Written Corrective Feedback for Students' Research Proposal in English: What Do Students and Lecturers Prefer and Why?

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Abstract

The purposes of this study were to describe types of written corrective feedback applied by the lecturers on students' research proposal and to find out the favorable types of written corrective feedback for the students of English study program at a public university in Jambi. This research used a questionnaire to collect the data from students and lecturers. The results of this research revealed that there were three types of written corrective feedback that were often used by the lecturers. They were direct corrective feedback, grammatical description, and electronic corrective feedback from metalinguistic feedback. Additionally, there were four types that sometimes were used by the lecturers. They were indirect corrective feedback, error codes by metalinguistic feedback, unfocused and focused feedback. The last type was reformulation. It was rarely used by the lecturers. The results also showed that direct, electronic, and unfocused corrective feedbacks were very favorable for students while a brief grammatical description (metalinguistic), focused feedback, error codes (metalinguistic), and reformulation feedback were somewhat favorable. The last type was indirect corrective feedback which was very unfavorable for the students. Implications and recommendations are discussed.

Keywords
Perception, research proposal, written corrective feedback

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Introduction

In English teaching and learning process, many students produce errors or mistakes. This also happens in the process of writing. Some common errors may include problems in their content, organization of their writing, vocabulary and especially in their grammar. Grammar plays an important role in writings. Because the shortage of grammar knowledge, the grammatical errors are still made by the students in their writing. When this occurs, the students need feedback from others to make their writing better. Students need feedback to increase their writing and to reduce their problems that they face in the process of writing. So, this is the reason why grammar correction is needed for the students. Feedback is information that is given to the students about their performance of their learning task, and the objective is to improve their performance (Ur, 1996).

Written corrective feedback (WCF) is important in the learning process. When students fail to perform good writing, feedback is necessary to help them take the right action about their writing in order to enhance it. The students need the feedback from the lecture to understand the materials and improve their writing. Other than that, giving feedback to the students will make students feel that they are getting attention and cared for by their lecturers or teachers. So, they will be more careful and serious when they get tasks from the lecturers to write something. Feedback is needed for students to make their writing better. It is relevant with the finding of the research that conducted by (listiani, 2010) she found that most of the students in her research claimed that feedback on their writing (organization, content, mechanic, and vocabulary) helped them to improve their writing.

There are many kinds of writing practices that should be taken by English students in some universities, namely paragraph writing, essay writing, academic writing, and thesis. In the last semester, a student needs to write a thesis when she/he wants to get their Bachelor degree. It is a kind of a research that must be done by the students. Before they conduct the research, they should write a proposal. The proposal consists of three chapter, those are introduction, literature review, and methodology. A research proposal is needed and it is the step that will help them on how to conduct and finish his or her research (Sugiyono, 2012).

The importance of WCF related with the efficacy of learners' grammatical improvement was an issue in writing. The most common mistake that students do in their writing is grammar consisting of three kinds of errors. They are grammatical, syntactical, and mechanic substances (Pescante-Malimas & Samson, 2017). So, corrective feedback is needed for them to help them write their proposal. Three reasons why grammar corrective feedback should not cease have been presented (Ferris, 1999) including students' desire to be corrected, contents that instructors need to correct grammar, and learners' development of self-editing skill.

There has been several studies (Kim, 2013; Maleki & Eslami, 2013; Pakbaz, 2014; Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki, 2014; Diab, 2015; Frear & Chiu, 2015; Sarvestani & Pishkar, 2015; Salimi & Valizadeh, 2015; Shintani & Aubrey, 2016; Sia & Cheung, 2017; Nurie, 2018) which focused on the effectiveness of WCF in enhancing capability of students' L2 writing in terms of errors and mistakes and the importance of WCF in terms of L2 the teaching and learning of writing. However, the previous studies were mostly concerned with describing the

effectiveness of WCF for L2 students through a comparison between WCF and other teaching and learning techniques in terms of students' writing correction. Nevertheless, little study has been undertaken in terms of exploring types of WCF perceived by students and lecturers and their favorable WCF during thesis proposal writing.

The purposes of this study were to describe types of written corrective feedback applied by the lecturers on students' research proposal and to find out the favorable types of written corrective feedback for the students of English study program at a public university in Jambi. This study was expected to give some benefits to English teachers, because it can be references for them when providing written corrective feedback for students' research proposal. Overall, this study was conducted to explore these research questions: (1) What are types of written corrective feedback applied on students' research proposal writing? and (2) What are students' most favorable WCF during research proposal writing?

