The Effects of Direct and Indirect Error CorrectionFeedback and Students' Attitudes on The Quality of Junior High School Students' Paragraph Writing

Ahmad Sabarudin[1], I Wayan Ardhana[2], I Nyoman Sudana Degeng[2], Punaji Setyosari[2]

[1]SMP Negeri 2 Sepulu, Bangkalan
[2]Program Pascasarjana, Universitas Negeri Malang

Abstract: *This study was in the secondary school context in Indonesia. English is a compulsory subject in secondary school and taught as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia. Improving students' writing ability is still a big problem for teachers. Teachers had to find the best way to improve students' writing ability. Instead of ongoing controversy on the effectiveness of error correction by some researchers (Kepner, 1991; Truscott, 1999), this study was designed to investigate two types of written error correction feedback (direct versus indirect) and two types of students' attitudes (positive versus negative) on students' paragraph writing quality. Quality of paragraph writing was defined as the degree to which students' paragraph writing met the acceptable characteristics of a good writing in term of contents, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.Seventy two secondary school students were involved in the research to write and revise paragraphs.In the direct error correction feedback condition, errors made by students were corrected and the right forms were providedby teacher next to or above the original errors. Students rewrote the drafts to make revision ofthe paragraphs. In the indirect error correction feedback condition, errors made by students were underlined and given codes by teacher.Students make revision ofthe paragraphs based on teacher's feedback given. The research data were collected through pre-test and post-test and analyzed using analysis of variants through SPSS 20.0 Windows program. Results indicated that the group receiving indirect feedback performed significantly better than the group receiving direct feedback on the quality of their writing. The results also revealed that students having positive attitude toward English lesson outperformed those having negative one. Possible reasons for these findings and suggestions for future research were discussed.*

Keywords: direct/indirect feedback, students' attitude, paragraph writing quality

1. Introduction

The goal of teaching writing course in junior high school in Indonesia was to help students to be able to express their feelings, opinions, or ideas in simple, short written texts as stated in school syllabus. To be able to write well, students had to master all components of writing such as content, organization of ideas, language use, vocabulary, and mechanics.

Greater attention had to be paid to develop students' writing ability because of poor achievement in writing class. It indicated that writing in English was not easy for most of the Indonesian students since writing in English was very much different from writing in Indonesian language. English spelling, vocabulary and grammar were very much different from those of Indonesian language. Results of some research revealed that students had problems in writing. Roni (2006) stated that students' writing errors were in term of topic sentence, diction, and description. Another research by Astasari (2009)showed that students made errors in term of omission, misinformation, addition, and disordering. Students' error was categorized as inter-lingual errors of inference from native language, intra-lingual errors within the target language, and inaccuracies in measuring and appropriating to sociolinguistic context of communication. According to Muth'im (2010), there were two serious problems for Indonesian students learning English in writing class: organization and language use.

Previous studies on error correction in second language writing classes had been conducted by some researchers. Chandler, (2003) found that students receiving error feedback from teachers improved in accuracy over time; Hyland (2006) observed six English as a second language writers on a full-time 14-week English proficiency program course at a university. It was found that feedback focusing on form was used by most of the students in their immediate revisions to their drafts and was highly valued by them. The case studies suggested that some language errors might be "treatable" through feedback. With experimental and control group data, Chandler (2003) showed that teachers' feedback on students' grammatical and lexical errors resulted in a significant improvement in both accuracy and fluency in subsequent writing of the same type over the same semester.

Effects of Direct and Indirect Feedback

Some researchers had different opinions on the effectiveness of direct and indirect correction feedback. Ferris (1995) claimed that students would benefit more from indirect correction feedback because they had to engage a more profound form of language processing as they were self-editing their output. Another study by Ferris (2005) found that whereas indirect correction feedback proved to be the most effective in improving students' accuracy in subsequent writing, students who received direct feedback made the most accurate revisions. Lalande (1982) stated that students who received indirect correction feedback outperformed students in a direct correction group. On the other hand, Frantzen (1995) and Rob et al. (1986) stated that

direct and indirect correction feedback had equal effectiveness. On the contrary, Chandler (2003) found that direct correction feedback resulted in the largest accuracy gains, not only in revisions but also in subsequent writing.

