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أبجدية
مجلة علمية دولية في التربية

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Teachers' Corrective Feedback on Students' L2 Writing: State of The Art

Abstract

Teachers' corrective feedback has been largely practiced in L2 writing programs and still extensively researched especially in the last decade. In the literature about ESL and EFL writing pedagogy, it is not only the typology but also the effectiveness as well as the relationship to others have been discussed. This paper synthesizes the current progress in the field to draw what has been done by the researchers in the area particularly in both ESL and EFL setting. As many as sixty-six studies mostly published in reputable journals from 2008 to 2018 are synthesized; and the result is categorized into five themes that include: *first*, the effectiveness of teachers' corrective feedback on L2 writing accuracy; *second*, the stance of teachers' corrective feedback comparing to peer feedback and computer-generated feedback; *third*, teachers' perceptions and practices, fourth, students' response and engagements; and *finally* experts' recommendation for further studies and for synergizing research findings and practices.

Teachers' Corrective Feedback, EFL/ESL/L2 Writing, Written Corrective Feedback

مستخلص

لقد تم استخدام التغذية الراجعة للمدرسين بشكل كبير في برامج كتابة المستوى الثاني، ولا تزال تبحث على نطاق واسع خاصة في العقد الأخير. تدريس اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية (ESL) وعلم اللغة الإنجليزية (EFL)، لا يقتصر الأمر على التصنيف فحسب، بل تمت أيضاً مناقشة الفعالية بالإضافة إلى العلاقة مع الآخرين. هذه الورقة تجمع التقدم الحالي في المجال لرسم ما قام به الباحثون في المنطقة خاصة في كل من ESL و EFL. تم تجميع ما يصل إلى ستة وستين دراسة وتم نشرها غالباً في المجلات ذات السمعة الجيدة من عام 2008 إلى 2018؛ وتم تصنيف النتيجة في خمسة محاور تتضمن: أولاً، مدى فاعلية ملاحظات المدرسين التصحيحية على دقة الكتابة في المستوى الثاني؛ ثانياً، موقف المدرسين التصحيحي مقارنةً بملاحظات الزملاء والمعلومات المرتجعة بالحاسوب؛ ثالثاً، تصورات وممارسات المدرسين، رابعاً، استجابة الطلاب ومشاركاتهم؛ وأخيراً توصية الخبراء بإجراء المزيد من الدراسات وتوحيد نتائج البحوث والممارسات.

ملاحظات المدرسين التصحيحية ، كتابة EFL/ESL/L2 ، التعليقات التصحيحية المكتوبة


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Abstrak

Umpan balik korektif para guru telah banyak dipraktekkan dalam program penulisan L2 dan masih banyak diteliti terutama dalam dekade terakhir. Dalam literatur tentang pedagogi penulisan ESL dan EFL, tidak hanya tipologi tetapi juga efektivitas serta hubungan dengan orang lain telah dibahas. Makalah ini mensintesis kemajuan saat ini di lapangan untuk menggambarkan apa yang telah dilakukan oleh para peneliti di daerah tersebut terutama dalam pengaturan ESL dan EFL. Sebanyak enam puluh enam studi yang kebanyakan diterbitkan dalam jurnal terkemuka dari tahun 2008 hingga 2018 disintesis; dan hasilnya dikategorikan ke dalam lima tema yang meliputi: pertama, efektivitas umpan balik korektif guru pada akurasi penulisan L2; kedua, sikap umpan balik koreksi guru dibandingkan dengan umpan balik teman dan umpan balik yang dihasilkan komputer; ketiga, persepsi dan praktik guru, keempat, respon dan keterlibatan siswa; dan akhirnya rekomendasi para ahli untuk studi lebih lanjut dan untuk mensinergikan temuan dan praktik penelitian

 *Umpan Balik Korektif Guru, Penulisan EFL/ESL/L2, Umpan Balik Koreksi Tertulis*

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INTRODUCTION

Corrective feedback is mostly used for supporting students' learning, and the power have been known especially by those working in language teaching. There are numbers of updated empirical confirmation showing that corrective feedback can positively affect language development (e.g. Bitchener and Knoch, 2010; Hattie and Timperley, 2007; Oltra-Massuet, 2018; Rummel and Bitchener, 2015). To follow the discussion about teachers' corrective feedback in L2 writing context, it is useful to refer the typology of teachers' corrective feedback from Ellis (2009) and Sheen & Ellis (2011) mentioning that there are some known terminologies related to types of feedback such as direct vs. indirect feedback, focused vs unfocused feedback, located vs not located, and using metalinguistic information vs no metalinguistic information. Advanced technology has enlarged the typology both as the medium of transferring feedback (use of video or audio) and automatic feedback function (software), which is also popular as automated writing evaluation (AWE).

