The Students' and Teachers' Preference of Written Corrective Feedback

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Abstract. Previous research mainly shows students' improvement of composition benefits from Written Corrective Feedback (WCF). According to the five types of WCF mentioned by Ellis, containing direct WCF, indirect WCF, metalinguistic WCF, focused and unfocused WCF and reformulation, the paper reviews previous literature to help teachers adjust their WCF method to students' preferences. The paper's main findings are: 1) teachers' preference for WCF is inconsistent with students' preferences; 2) students prefer detailed and explicit feedback such as direct WCF; 3) teachers prefer indirect WCF to encourage students to reflect on their mistakes. This paper contributes to improving the teaching method of WCF.

Keywords: Written Corrective Feedback; Students' Preference; Teachers' Preference; Direct Feedback; Indirect Feedback.

1. Introduction

The improvement of students' composition in language classes, particularly in writing, depends heavily on feedback (Ferris; Bichener & Knoch; Dayat) [1] [2] [3]. Ferris contends that feedback encourages students to write better [1]. Additionally, Bichener and Knoch discover that students who get written corrective comments perform better in writing than those who do not [2]. And another researcher Dayat explains that it has been demonstrated that written corrective criticism works to improve students' writing abilities [3]. Getting feedback during the writing process is essential. Teachers provide responses such as criticism or suggestions through feedback to improve students' learning ability. The goal of feedback instruction is to assist students grasp the context of their writing, and to give them a practical awareness of the audience for their writing (Hyland) [4]. The difference between students' preferences and teachers' practices of writing feedback creates difficulties for teachers and confusion for students. The effective feedback that teachers prefer may not be the most suitable and effective feedback for students. The preference for different feedback affects the improvement of students' writing ability differently. Therefore, investigating the most efficient kind of feedback is crucial to improving teachers' instructional strategies.

2. Preference for Written Corrective Feedback

2.1 The Directness of Feedback

There are five different sorts of written corrective criticism, according to Ellis [5]. Direct WCF is the first, referring that teachers will not only cross out wrong or unnecessary words but also provide the correct forms near them.

The second type is indirect WCF. When teachers provide students feedback by calling their attention to their mistakes instead of correcting them, this is known as indirect feedback. According to Ferris, while indirect feedback may not provide a suitable format to help students address faults, direct feedback may consist of marking out errors and then providing the correct form surrounding the errors [1]. Teachers use indirect WCF to encourage students to reflect on their mistakes by giving some indicators for students, such as underlining are given next to the lines which contain errors, to help students realize their mistakes.

Metalinguistic WCF is the third type. Grammar explanations are given to the students by the teacher, who uses abbreviated names for various types of faults to identify the errors. The symbol can be positioned incorrectly within the text; however, the exact part of the error may or may not be displayed. Students must try to find the clues to locate the errors and then correct them.

2.2 Focus of Feedback

The fourth one is unfocused and focused WCF. In the unfocused WCF, teachers correct all students' errors. According to Ellis, in the provision of unfocused feedback, teachers make an effort to correct or comment on all language mistakes made by students. Feedback that is not narrowly focused is considered extensive feedback because it contains several inaccuracies.

When it comes to focused WCF, teachers merely pay attention to specific error types. Ellis claims that concentrated feedback only addresses particular faults that need to be rectified and ignores all other errors, and also teachers are selective about the specific elements of language that they must comment on or correct.

2.3 Reformulation

Reformulation feedback is the sixth category of feedback. While maintaining the original text's meaning, native speakers adapt the entire student text to make it seem as much like their mother tongue as feasible. It is just like a kind of paraphrase made by teachers to polish student' language without interfering with its original meaning. Its goal is to give students the tools they need to rectify their mistakes while letting them make the final call on whether and how to do so.

2.4 Students' Preference for Written Corrective Feedback

According to Schulz, if students prefer certain feedback, they will pay greater attention to how feedback is used instead of when they dislike how feedback affects their learning [6]. The success of specific comments given to students' writing is influenced by their preferred method of receiving feedback, which also has an impact on how well students acquire new material.