A distinction has been made between direct and indirect feedback. Ferris (2002) stated that direct feedback took place when a teacher provided the correct linguistic form for students such as word, morpheme, phrase, rewritten sentence, deleted word(s) or morpheme(s). On the other hand, indirect feedback occurred when the teacher indicated that an error had been made but left it to the students to solve the problem and correct the error. Indirect feedback took the form of underlining and coding (or description) of the errors. In a rather similar context, Ferris and Roberts (2001) compared these two types of indirect feedback. They found that the group receiving feedback of both underlining and coding did slightly better in revising their grammatical errors than the one receiving only underlining as the feedback. Both groups were significantly more successful in revising errors than the control group receiving no feedback. The results were challenged by Chandler (2003), who compared four types of feedback: direct correction, underlining with description, description only, and underlining only. In her study, Chandler found both direct correction and simple underlining to be more effective than describing the type of error in reducing long-term error. She also noted that direct correction worked best for producing accurate revision. There was no significant difference between direct correction and underlining of errors. The survey results indicated that students preferred direct correction because it was the fastest and easiest way to revise their grammatical errors. But students felt that they learned more from self-correction when the errors were only underlined. Although both studies made distinctions on different types of errors, neither addressed the effect of feedback on the specific types of errors.

Whereas most research on correction feedback were carried out in college context, the present study was set up in secondary school context and aimed to investigate the effectiveness of two types of error correction feedback (direct and indirect) in improving the students' writing quality. Since the subjects were junior high school students, the tasks given were to write paragraphs, not essays. We compared two groups of 36 junior high school students in a four-week experiment. The two groups in this experiment were treated differently. Students in experimental group were given indirect correction feedback with three phases. Similarly, students in control group were given direct correction feedback with three phases. Both groups had the same topics in their assignments. Besides, the effects of students' attitudes (positive and negative) on writing quality were also investigated. Both groups had pre-test and post-test.

2. Method

2.1. Subjects

Participants in this study were seventy two 9th-grade junior high school students taught by a teacher who had completed four years of college and obtained a bachelor's degree in English education and had more than 5 years of teaching experience. The school was located in rural area in Bangkalan Regency, East Java Province, Indonesia. Thirty six students served as an experimental group and the other 36 students served as a control group. The students in experimental group received indirect error correction feedback and those in control group received direct error correction feedback. The students in both groups were expected to learn how to write and revised a paragraph based on teacher's feedback. They participated in the study during their regular scheduled classes for nine meetings.

2.2. Direct and Indirect Error Correction Feedback

At the first meeting, students in direct group and indirect group were given questionnaire on student's attitude toward English that was developed by the researcher. From the questionnaire, the data of students' attitude were collected and classified into positive and negative. The students who got score above the average score were classified as having positive attitudes and those who got the same or less than the average score were classified as having negative attitude.

At the second meeting, both groups had a pre-test of free-paragraph writing. The data from pre-test were regarded as students' prior writing quality. Later, the result of students' pre-test was compared to the result of post-test at the end of the research. Thus the quality of the students' writing could be judged.

At the third to eight meetings, the teacher gave classroom instructions. For both groups, instruction consisted of two 40-min lessons. The treatment given to both experimental group and control group was the same. Teacher began the lesson by (1) providing a general overview of the lesson, (2) briefly describing the goals of the lesson, (3) stating what topic to write, (4) giving students a chance to write a paragraph based on the topic given, and (5) collecting students' work.

At the next meeting, students revised their paragraphs based on teacher's feedback. Students in direct group just copied from teacher's feedback. Students in indirect group revised based on teacher's feedback. At the end of the meeting, teacher collected the students' works and gave scores. The same thing happened with the next two topics for the next four classroom meetings.