It is important to note that the effectiveness of teachers' corrective feedback is not without critics. Truscott (1996) strongly rejected grammar correction because it was ineffective and even harmful. Ferris (1999) responded that Truscott's argument was premature and overly strong. Truscott-Ferris debate and supporters in the area of grammar corrective feedback have been reviewed in several resources (e.g. Brown, 2012; Casanave, 2007:86). This paper overviews the current studies on teachers' corrective feedback in L2 writing. L2 in this paper refers to English, and thus the

collections of sources to review are specific to both ESL and EFL setting. As many as sixty-six articles mostly published in selected Q1 journals (as listed in second language acquisition and writing are synthesized. The result of the overview is organized into five following parts first, the effectiveness of teachers' corrective feedback on L2 writing accuracy; second, the position of teachers' corrective feedback comparing to other external feedback; third, teachers perceptions and practices, fourth, the students response and engagements to teachers' corrective feedback; and finally recommendations for further studies.

DISCUSSIONS

The Effectiveness of Teachers' Corrective Feedback on L2 Writing Accuracy

Numerous experimental studies in different contexts have currently reported that teachers' written corrective feedback (WCF) is statistically significant to improve the students' L2 writing grammatical accuracy. Bitchener (2008) reported one experimental study that is applied to four assigned groups (direct corrective feedback, written and oral meta-linguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback and written metalinguistic explanation; direct corrective feedback only; the control group received no corrective feedback) involving 75 students of low intermediate international ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand who were asked to produce three pieces of writings (pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test) that portrayed what was happening in a provided picture. The study found that the accuracy (in using article system) of students who received written corrective feedback in the immediate post-test is outperformed those in the control group and that this level of performance was consistent two months ahead (Bitchener, 2008).

The same findings are also accurate for identical studies applied to 52 low-intermediate ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand (Bitchener and Knoch, 2009) and 63 advanced L2 writers in a course named 'Introductory Composition for International students' in USA (Bitchener and Knoch, 2010). Again, similarly targeting on the use of article, a different study involving 49 low-intermediate ESL students in an intensive language program in the United States confirmed that metalinguistic explanation (ME) helped to develop learners' L2 explicit knowledge although the effect was not durable (Shintani and Ellis, 2013). These three studies confirm the immediate positive effect of teachers' corrective feedback to the ESL writers' grammatical accuracy particularly on the use of article.

Concerning dissimilar linguistic feature, another experimental study in EFL setting was reported by Rummel and Bitchener (2015) who conducted a seven-week experimental study requiring 42 advanced EFL learners in Vientiane, Laos to write four different narrative texts on the given prompts (pre-test, post-test and two delayed post-

tests). The study found that the three experimental groups having different types of WCF showed significant improvement in the use of the targeted feature (simple past tense) while the control group did not (Rummel and Bitchener, 2015). The other study on the effect of focused and unfocused indirect written corrective feedback on EFL learners' accuracy in using weak past tense verb has confirmed that the experimental groups not only outperformed the control groups in the direct post-test but also in the delayed post-test (Frear and Chiu, 2015).

Specific factor, for example language analytical ability (LAA), might mediate the short term effect of feedback, just like what Shintani and Ellis (2015) have reported from a correlational study participated by 118 Japanese university students of English that *first*, learners with stronger LAA benefited more from both direct feedback and metalinguistic explanation than learners with lower ability; *second*, LAA played a more prominent role for those learners who had revised their original writing following the feedback; and *finally* the mediating effect was only apparent in new writing produced immediately after the feedback. Highlighting the role of mediating factors of teachers' corrective feedback in the grammatical accuracy of L2 learners, Kang Han (2015) synthesized 21 primary studies in the subject of teachers' written corrective feedback and came to the conclusion that teachers' written corrective feedback could promote better grammatical accuracy in second language writing, but the significance depends on variables such as learners' proficiency, the setting, and the genre of the writing task.