Literature Review

Written corrective feedback

"Feedback is a key component of foreign language writing programs around the world, with product, process and genre approaches all employing it as a central part of their instructional repertoires" Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 15). The indication of the incorrectness of students' the target language and including all kinds of responses that students' receive is the meaning of corrective feedback (Lightbown & Spada, 2006). So, a technique of a teacher in giving corrections to the target language used by the students and in indicating an error exists on their target language is called corrective feedback. From corrective feedback, the students will be aware with their errors. It is an important part of the writing process. So, feedback is beneficial to be provided for students to improve their performance from what they have learnt.

Corrective feedback is divided into two types; those are oral corrective feedback and written corrective feedback (WCF). The teachers' way of providing correction by saying what is wrong. One distinction between oral corrective feedback and written corrective feedback (WCF) is that oral CF is mostly provided as part of the instruction within the classroom (Balachandran, 2017). WCF, on the other hand, is usually written responses provided by the teacher after reviewing student writings, which is not an immediate response as oral feedback. (Balachandran, 2017).

There are many kinds of written corrective feedback that used by the teachers in process of teaching and learning. There are two related studies that reviewed in this study. First, Wulandari (2017) found that from six types of corrective feedback, there were four types that used by the teachers in students' writing. Those were direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focused and unfocused feedback. Then, electronic and reformulation feedback were not found in students' text. Another study was done by Pratama (2018), he found that the type with the highest score (71 feedback or 43.35%) that utilized on students' research proposal is direct corrective feedback. The second is focused feedback with 52 feedbacks (31.90%). The third is indirect with 35 feedbacks (21.47%). And the fourth is unfocused feedback with 5 (3.06%). Then metalinguistic feedback, electronic feedback and

reformulation are not included in the research proposal. Types of written corrective feedback have been classified into six categories (Ellis, 2008). The types are direct CF, indirect CF, and metalinguistic CF, the focus of the feedback, electronic feedback, and reformulation as presented in the following table.

Table 1. *Types of written corrective feedback* (Ellis, 2008)

Types of corrective feedback	Description
Direct corrective feedback	The teacher provides the correction with the correct form.
Indirect corrective feedback	The teacher only indicate that an error exist without provide the
Indicating only	correct form
Indicating the specific location	An error is indicated in the margin or a line
	An error is underlined
Metalinguistic CF	Providing metalinguistic clue of the error
Brief grammatical description	Teacher writes a grammatical description of the errors in a text
Error Codes	and numbered
	Teacher uses abbreviation in the margin of the error
The focus of the feedback	The correction is given for all (most) of the students' error or select it
Unfocused CF	a. The correction is provided for all (or most) of the error
Focused CF	b. The correction is provided only on single types of error
Electronic feedback	The correction is given by using computer to point out the error and provide the example of correct usage
Reformulation	It is including native speaker reworking of the text to make it seems like native but still keep the original text.

Direct corrective feedback is the way the teachers provide a correction with the correct form.

Example of using direct CF:

> A dog stole (a) bone from (a) butcher. He escaped with having (the) bone. When the dog was going (over)~~through~~ bridge over (a) ~~the~~ river he (saw a) ~~found~~ dog in the river.

Indirect corrective feedback is the teacher only indicates that an error exists without provide the correct form:

Example of using Indirect CF:

> A dog stole X bone from X butcher. He escaped with X <u>having </u>XX bone. When the dog was going X <u>through </u>X   X bridge over X <u>the </u>X river he found X dog in the river.
>
> X= missing word```
>
> X__X = wrong word

Metalinguistic CF is the way to give feedback to students' writing tasks by providing them with some forms of explicit comments about the nature of the errors that they make in their writing. There are two ways in providing explicit comments. The first is by using error codes. It means that the teacher uses abbreviation labels as a clue for every different type of errors. To be taken as an example is that teachers might write 'art' for article, 'ww' for wrong word, 'prep' for preposition, and etc.