Several studies have looked on how students feel about and favor teachers' WCF (Leki; Cohen & Cavalcanti) [7] [8]. Students are discovered to value professors' WCF and have a propensity for indirect WCF. Leki's study is one of these investigations, in which ESL college students were given a questionnaire to ascertain how worried they were with their writing faults [7]. Students were also asked for their views on how best to give the WCF. Students are particularly worried about making mistakes in their writing, according to Leki, and seek to do so as little as possible. Students also prefer to accept coded indirect WCF to describe the nature of their writing errors.

However, other research (Diab; Lee) have revealed that students favor receiving direct WCF [9] [10]. The study (Agung) found that students prefer direct feedback best [11]. This is because it addresses problems directly and provides sufficient correction during the revision stage thus students can revise their composition efficiently. Indirect WCF ranks right after direct WCF. Students who tend to revise indirectly regard indirect WCF as a helpful way to stimulate their understanding of their writing weaknesses and encourage them to correct their mistakes. Also, the result of the study (Talisa) illustrates that many students prefer direct WCF because it helps them more in polishing their compositions [12].

On the contrary, those who dislike indirect WCF argue it is often confusing and lacks teachers' explanations. According to the study (Adrefiza et al.), many students favor the direct kind over the indirect form [13]. This choice could be influenced by how students have interacted with lecturers in writing assignments, particularly how they have attempted to respond to and comprehend the actual information or corrections that teachers have attempted to impart in WCF. In direct WCF, teachers usually replace students' wrong words directly. At the same time, in terms of indirect feedback, the correct form is not given, students are only provided with clues or hints are used to guide students to refine their word choices. This distribution shows that students prefer direct WCF over indirect WCF and are dissatisfied with both.

The metalinguistic WCF lies in third place (Agung) [11]. Some students feel that it is a simple technique to spot mistakes, but others believe the metalinguistic WCF is as confusing as the indirect one because they usually face difficulties in using it in their review process. However, Dayat finds that the metalinguistic WCF is the students' favorite feedback type [3]. Most participants enjoy using this kind of teacher feedback to improve their drafts. The students also expanded on several responses of this nature. Because it offers clearer cues to lead things into view, the metalinguistic WCF is a hard sort of feedback for students; also, compared with other types of feedback, metalinguistic clues are not confusing, providing sufficient sources of correction for students. In addition, this feedback provides an opportunity for self-learning, and students can learn from their mistakes. They determine that this kind of criticism is sufficiently succinct and unambiguous and provides students with detailed instructions for revision.

In addition, Lee finds that students hope teachers provide more written opinions, and students also prefer teachers to provide more explicit error feedback [10]. Additionally, it implies that it is critical to comprehend how students respond to the input they obtain in order to help teachers carry out reflective and effective feedback practice. According to Fathman and Whaley, there was a discrepancy between the kind of feedback professors provided and the kind of response students sought to receive from their papers [14]. Hyland finds that there is a mismatch between how teachers provide feedback and what students anticipate accepting [4].

2.5 Teachers' Preference for Written Corrective Feedback

However, teachers' practice is inconsistent with students' preferences. Although teachers have different views on whether indirect WCF applies to all students, they still follow the university's recommendations to use indirect WCF.

The study (Agung) finds that teachers who participated in writing used a comprehensive approach, which means that they attempt to correct all students' writing faults using WCF [11]. Despite the fact that two teachers favored this approach, one of them did not think it was good for students' writing. This demonstrates that instructors' views and practices are inconsistent. In the interview with Dayat, indirect WCF is used more often than other WCF because the teacher believes that by utilizing circling to denote faults, the students are better equipped to handle the difficulties themselves [3].

In addition, the research (Agung) also shows that teachers give more attention to mechanics in WCF. [11]. However, they believe that students should concentrate WCF on grammatical and vocabulary faults. Therefore, teachers' practices do not match their perceptions about the WCF's goal. As for the type of WCF teachers use, they are known to primarily utilize indirect WCF, and the code specified by their universities is employed to correct errors. Although teachers have different views on whether indirect WCF is applicable to all students, they follow the advice of the university. Another study (Amrhein & Nassaji) shows that although students prefer teachers to mark all major errors, teachers prefer to correct only those that interfere with communication [15]. Teachers agree that WCF should be available for all problems, but they also take into account if errors will hinder communication. Teachers' second most frequent response is to only note mistakes that go in the way of communicating their thoughts. These phenomena illustrate unlike the students, teachers distinguish between errors that they consider increasingly important.