2.3. Students' Attitudes toward English

The attitude of the students toward the English was measured by a 30-item Likert-type questionnaire. The questionnaire provided a situational measure of students' emotional reactions to English subject matter. It required students to report their degree of agreement with a variety of statements concerning three points: students 'feelings or attention to English subject matter, their readiness to learn English, and their awareness of English future benefits. Nineteen of 30 statements were categorized as positive and the rest eleven statements were categorized as negative. Students responded to these statements by using a four-point Likert scale: strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. Scoring for the positive statements was1 = strongly

disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = agree, and 4 = strongly agree. On the contrary, scoring for negative statements was 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, and 4 = strongly disagree. Of those 30items, the total number of items pertaining to each construct was as follows: feelings or attention to English subject matter was nine items (five positive and four negative), readiness to learn English was fourteen items (ten positive and four negative), and awareness of English future benefits was seven items (four positive and three negative).

The overall survey used in this study had a reliability of 0.91, as measured by Cronbach's alpha. Furthermore, statements pertaining to feelings or attention had a reliability of 0.75, those pertaining to readiness to learn English had a reliability of 0.79, and those measuring awareness of English future benefits had a reliability of 0.88. Thus, reliability was generally high for this instrument.

2.4 Paragraph Writing Quality

The quality of students' paragraph writing refers to the degree to which students' writing meets the acceptable characteristics of a good writing in term of contents, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics.In this study students wrote a paragraph. Thus, the quality of students' writing referred to the quality of paragraph produced by students in this research.

2.5 Procedures

The study was conducted in a secondary school context as long as nine classroom meetings. There are three topics to write during this experiment. At the first meeting, students in both experimental and control groups were given attitude survey by completing questionnaire to determine their position of attitude toward English subject matter (positive or negative). As noted earlier, the same teacher taught all sections of the class. At the second meeting, two days before conducting the study, the pretest was given to the students to determine their level of prior knowledge with regard to writing a paragraph. The score of the pretest was then regarded as the student's prior writing quality. Later, it was compared with the result of the post-test held at the end of the study to determine the improvement of students' writing quality.

As noted above, two 40-min lessons were presented to each group in each meeting. In both treatment conditions, topic 1was presented on the same day at the third meeting, 2 days after the pretest was administered. The students in both groups had assignment to write a paragraph for topic 1. After the class was over, the teacher collected the students' work and gave them a feedback. The teacher gave the students in experimental group indirect feedback on their works and those in control group direct feedback on their work.

At the next meeting, the teacher gave each student his/her works in both groups. Students then revised their paragraph based on the teacher's feedback. At the end of the class, the teacher collected the students' final paragraph. Finally, the teacher scored the students' works.

For the next four meetings (5th – 8th meetings), the second and third topics were given to both groups the same way as topic one was given. As previously indicated, each topic was given in two meetings. Three days after the third topic was accomplished, students had a post-test. The students in both groups were asked to write a paragraph with a new topic. Without feedback any more, the students' works were scored using the following criteria: a. content: 5-25, b. organization: 5-25, c. language use: 7-35, d. vocabulary: 2-10, and e. mechanics: 1-5.

2.6. Data Analysis

To examine difference of writing quality between the experimental group and control group, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted. In this case, the results of the pre-test of both groups were compared to the results of post-test of both groups. To examine the effects of attitude on the students' writing quality of both groups, anANOVA was also conducted.

3. Result and Discussion

One important thingto be noted before discussing the implications arising from the study is that the sample is small and is therefore not representative of all Indonesian students.

3.1. Result of Pret-test

As stated earlier, the result of pre-test was regarded as students' prior writing quality. Data of students'prior writing quality in English were obtained from a pre-test. Instrument of pre-test had been tested and analyzed in term of its validity and reliability. Then the data from both experimental and control groups were analyzed descriptively using SPSS 20.0 version Windows program and the results were as follows.