Example of using codes:

Art.   Art.   WW art.   A dog stole bone from butcher. He escaped with having bone. When the dog was   Prep.   Art.   Art.   going through bridge over the river he found dog in the river

Art, x3; WW A dog stole bone from butcher. He escaped with having bone.   Prep. ; art.   When the dog was going through bridge over the river he   Art   found dog in the river

Example of using metalinguistic explanation:

(1)   (2)   (3)   A dog stole bone from butcher. He escaped with having bone. When the dog was going   (4)   (5)   (6)   Through bridge over the river he found dog in the river.   (1), (2), (5), and (6) – *you need 'a' before the noun when a person or thing is mentioned for the first time.*   (3)- *You need 'the' before the noun when the person or thing has been mentioned previously.*   (4)- *You need 'over' when you go across the surface of something, you use 'through' when you go inside something (e.g. 'go through the forest'*

Focused versus unfocused CF, when the teacher corrects all of the students' errors in their writing, this is called unfocused. But, when the teacher only selects specific types of errors that happen in students' writing to be correction, this is called focused CF.

Electronic Feedback is the fifth type of corrective feedback. In this type, teacher provides feedback by using a computer as a tool to point out the students' errors. It means that the teacher provides feedback for students' writing through technology, such as via

email. The teachers make a use of electronic media to provide comments for students' writing texts.

Reformulation Feedback, the sixth type of corrective feedback is reformulation feedback. It is a way of correcting the errors through rewriting students' entire texts to make their writing like a native while keeping the content to the original text.

Methodology

Research design, participants, and locale of the study

This study employed a descriptive quantitative approach as a systematic investigation of phenomena by gathering numerical data of analysis. Survey design was used in this study. Creswell (2010) stated that a survey design provides quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population. The purpose of survey design is to generalize characteristic, attitude, or behavior from a sample to a population. In this case, this study sought to determine types of WCF as perceived by both students and lecturers and most favorable WCF for students in dealing with their research proposal writing.

The participants of this study consisted of thirty students and twenty lecturers from English department of a state-owned university in Indonesia. The students were selected as they were taking thesis course and finished writing their research proposals. Regarding the students, their age ranged between 20 and 23 years old. There were 3 (10%) students from semester seven and 27 (90%) students who were in the ninth semester. The number of female (93.3%) students outperformed male (6.7%) students who participated in this descriptive study. As for lecturers, their age ranged between 38 and 47 years old. There were 11 (55%) female lecturers and 7 (35%) male lecturers participating in the study.

The questionnaire was used in this study as the instrument to collect the data from respondents. The type of the questionnaire was closed-ended questionnaire. A closed-ended questionnaire is a set of questionnaire and option that already settled by researcher (Sugiyono, 2012). The questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first was focused on various types of written corrective feedback that utilized on students' research proposal and the second one was the types that most favorable for the students. In this questionnaire, there were about 16 questions which the form was checklist. The choices for the first were Never, Rarely, Sometimes, Often, and Always. Then, the second were extremely unfavorable, very unfavorable, neutral, very favorable, and extremely favorable.

Table 2. *The interpretation of five-Likert scales (Jackson, 2006)*

Mean	Interpretation
1,00 – 1,80	Never/Extremely Unfavourable
1,81 – 2,60	Rarely/Very Unfavourable
2,61 – 3,40	Sometimes/Somewhat Favourable
3,41 – 4,20	Often/Very Favourable
4,21 – 5,00	Always/Extremely Favourable

Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire was previously designed and validated by two experts to determine its validity and reliability. To collect the data, the questionnaire was delivered online to the participants and the data were collected via Google Forms. Online app was employed due to its easy access and Covid-19 regulation which ordered people to abide by physical distancing issue. We sent thirty questionnaires to the students and twenty questionnaires to the lecturers during the study. Fortunately, we received the thirty and twenty questionnaires after being completed for one week by all of the participants via Google Forms. The data were transferred and analyzed by using SPSS Program. Then, we analyzed the data by using SPSS and find out the frequencies, percentage, and mean. After that, we found out the value of mean. The interval length of five points scale is 0.80. The means is very significant, from 1 to 1.80 it means Never/Extremely unfavorable. From 1.81 to 2.60, it means rarely/very unfavorable. From 2.61 to 3.40, it means sometimes/ somewhat favorable. From 3.41 to 4.20, it means often/very favorable. From 4.21 to 5, it means always/Extremely favorable. The mean score of five Likert scales will be interpreted into the following mean score level. The interpretation of the mean score is adapted from (Jackson, 2006).

