refer their writings to the lecturer. This result supports research by O'Mahony (2017) showing that feedback is excellent for motivating students towards better final reports. The results of research conducted by Pratiwi (2013) also highlight those

students are not only motivated to improve their writing but also to learn English in general.

Regarding feedback as a socio-constructive process, Nicol (2014) pointed out that students can develop an understanding of assessment requirements through participation and discussion. Since assessment is based on students' progress, they bring their writing together at an early stage, such as identifying a title and stating a point, then expanding the body of each main idea. Winstone et al. (2016) stated that exercises involving drafting, feedback, and improvement are often recommended.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results, lecturer's feedback had a significant positive correlation with students' writing performance. It can be concluded that the students had a positive perception of the lecturer's feedback. Indirectly, these positive thoughts are helpful to them in improving their writing performance. This current study implies that feedback can inspire students to improve their work. It can be seen that most students feel encouraged and motivated to write better in their future writing assignments.

In addition, the researcher also found that the use of the Knowledge Correct Response prevails over the Elaborated Feedback. It is understood that giving correct clues, even without explanation, can still help students understand and correct their writing. However, if this is to be viewed from social constructivism, teachers still need to be constructive and/or justify when providing feedback.

Based on this study, the researcher made several recommendations for the lecturers or future researchers. As a learning assistant, the instructor should know what students like most in EFL teaching-learning. Instructors should note that different students should have different learning styles, either auditory or visual. Therefore, providing two forms of feedback, oral and written, can be an effective way. During this time, in order to monitor the progress of the student, the teacher should always give constant feedback as this helps students a lot to improve their skills. In addition, the feedback given must be accompanied by an explanation so that the student does not have any difficulty interpreting the clues.

The researcher hopes that this study can be an appropriate reference for other researchers to conduct further study related to feedback in EFL teaching-learning. Additionally, since the theory used in the present study is social constructivism, future researchers might find similar themes from another learning theory like behaviorism or cognitivism theory. Future researchers can find similar topics and broaden the scope of the research by performing different contexts so that the results can be better and valid.

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