Table 1: Resume of Pre-test Result

Technique	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Std. Error	Min	Max
Indirect	36	64.6	5.99	1.00	53.0	74.0
Direct	36	64.5	6.98	1.16	53.0	77.0
Total	72	64.5	6.46	0.76	53.0	77.0

As can be seen in Table 1, the mean score for students in the indirect feedback group (N=36) was 64.55 (max score 74.00; min score 53.00; std. dev. 5.99; and std. error 0.99), whereas students in the direct feedback group(N36) had a mean score of64.50 (55 (max score 77.00; min score 53.00; std. dev. 6.97; and std. error 1.16). The result oft-testanalysis revealed *p-value*0,971 > 0,05. It was concluded that there was no significant difference between experimental group and control group onstudents' prior writing quality before the research began.

3.2.Description of Questionnaire Results

The 30-item attitude survey consisted of three sub-scales, including feelings/attention, readiness to learn English, and students' awareness of future English benefits. Result of the survey on students' attitude toward English subject

determined the students' attitude. The data analysis using SPSS 20 program served the result as in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Result ofAttitude Scale

Technique	N	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Indirect	36	90.7	11.4	68.0	113.0
Direct	36	90.9	8.2	70.0	113.0
Total	72	90.8	9.9	68.0	113.0

Data on table2 showed the score of students' attitude on both experimental group and control group. Students in experimental group which were provided with indirect error correction feedback had an average mean of 90.7;maximum score 113.0; minimum score 68.0; and std. deviation 11.4. Whereas students in control group which were provided with direct error correction feedback had an average mean of 90.9; maximum score 113,0: minimum score 70.0; dan std. deviation 8.2.

The average total score 90.8was used to classified the students into two attitude categoriesnamely positive attitude and negative attitude.The students who had score above 90,8were categorized as having positive attitude. On the contrary, the students who had the same or less than 90,8 were categorized as having negative attitude.According to the classification, 40 students (55,56%) were positive and 32 students (44,44%) were negative.

3.3. Result of Post-test

At the end of the study, both groups (direct and indirect feedback) had a post test.Data from the post-test were computed and analyzed using SPSS 20 program. The result of the analysis was put in Table 3 below.

Table 3: Result of Post-test

Technique	Attitude	Max	Min	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
Indirect	Pos.	83.0	71.0	78.5	3.45	19
	Neg.	73.0	61.0	67.7	3.28	17
	Total	83.0	61.0	73.4	6.43	36
Direct	Pos.	82.0	64.0	72.3	5.05	19
	Neg.	69.0	55.0	59.9	4.62	17
	Total	82.0	55.0	67.2	7.85	36
Total	Pos.	83.0	64.0	75.3	5.33	40
	Neg.	73.0	55.0	64.0	5.52	32
	Total	83.0	55.0	70.3	7.78	72

According to the result of the post-test (table 3), the students receiving indirect feedback (experimental group) had a maximum score of 83.00; a minimum score of 61.00; a mean score of 73.3889; a standard deviation of 6.43330, whereas the students receiving direct feedback (control group) had a maximum score of 82.00; a minimum score of 55.00; a mean score of 67.1667; a standard deviation of 7.84675. The data showed that the students in experimental group outperformed the students in control group.

The data in table 3 also showed that the students who have positive attitude had a maximum score of 83.00; a minimum score of 64.00; a mean score of 75.2750; a standard deviation of 5.33007, whereas the students who have negative attitude had a maximum score of 73.00; a minimum score of 55.00; a mean score of 70.2778; a standard deviation of 5.52113. The data showed that the students

who have positive attitudes toward English lesson outperformed the students who have negative attitudes.

This study examined the effects of written direct error correction feedback, written indirect error correction feedback and students' attitudes on the quality of paragraph writing. Students in the indirect feedback received significantly higher quality on paragraph writing than students in the direct correction feedback. Overall, students in both groups with positive attitudes toward the English subject matter received higher quality on their paragraph writing than students with negative attitudes.

3.4. Effects of Error Correction Feedback on Students' Writing Quality

Results of the present research support the notion that an indirect feedback is an effective means of promoting the quality of students' paragraph writing such as those examined in this study. Students in the indirect feedback condition performed significantly better on the post-test than did their counterparts in the direct feedback condition. This finding is likely due to the fact that these students had more opportunities to use their thinking skills and more challenges in accomplishing their works independently in indirect feedback activities and thus had more opportunities to integrate and coordinate the writing component skills throughout the instruction than those in the direct feedback. They engaged in a more profound form of language processing as they were self-editing their output and had the opportunity to think and self-edit within the context of solving a writing problem, so they received deeper understanding and engagement in their writing activities.