Above and beyond grammatical accuracy, Truscott (1996, 2008) claims that (a) correction may have significance for non-grammatical errors but not for errors in grammar; (b) students tend to avoid more complicated advice due to error correction; and (c) the time used on CF may be more wisely used for additional writing practice. Responding to Truscott's provoking thought, many researchers have undertaken more investigations and meta-synthesis argumentation to provide stronger evidence on the effectiveness of written corrective feedback to improve writing quality (Ferris, 2012; Hyland and Hyland, 2008; Liu and Brown, 2015). As a results of this attempt, several longitudinal and mixed studies have consolidated that comprehensive, multiple component, dynamic and individual error correction in second language writing are effective strategies in improving learners' accuracy over time (Beuningen, Jong, and Kuiken, 2012; Early and Saidy, 2013; Ferris, Liu, Sinha, Senna, 2012; Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Strong-Krause, and Anderson, 2010; Kurzer, 2018; Rahimi, 2008). Even though more and more evidence of the power of feedback in EFL and ESL writing contexts have been published, expanded and extended explorations in the area are still open to help researchers and practitioners conclude and make generalization about the effectiveness of teachers' corrective feedback particularly on non-grammatical and more complex aspects and the longer-term effects (Bitchener and Knoch, 2015; Ferris, 2015).

Teachers' Corrective Feedback vs. Other External Feedback

Another area of investigation about corrective feedback in L2 writing is contrasting the uptake between feedback given by teachers and other external sources (peers and technology/computer-generated). Ruegg (2015) carried out a study participated by 64 Japanese university students to investigate the differences in students' uptake of peer and teacher feedback after receiving feedback from only one subject longitudinally. Her study found that peer feedback was more often nonspecific but led to successful revisions whereas teacher feedback was more often specific and more often up-taken yet led to misunderstandings or unsuccessful revision (Ruegg, 2015). While peer feedback is powerfully lead to successful revision, previous studies confirm that most learners paid attention to less than 50% of peer feedback received (Cannor and Asenavage, 1994; Paulus, 1999; Tsui and Ng, 2000) probably due to the nonspecific nature of the feedback from peers. Therefore peer reviewers should be trained to give specific feedback and general comments peer feedback (Ruegg, 2015).

The other external feedback source growing in this sophisticated era is computer-generated feedback software by utilizing language corpora and concordance files which have been started to be widely used at the beginning of 2000s such as *Word Pilot*, *Check My Words*, *Mark My Words* (Hyland and Hyland, 2008) and *Criterion, My Access!* (Chong, 2017). Those automated writing evaluation (AWE) software are not only used for assessment feedback but also for diagnostic and corrective feedback (Chong, 2017). It was reported that AWE feedback is likely to have a constructive impact to students' EFL writing accuracy and positively perceived by both teachers and students (Li, Link, and Hegelheimer, 2015; Zhang (2016). However, there's a large discrepancy between teachers' and AWE's feedback (Dikli and Bleyle, 2014). *Criterion* did not identify numerous errors made by the students, but most of those errors were truly identified by the teacher; in fact, the teacher provided both more (i.e., a higher total number of coded errors) and higher quality (i.e., a higher percentage of coded errors judged as accurate) feedback compared to *Criterion* (Dikli and Bleyle, 2014). Another software, *My Access!*, is the same either (Dikli, 2010). Given that, it might be true that AWE could reduce teachers' workload, but that does not mean that AWE provides better feedback that the students are likely to pay attention and uptake for their revisions.

Teachers' Perceptions and Practices

Teachers respond students' writing with a certain amount of different concern and that this may change within the diverse situation (Hyland and Hyland, 2008). In L2 writing learning programs, most teachers respond not only to mechanics (Alshahrani and Storch, 2014) but also to global, substantive, higher-order concerns such as responding to students' rhetorical situations, use of reason, and organization as well as lower-order concerns about grammar or formatting (Dixon and Moxley, 2013; Lee, Leong, and Song, 2016). Previously, teachers tend to aware more on grammar and

mechanics rather than content and organization because grammatical and mechanical errors are more explicit (Ur, 1996: 170), but currently teachers are likely to cover all aspects when responding to students' writing (Dixon et al., 2013) and faculty teachers generally tend to concern more on content and style of the writing within the subject (Hyland, 2013; Lee et al., 2016).

