

# The Types of Lecturers' Feedback on EFL Learners' Writing

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## Abstract

Feedback is very essential in learning. It can help students to get the bigger picture of their progress, which stage they are in, and what steps they are going to take for future learning. Giving feedback is considered to be the essential role of a teacher or lecturer in guiding students in their learning process. As many experts noted that writing is the most complex skill to learn, and students need more assistance in developing their writing. Here, teachers or lecturers are needed to guide them in the whole process of writing, which are pre-writing, drafting, revising, and editing. Considering this prominent role of giving feedback, it is necessary for teachers or lecturers, and also the students to know about the types of feedback used in English writing. This will be useful for the teachers or lecturers to understand what type of feedback they will use in the learning, and for the students to reflect more on their preference for the given feedback.

**Keywords:** EFL students, lecturers' feedback, writing, writing feedback.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many have noted writing as the most complex skill to learn. Heaton, as cited in Aulya (2020), noted that writing abilities are difficult to teach because they need mastery of not just grammatical and rhetorical devices, but also conceptual and judgmental aspects. Another reason why writing is hard was stated by Ulashovna (2020) who said that performing writing activities necessitates a distinct mental process that has a direct impact on the blending of attention, fine motor coordination, memory, visual processing, language, and higher-order thinking. Writing needs ideas to be organized. It does not only care about grammatical things but also conceptual things.

To guide students in these whole processes, teachers or lecturers have to pay attention to what they should do. Harmer (2015) proposed some tasks that teachers must perform before, during, and after the process of writing. They are demonstrating, motivating and provoking, supporting, responding, and evaluating. According to Brown (2007), teachers assist in helping students engage in the thinking process of writing but they must not force their ideas on students' writing in the spirit of respecting students' opinions. This explained that the role of teachers is to facilitate students and guide them in the whole process of writing without involving or intervening in their thoughts in student writing.

Giving feedback or responding is considered to be the essential role of a teacher or lecturer in guiding students in their writing process. Raihany (2014) noticed that a notified learner of the outcome of their learning or their areas for development helps to motivate them to continue learning. Leng (2014) stated that the teacher gives feedback so that students may read and comprehend the problems and utilize it to enhance their work in the future. These show that in writing, feedback is needed to monitor and improve students writing results and their learning process, and also understand the problems they face.

## **2. THE CONCEPT OF WRITING**

Writing is one of the English skills that is considered a productive skill, which means a skill that can produce some things, such as ideas, thoughts, and expressions in written form. According to Harmer (2001), writing is a kind of communication used to convey ideas or feelings in a written format. Here, it can be seen that Harmer took writing as a tool which is a form of communication. Same as speaking skills, writing is also a way of communication where in its use, there must be a thought or a feeling expressed or shared. If the thoughts or feelings are shared in speech or written form, then it will produce the language that will be used in communication. As in writing skills, the written form is the product of thoughts and feelings expressed.

Siahaan (2008) noted that writing is a psychological action in which the user of a language puts information into a written text. Here, what he said relates more to the concept of writing as an activity. Writing is a way of communication to express feelings or to share thoughts in a written form which at the same time requires a psychological activity that mostly involves the brain and mental activities in its processes. Especially in higher education where academic writing is necessary, the involvement of the brain and mental activity is highly needed.

Kirmizi & Kirmizi (2015) furtherly said that academic writing involves strong critical thinking abilities since it requires high mental processes in content, organization of concepts and structure, and use of grammar and mechanics. Therefore, some steps, stages, or processes are needed in order to make writing can be easily done. Because when the thoughts are not structured and organized well, the readers would be struggling a lot to understand. The requirement of steps and stages is what makes writing considered to be an activity.

Based on the theories above, the concept of writing can be taken first as a tool or a way of communication that helps people to share thoughts, feelings, arguments, and expressions. Writing also can be taken as an activity because it requires some steps or

stages to be done. As writing involves the brain and mental activity, it is included as a psychological activity. Some steps that are involved in writing as an activity are discussed more in the process of writing.

### **3. THE PROCESS OF WRITING**

Many experts have noted the process of writing. Oshima & Hogue (2007) stated that there are four main stages in the writing process: prewriting, organizing, writing, and polishing (revising and editing). Harmer (2004) stated his version of the writing processes which are the choice/ briefing, idea/language generation, data gathering, planning, drafting and editing, final version, and consultation/tutorial. Seow (2002) mentioned that the four main stages of writing are: planning, drafting, revising, and editing. According to Richards & Rodgers (2015), the process of writing consists of four basic steps. They are planning, drafting, revising, and editing. In general, the well-known processes of writing are considered to be prewriting/planning, drafting, revising, and editing.

#### **3.1. Prewriting**

Prewriting can be simply said as a way to get ideas. Harmer (2004) used the term 'generating ideas' to define this stage of the writing process. He claimed that generating ideas is used by a writer to plan what they are going to write. As stated in William's (2018) model of the writing process, prewriting is described as the activities that take place before the first draft is started which include some activities like discussion, outlining, freewriting, journaling, etc. In brief, these prewriting activities are aimed to assist writers in developing ideas.