3.5. Effects of Attitudes on Students' Writing Quality

This study was also designed to examine how students' attitudes would affect their paragraph writing quality. Results on the post-test revealed there was significant interaction between students' attitude and the quality of paragraph writing. Why did positive attitude students outcome the negative ones in their paragraph writing quality? As noted earlier, the group of positive attitudes students had higher motivation in learning than the group of negative ones. It was likely that the higher-motivated students would learn harder than the lower ones, consequently, they had better scores in their writing course.

4. Conclusion

Instead of ongoing controversy on the effect of teachers' feedback on students' achievement, much had been written about the potential value of employing indirect error correction feedbackbut little research had been conducted in the secondary school context. The present study provided support for the notion that indirect feedback might facilitate students' writing skill. However, a great deal of additional research was necessary in order to determine whether these promising findings hold true across a wide range of students. For example, it is important to identify which components of indirect feedback were essential in promoting students' writing competence, and to examine how the learning strategies employed were affected by this type of technique.

Hopefully, researchers who build upon the present study, following the suggestions offered, will help provide a richer picture of the benefits of indirect error correction technique.

5. Suggestion

The findings of this study suggest several directions for future research. First, future researchers may want to examine which particular aspects of the feedback technique facilitate students' learning of writing. It isa bit uncertain what specific aspects of the indirect feedback technique made better effects. For example, it is not clear whether students in the indirect feedback group outperformed the direct feedback group because they were exposed to more challenging activities, because they engaged in more thinking and learning tasks.

Based on the results of this study, it is also suggested that in future studies, researchers should carefully consider the type of feedback used as well asthe students' attitudes.

References

[1] Astasari, Isanti. 2009. *Gramatical Error in Students' Narrative Writing.* Thesis English Department, Faculty of Letters, State University of Malang.

[2] Chandler, J. (2003). The Efficacy of Various Kinds of Error Feedback for Improvement in the Accuracy and Fluency of L2 Student Writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 12: 267–296.

[3] Ferris, Dana R. (2005). *Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Witing.* Michigan: The University of Michigan Press.

[4] Ferris, Dana R. (1995). Student Reaction to Teacher Response in Multiple-draft Composition Classrooms. *TESOL Quarterly.* 29(1): 33-53

[5] Frantzen, D. 1995. The Effects of Grammar Supplementation on Written Accuracy in an Intermediate Spanish Content Course. *Modern Language Journal.*79(3): 329–344.

[6] Hyland, Ken. and Hyland, Fiona. 2006. Context and Issues in Feedback on L2 Writing: An Introduction. In Hyland, Ken and Hyland, Fiona (Eds). *Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues.* New York: Cambridge University Press.

[7] Kepner, C. G. (1991). An Experiment in the Relationship of Types of Written Feedback to the Development Second-Language Writing Skills. *Modern Language Journal.* 75: 305-313.

[8] Lalande, J. F. II., (1982). Reducing Composition Errors: An experiment. *Modern Language Journal.* 66: 140-149.

[9] Muth'im, Abdul. 2010. EFL Learners' Ability in Writing Comparison-Contrast Essay. In Cahyono, Bambang Yudi (Ed). *Second Language Acquisition and English Language Teaching.* Malang: State University of Malang Press.

[10] Robb, T., Ross, S., & Shortreed, I. 1986. Salience of Feedback on Error and its Effect on EFL Writing Quality. *TESOL Quarterly.*20(1): 83–95.

[11] Roni, Rusman. 2006. The Students' Competency in Writing Descriptive Paragraph at Electrical and Mechanical Department, Faculty of Engineering, Tridinanti University Palembang. *TEFLIN Journal.* 17 (1): 28-36

[12] Truscott, J. 1999. The case for "The Case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes": AResponse to Ferris. *Journal of Second Language Writing.*8(2): 111–122.