Ethical considerations

Regarding ethical consideration of this study, we asked the participants to read an informed consent describing their readiness to participate in volunteered work during the study, including sharing their responses to be analyzed, disseminated, and published in a scientific journal. To complete, the participants signed in the informed consents and returned them back via online app such as Email and WhatsApp.

Findings

Written corrective feedback's types applied on students' research proposal

An analysis of written corrective feedback types through the questionnaire revealed that the three top items from students and lecturers were the same, even though there is a little bit difference. The three top items of written corrective feedback types were direct, electronic, and a brief grammatical description (metalinguistic). The mean score was between 3.43 and 4 which means that these types were often used by the lecturers.

Table 3. *Types of written corrective feedback that often used by the lecturers*

Types of written corrective feedback		Percentage					Mean	Level
		N	R	S	O	A		
Students	Direct	-	-	26.7	46.7	26.7	4	O
	Electronic	-	13.3	20	53.3	13.3	3.66	O
	Metalinguistic	-	3.3	50	46.7	-	3.43	O
Lecturers	Direct	-	-	40	4	20	3.8	O
	Electronic	-	20	15	65	-	3.45	O
	Metalinguistic	-	5	45	50	-	3.5	O

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Always (A); 3.41-4.20 Often (O); 2.61-3.40 Sometimes (Sometimes); 1.81-2.60 Rarely (R); 1.00-1.80 Never (N)

The data from questionnaire showed that four kinds of written corrective feedback existed with the mean score between 2.9 and 3.36. It means that these types were sometimes used by the lecturers when providing written corrective feedback. The finding from students and lecturers were also similar and only differed in the ranking order.

Table 4. *Types of written corrective feedback that were often used by the lecturers*

Types of written corrective feedback		Percentage					Mean	Level
		N	R	S	O	A		
Students	Indirect	-	26.7	46.7	26.6	-	3.36	S
	Unfocused	-	-	70	30	-	3.3	S
	Focused	-	16.7	53.3	30	-	3.13	S
	Error Codes	-	13.3	40	43.3	3.3	3	S
Lecturers	Indirect	-	40	30	30	-	3.35	S
	Unfocused	-	25	40	35	-	3.1	S
	Focused	-	15	50	35	-	3.2	S
	Error Codes	-	-	65	35	-	2.9	S

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Always (A); 3.41-4.20 Often (O); 2.61-3.40 Sometimes (Sometimes); 1.81-2.60 Rarely (R); 1.00-1.80 Never (N)

The last type of written corrective feedback is reformulation with the lowest mean score. It can be interpreted that this type is rarely used. The lowest mean score of the types' written corrective feedback from students and lecturers was also similar and only differed on the means' value.

Table 5. *Types of written corrective feedback that were rarely used by the lecturers*

Types of written corrective feedback		Percentage					Mean	Level
		N	R	S	O	A		
Students	Reformulation	-	43.3	53.3	3.3	-	2.6	R
Lecturers	Reformulation	-	45	55	-	-	2.55	R

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Always (A); 3.41-4.20 Often (O); 2.61-3.40 Sometimes (Sometimes); 1.81-2.60 Rarely (R); 1.00-1.80 Never (N)

Written corrective feedback's types that are most favorable for the students

This study also found written corrective feedback's types that were most favorable for the students. The mean score from the data showed that there were three types that were very favorable for the students including direct, electronic, and unfocused feedback. Direct feedback has the highest mean. So, direct corrective feedback can be said as the first preference of the students.

Table 5. *Written corrective feedback's types that are very favorable for the students*

Types of written corrective feedback	Percentage					Mean	Level
	EU	VU	SF	VF	EF		
Direct Feedback	-	-	20	50	30	4.1	VF
Electronic Feedback	-	-	26.7	53.3	20	3.9	VF
Unfocused Feedback	-	10	26.7	46.7	16.7	3.7	VF

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Always (A); 3.41-4.20 Often (O); 2.61-3.40 Sometimes (Sometimes); 1.81-2.60 Rarely (R); 1.00-1.80 Never (N)

From the analysis of the questionnaire, four kinds of written corrective feedback were revealed by the data as somewhat favorable for the students. They are grammatical description (metalinguistic), focused feedback, reformulation, and error codes. Each type has a different mean score as shown in the following table.