#### **3.2. Drafting**

The next step in the writing process is drafting. In this step, students will try to transform what they got in the prewriting stage into a written text. Johnson, as cited in Hutari (2019), described drafting as the writer's first attempt to capture ideas on paper. Moreover, Hutari (2019) said that students are not concerned with grammatical precision or the neatness of the draft at this stage, but rather with the fluency of writing. The writing is not completed yet and modified be modified. In other words, during this step, writers need to develop the prewriting ideas and turn them up into a draft. In this step, it is important to write the rough draft first. It can be done by quickly writing without stopping or wondering about grammar, spelling, or punctuation. Because this is just a rough draft, the errors will be fixed later. When the ideas have already been drafted out, then a writer may show the draft to their fellows or experts to continue to the next stage, which is revising.

#### **3.3. Revising**

The draft from the previous process will then be revised in this stage. Oshima & Hogue (1999) noted that during this stage, the concern or the discussion will be focused mainly on the content and organization. This shows that in revising, the concern will not be put into other things but content and organization. Moreover, McLean (2012) stated that a writer will be likely to construct changes to the first draft during revising before putting the final touches on it during the editing stage. In conclusion, at revising stage, a

writer will revisit the first draft and look back at the content, may also provide reorganizing, and make some major changes to the drafted ideas before going on to the editing stage.

### **3.4. Editing**

The last stage is editing. Here, McLean (2012) noted that making changes to enhance style and adherence to normal writing rules, such as replacing an ambiguous phrase with a more specific one or correcting grammatical and spelling problems, is what editing entails. This is also in line with Oshima & Hogue (1999) stated that the editing stage, distinguished from revising, focuses only on the smaller issues such as grammar, punctuation, and mechanics. It can be clearly distinguished that revising holds a bigger focus than editing so that after the editing process is done, the writing will be ready for submission or publication.

## **4. FEEDBACK IN WRITING**

In contributing to improving further learning, feedback lets the learners get information about their learning results. It is not only to show which level or stage they have reached but also to find know their improvement needs. Leng (2014) said that feedback is very important to students since it is one of the most important components of their learning process, as well as one of the most common and favorite strategies used by teachers to improve learning. Harmer (2001) stated that feedback includes not just criticizing students but also providing them with an assessment of their performance, whether during a drill or after a longer language production exercise. Here, it is well said that feedback is very essential in learning because it can help students to get the bigger picture of their progress, which stage they are in, and what steps they are going to take for future learning.

Not only for learning but feedback is also considered to be very essential in teaching. Raihany (2014) noted that teachers can use feedback to determine how successful they have been in their teaching and what they need to do to improve their effectiveness in teaching. To provide helpful and effective feedback to students, teachers also need feedback from students about how well their teaching is going. This will help teachers to measure themselves by considering what stuffs are achieved and what is not yet.

Giving feedback or responding is considered to be the essential role of a teacher or lecturer in guiding students in their writing process. Yishu, as cited in Zhang (2016), stated that feedback plays an important role in improving students' understanding of writing structure. Li Jing's case study, also cited in Zhang (2016) also revealed that both error and non-error feedback from teachers improves language accuracy in EFL students' writings, and the latter can even draw students' attention to the deeper parts of their writings. Keh (1990) furtherly said that feedback is an essential component of a process approach to writing because it provided information given by a reader to a writer for the writer to revise and improve. Improving a writing work to create good writing is not easy. Sari et al. (2020) declared that in terms of word choice and syntax, and correct use good writing should satisfy the following criteria. They are topic unity, smooth ideas organization, relevant use of terms and vocabulary, and proper use of the language of mechanics such as punctuation and spelling. Without any help, guidance, or information from readers, it will be difficult for a writer to revise their writing to produce good writing. Some other

researchers have done studies showing the importance of feedback in the writing classroom (Ajjawi et al., 2022; Bowen et al., 2022; Guo et al., 2022; Kerman et al., 2022; Saeed & Al Qunayeer, 2022; Xu, 2022; Zhang & Hyland, 2022).

## **5. THE TYPES OF FEEDBACK**

Teacher's feedback, as its name, is given feedback by a teacher in response to students' work. Teacher's feedback also known as "teacher's-response" or "teacher's review" is defined by Su, as cited in Susanti et al. (2020), as any given comment by a teacher to students to revise the writing. Furtherly, Susanti et al. (2020) stated that in the context of students' writing, feedback, in the form of a teacher's response, is termed Corrective Feedback (CF). Corrective feedback itself is defined by Hutari (2019) as a part of practice in the education and learning field and is needed as a medium to measure whether the student's work is correct or not. As stated above, teacher feedback, especially in the context of students' writing is also known as corrective feedback which focused on measuring whether students' work is correct or not.