Current studies about teachers' perception to teachers' feedback in L2 writing classroom also inform that teachers believe that their feedback can improve the students' writing quality, but they might find some constraints in practicing their ideals (Alshahrani et al, 2014; Junqueira and Payant, 2015; Lee et al, 2016; Lee, Mak, and Burns, 2015). More constraints are potentially faced by novice teachers as what has been portrayed in these following case studies. Junqueira and Payant (2015) investigated teacher feedback beliefs and practices of a pre-service L2 writing teacher during academic semester and found that the respondent (Kim) believe that feedback needs to be individualized, consumes time, requires practice, and can lead to better writing. Junqueira and Payant (2015) also informed that Kim understood that teachers should provide feedback on global aspects and, to a lesser extent, on local issues and provide explanations to WCF occurrences but her actual practice showed some mismatches, such that local WCF (83.9%) significantly outnumbered global WCF (16.1%). Relatively comparable constraints is also met by high school teachers in Hongkong as reported by Lee et al (2015).

To manage such constrains, teachers need to employ some professional adjustment (Ferris, Brown, Liu, Eugenia, and Stine, 2011) by dealing with three crucial contextual variables that are learners, situation, and instructional methodology (Hartshorn, McCollum, and Wolfersberger, 2010). Several attempts have also been empirically tested for example the use of video which is multimodal for conferencing thus the information delivered to the students could be richer (Ozkul and Ortactepe, 2017), the addition of affective comments to complement the written corrective feedback (Tang and Liu, 2018), the use of models (Mayo and Labandibar, 2017), and the application of supplementary rubrics (Ene and Kosobucki, 2016). Besides, reciprocal caring and dialogue interactions between teachers and students during the writing process could improve trust (Lee and Schallert, 2008) which then facilitate the linguistic revisions of the student writing (Merkel, 2018).

Students' Response and Engagement

Expanding the previous attempts to explore the students' preferences (Hyland and Hyland, 2008), recent studies on the students' preferences has evolved to students' responses and engagement to feedback. Several studies have been conducted in various settings. Lee (2008) investigates the reactions of students in two Hong Kong secondary classrooms to their teachers' feedback and finds out that students expected more written comments and explicit error feedback from teachers, yet lower proficiency

students were less interested in error feedback than those of higher proficiency. Regarding the directness of the feedback, Treglia (2008) analyzes the critical and positive commentary, mitigated and unmitigated, written by two community-college students, first-year composition teachers on two drafts of two writing assignments done by 14 L1 and L2 students and addresses the students' reactions to these comments. Students indicated that they equally understand and revise following mitigated and directive comments; however, they found most helpful the commentary that provided some acknowledgment of their writing, offered specific suggestions, and gave them choices (Treglia, 2008).

In university settings, Elwood and Bode (2014) report on an investigation of student response to teacher feedback in university EFL writing classes in Japan. Students reacted positively to feedback and exhibited strong preferences for detailed, handwritten feedback that addressed both content and mechanical errors and commonly preferred red and blue marking (Elwood and Bode, 2014). The other results are that higher proficiency associated with lower anxiety levels, a better willingness to ask questions about feedback, and more favorable reactions to feedback, while the opposite was factual for lower-proficiency students; and that female student's favored detailed, direct feedback more than male students did, while males indicated somewhat upper anxiety regarding feedback (Elwood and Bode, 2014). While in a disciplinary academic writing class, Song, Hoon, and Alvin (2017) analyze the extent to which students made appropriate revisions based on the feedback they received and find out that the students gave more attention to feedback on the rhetorical structure of their writing and were more focused on macro issues regarding the clarity of their thesis/topic statements and the logical development of ideas than with the mechanics.

The other report from graduate programs context find that after taking part in the research replication project, many students' notes discovered a reduced emphasis on the affective aspect of error correction, and a more advanced understanding of corrective feedback, as well as an appreciation for the relationship between corrective feedback, student uptake, and error type (Vasques and Harvey, 2010). In addition to the studies on English (L2) students' cognitive responses to teachers' feedback to their writing, researches dealing with the students' emotional responses to the feedback gain more attention recently. Mahfoodh (2016) conducted grounded theory approach to obtain kinds of emotional responses to teachers feedback in L2 writing context; the results uncovered that EFL university students' emotional responses include *acceptance of feedback, rejection of feedback, surprise, happiness, dissatisfaction, disappointment, frustration, and satisfaction*. Some emotional responses could be categorized as harsh criticism, negative evaluation, and miscommunication between teachers and their students (Mahfood, 2016).