Table 6. *Written corrective feedback's types that are somewhat favorable for the students*

Types of written corrective feedback	Percentage					Mean	Level
	EU	VU	SF	VF	EF		
Grammatical description	-	16.7	50	26.7	6.7	3.2	SF
Focused feedback	-	20	60	20	-	3	SF
Reformulation	-	33.3	36.7	30	-	2.9	SF
Error codes	-	26.7	66.7	6.7	-	2.8	

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Always (A); 3.41-4.20 Often (O); 2.61-3.40 Sometimes (Sometimes); 1.81-2.60 Rarely (R); 1.00-1.80 Never (N)

The lowest mean score was on the indirect type of written corrective feedback. From the mean score, it can be interpreted that this type is very unfavorable for the students.

Table 7. *Written corrective feedback's types that is very unfavorable for the students*

Types of written corrective feedback	Percentage					Mean	Level
	EU	VU	SF	VF	EF		
Indirect	10	30	60	-	-	2.5	VU

Legend: 4.21-5.00 Always (A); 3.41-4.20 Often (O); 2.61-3.40 Sometimes (Sometimes); 1.81-2.60 Rarely (R); 1.00-1.80 Never (N)

Discussion

These research findings revealed that the direct corrective feedback was the first type that was mostly applied for students' research proposal. It is the same with the finding of previous study which found that the direct corrective feedback was the most dominant type that teachers used (Wulandari, 2017). She found out the teachers using four kinds of written corrective feedback when providing comments on students' text. The types are direct, indirect, metalinguistic, and focused and unfocused feedback. The first type that teachers'

preference was the direct feedback because students gained an accurate correction form in order to increase their writing (Sari, 2020). In this current study, we found that a direct, a brief grammatical description (metalinguistic), and electronic feedback were three tops of written corrective feedback's types that were mostly provided on the research proposal of the students. These were categorized as often used by the lecturers.

The present study also found four types of written corrective feedback that was sometimes used by the lecturers. Those are indirect, error codes, unfocused and focused feedback. Advisor's preferences on using indirect written corrective feedback was very low because it made students confused and sometimes did not know what they should do (Syam, 2019). Then, the last of corrective feedback's types that were rarely utilized by the lecturers in this study was the reformulation feedback. Reformulation feedback was the lowest because most advisors did not know what the reformulation was (Syam, 2019).

In this current research, the results of our study indicated the students' favorable types of written corrective feedback. The results showed three top types that were very favorable for the students. The first type that was the most favorable for the students was the direct corrective feedback. Students preferred a direct corrective feedback instead of indirect because students believed that this type was easier to understand the nature of errors that had been corrected (Mubarak, 2013). Students felt that direct corrective feedback really helped them in their writing improvement because there were correct forms directly (Sari, 2020).

The second type that was very favorable was electronic feedback. Electronic feedback was the mainly used by the advisors in correcting students' proposal because it used less paper, students should not print out the paper for just small mistakes and waste their time and money (Syam, 2019). The third type that was very favorable for the students was unfocused feedback. Students liked their lecturers to provide written corrective feedback on all the types of errors that they made in their research proposal. While the result of this study also showed four types of corrective feedback were at somewhat favorable. Those are a brief grammatical description of metalinguistic, focused feedback and reformulation. The last type was indirect corrective feedback which is very unfavorable for the students. Students showed negative responses to indirect corrective feedback because it was confusing and it was not understandable (Paubun, 2015).

Conclusion

The purposes of this study were to describe types of written corrective feedback applied by the lecturers on students' research proposal and to find out the favorable types of written corrective feedback for the students of English study program at a public university in Jambi. The conclusions can be drawn as regards to describe the types of written corrective feedback applied on students' research proposal and the most favorable types of it. There are three various kinds of written corrective feedback that were mostly used by the lecturers in correcting students' research proposal. They are direct feedback, electronic feedback, and grammatical description from metalinguistic feedback. Then, there are four types that are sometimes used by the lecturers, those are indirect corrective feedback, error codes by metalinguistic feedback, unfocused and focused feedback. The last type is reformulation. It

is rarely used by the lecturers. The first favorable type of written corrective feedback for students is a direct feedback. The other types are electronic feedback and unfocused feedback. These types are also categorized as a very favorable one for students. Additionally, a brief grammatical description (metalinguistic), focused feedback, error codes (metalinguistic), and reformulation are categorized as somewhat favorable for students. The last type is indirect corrective feedback. This type is categorized as a very unfavorable one for the students.

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