Corrective feedback is considered to be important in writing. Susanti et al. (2020) have stated that one of the most important problems for L2 language teachers in Second Language (SL) situations is providing Corrective Feedback (CF) on linguistic errors in L2 students' writing. Sari et al. (2020) also noted that corrective feedback is vital because it can help students eliminate errors in their writing. Corrective feedback, according to Susanti et al. (2020), can be classified as written-oral feedback, direct-indirect feedback, form-content feedback, and first-final draft feedback. They are explained as follows:

### **5.1. Written and Oral Feedback**

According to Rofiqoh & Chakim (2020), oral feedback, also known as an oral conference, is a personal consultation between the teacher and the students during a composition review. Here, teachers provide feedback in form of oral by giving a sufficient amount of time to students to discuss their work. While written feedback, also defined by Rofiqoh & Chakim (2020), is the feedback given to students by providing certain comments, corrections, and marks on their work. Circle, underline, or other signs are often used by teachers to mark students' work. In learning, the use of both forms of feedback is probably used.

### **5.2. Direct and Indirect Feedback**

Direct and indirect feedback refers to the way teachers give feedback. Zhang (2016) noted that direct feedback happens when a teacher points out not only errors but also provides correct answers, whereas indirect feedback happens when a teacher provides no correct answer but indicates errors or problems through other means and lets the students answer by themselves. Westmacott (2017) said that in general, written feedback might be direct, with the learner receiving the correct version, or indirect, with the presence of the error highlighted but not corrected. When a teacher decides to give direct feedback, means he or she will directly point out students' errors and also provide the correct answers right away. On the other hand, when a teacher decides to give indirect

feedback, it means that he or she will give the students some hints to stimulate students so they will be able to indicate the errors and find the correction themselves.

Some examples of direct feedback were found in the research conducted by Leng (2014). The examples found are such as, 'Structure your argument – heading/sub-heading to improve readability' and 'Preview your main points here'. The teacher was also found highlighting students' work on things that were not right and also told them how to correct them. While in Hutari's research (2019), some examples of direct feedback are the written feedback given by crossing lines on students' work that also provided the correct answer, and mostly they were grammatical errors. These examples showed that in direct feedback, the teacher, lecturer, or instructor will directly give the correct form of the corrected words or sentences found in the students' work.

Some of the examples are provided in research conducted by Sari et al. (2020). They found such examples of indirect feedback as the lecturer already checked some mistakes and then let the students figure out the mistakes themselves. Another characteristic was shown by Hyland & Han, as cited in Susanti et al. (2020), in the indirect feedback, the teacher underlined and circled the error, provided editing symbols, and noticed the ambiguity of the marked text with a question mark or a question. From these statements, it can be shown that in indirect feedback, the lecturer, teacher, or instructor do not show any correct answer of the mistakes they indicate.

### **5.3. Form and Content Feedback**

These types of feedback are classified based on their focus. Form-focused feedback, as stated by Zhang (2016), is also known as error-correcting feedback or grammar feedback since it focuses on providing feedback on problems in grammar, vocabulary, and writing patterns. This is why it is called form-focused feedback. Furthermore, content feedback, as defined by Zahida et al. (2014), is the comment on the content of the writing which aimed to encourage students to concentrate more on the necessary content and ideas. In other words, form-focused feedback is focused more on grammatical and language use. While content-focused is focused more on the content organization, coherence, and unity of writing work.

### **5.4. First Draft and Final Draft Feedback**

The feedback that is given on the first or final draft is also important because they hold different effects on students' writing abilities. Diab et al., as cited in Susanti et al. (2020), claimed that the impact of teacher/peer feedback on the first or final copy makes a significant difference in the student's writing ability. Azariadis (2018) defined the first draft as a document that may share with others to read. Here, it can be seen that a first draft is useful to give the writer a new insight into what they have written. While on final draft feedback, Nash (2012) characterized final-draft feedback characteristics as written notations or oral answers addressing the content, sentences, documentation, and overall

evaluation of the essay. For the use of both of the feedback, each lecturer has their style in delivering the feedback.

## 6. CONCLUSION

Feedback is needed to monitor and improve students' results and their learning process, and also to understand the problems they face. Giving feedback is considered to be the essential role of a teacher or lecturer in guiding students in their learning process. Especially in writing, which is a skill that requires more than just a total focus, it is very prominent for instructors to give proper feedback to the students. There are four types of feedback that are usually given by teachers or lecturers in guiding students' writing process. They are written-oral feedback (feedback form), direct-indirect feedback (feedback delivery), form-content feedback (feedback focus), and first draft-final draft feedback (feedback timing). However, having information about these types of feedback is necessary for both teachers and lecturers and students. Teachers and lecturers may learn the types of feedback in order to fit the characteristics of the students in their classrooms. Students may get benefited to identify their teachers' or lecturers' feedback use, and finding their preference for the feedback use or suggestion to be provided to their teachers or lecturers to improve learning.

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