Such emotional responses are not only felt by students learning L2 writing in their home countries but also L2 writers studying abroad, as reported by Ryan and Handerson (2017) that international students were more likely than domestic students to find feedback comments to be discouraging, upsetting and too critical. Zhang and Hyland (2018) state that student engagement with written corrective feedback assists language acquisition and writing development. They argue that engagement is a significant factor in the attainment of formative assessment in teaching contexts where multiple drafting is applied (Zhang and Hyland, 2018). While, Han and Hyland (2015) find that the tertiary learner engagement to written corrective feedback is complex cognitively, the behaviourally, and the affectively; and individual differences in learner engagement with WCF seems attributed partly to learners' beliefs and experiences about WCF and L2 writing, their L2 learning objectives, and to the interactional context in which written corrective feedback was received and processed.

Underpinning Han's and Hyland's multidimensional conceptual framework, Zheng and Yu (2018) has explored how 12 Chinese lower proficiency students engaged affectively, behaviorally and cognitively with teacher written corrective feedback in EFL writing and found that while the participants' affective engagement was relatively positive, their behavioral and cognitive engagement was not extensive recognizing that their behavioral engagement did not result in better language accuracy, and there was inadequate awareness at the level of understanding the written corrective feedback, especially for the indirect written corrective feedback It has also found that students' lower English proficiency may negatively influence their cognitive and behavioral engagement with WCF and cause imbalances among the three sub-dimensions of engagement (Zheng and Yu, 2018). Teachers need to have an in-depth understanding of students' backgrounds and beliefs and that they should wisely plan their WCF strategies to boost students' engagement with WCF (Han and Hyland, 2015; Morris and Chickwa, 2016).

Relationships to Other Concepts and Further Research Agenda

In the last decade, some articles report that connection between teachers' corrective feedback in L2 writing and other concepts such as sociocultural perspectives, intelligence, and motivation. The discussion on teacher feedback is influenced by sociocultural perspectives (Lee, 2014; Moradian, Miri, and Nasab, 2016; Storch, 2018); and that mediated learning experience (MLE) is a new object of the feedback system and introducing other innovations can lead to more effective feedback and help students improve Activity Theory perspectives (Lee, 2014). While, Waller and Papi (2017) discuss the relationship between language learners' implicit theories of writing intelligence, their writing motivation, and their orientation toward written corrective feedback (WCF) as a result of their correlational study involving 142 English as a Second Language (ESL) writers at a large university in the United States. Multiple

regression result showed that the theory of writing intelligence (the belief that writing intelligence is dynamic and can grow through effort and experience) significantly and positively predicted the students' feedback seeking orientation, while the theory of writing intelligence (the belief that writing intelligence is stable and unchangeable) was a significant predictor of their feedback avoiding orientation (Waller and Papi, 2017). Moreover, the theory of writing intelligence, but not the entity theory of writing intelligence, was a statistically significant predictor of second language (L2) writing motivation; writing motivation, in turn, was most strongly correlated with the participants' feedback seeking orientation, accounting for 41% of its variance (Waller and Papi, 2017).

With the raise of attention toward teachers' corrective feedback as a body of knowledge in L2 pedagogy, replications studies about the efficacy of written CF and longitudinal studies are suggested (Bitchener and Knoch, 2015; Ferris, 2015). Moreover, research findings should be disseminated to both researchers and practitioners not only through journals but also through the professional online forum (McGarrell, 2011) so that gap between research and practice can be minimized (Lee, 2013)

CONCLUSION

Regardless Truscott's strong rejection (1996), current empirical studies have highlighted the significant role of teachers' corrective feedback on students' L2 (immediate) writing accuracy. In revising writing drafts, most students paid more attention to teachers' feedback than they do to peers and/or computer generated feedback. Both teachers and students are engaged cognitively and emotionally to the practice of corrective feedback in writing pedagogy and are encouraged to optimize the potentials of feedback in L2 writing to support the students' successful learning. Researchers have planned agenda for further research to explore teachers' corrective feedback in L2 writing from different theoretical perspectives to meet more conclusive case.

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