2.6 Comparison between Students' and Teachers' Preference

Whether teachers can understand students' preferences towards different feedback has a significant bearing on the feedback process, so it is vital for teachers to consider this factor. This perception can help teachers discern wrong feedback practices and modify them through their own practices. It can also encourage students' positive responses to teachers' feedback. However, it seems that teachers' belief in the key points of WCF is inconsistent with their practice. The research (Agung) shows that teachers' beliefs about WCF types are different from their practices [11]. Additionally, it is discovered that students favor the thorough method and think it helps them write better. Therefore, their preferences are consistent with the practice of teachers. Also, students want teachers' WCF to

concentrate on grammatical problems, but teachers actually concentrate on mechanics, showing that students' preferences do not align with teachers' real priorities. Students also tend to accept WCF directly about their writing mistakes. However, students' preferences are inconsistent with teachers' practice of mainly providing indirect WCF.

It is clear from the research's findings that there is a mismatch between the teachers' methods and the students' choices for WCF (Aridah Aridah et al.) [16]. Teachers, for instance, provide targeted feedback, but students demand that all of their errors be rectified. Teachers refine grammar errors, but students want written comments on their ideas and content. This shows that teachers have not met students' expectations and preferences in the actual practice of providing feedback. Also, Hyland finds that there is a discrepancy between what students anticipate from comments and how teachers actually respond to their writing [4]. The study's participants want their teachers to improve their grammar, but they also want encouragement. The teacher in this instance falls short of the students' expectations for feedback, which causes them to lose confidence. Students believe that grammar and vocabulary are more valuable than organization and content, whereas teachers thought that these two factors were more important.

Overall, the result of the study show that there is a mismatch between the WCF practice propsed by the university management department and the teachers' beliefs. Also, teachers' beliefs about WCF and their actual practice differ. Additionally, there is an expectation gap between what teachers think and what students prefer. These inconsistencies are primarily connected to the WCF's focus and style. Interview data show that teachers do not adhere to their beliefs in order to meet the university's standards for feedback, including feedback on all errors and using codes. Additionally, as a result of this, some professors do not take the initiative to inquire about the preferred forms of feedback from the students. This demonstrates that in order to change teachers' practices, it is necessary to alter not just their ideas (Ferguson), but also the culture and institutional framework that influence their work (Lee) [17] [10].

3. Discussion

In a nutshell, direct WCF is favored most by students, for most students are willing to know their mistakes directly and find the solution in the quickest way, so direct WCF can meet students' needs directly by providing the precise location of their errors and the correct word choice for their mistakes. However, the demands of the university as well as the teachers' views and practices appear to be at odds with direct WCF. Teachers think that direct WCF can assist students in correcting their errors, but direct WCF can not encourage students to think and reflect on their mistakes. Also, if students find their own solutions to correct the mistakes, they can memorize the usage of words instead of accepting the words provided by the teachers passively. As a result, teachers prefer indirect WCF to help students improve their composition. Although some students are in favor of indirect WCF because they can reflect on their mistakes and have more choices to refine their composition, it seems that many students find indirect WCF is often confusing and vague so these symbols are not helpful for them to correct their mistakes efficiently, even some students tend to neglect indirect WCF given by their teachers.

Besides, metalinguistic WCF is another form of WCF, but it is similar to the indirect WCF, for it gives symbols that explain the grammar or vocabulary errors without containing the locations of mistakes, as well as the correct form of the errors. The results of the students' preference for metalinguistic WCF are controversial: some students think it is confusing and hard to understand because they usually face difficulties in using it in their review process, while other students believe that it is an easy way to identify errors with clearer clues to guide them into view. Metalinguistic WCF provides an opportunity for self-learning so that students can learn from their mistakes. This type of feedback is also favored by teachers because it is short and clear enough to provide students with detailed instructions for revision.

When it comes to the focused and unfocused WCF, the students prefer unfocused ones and they want teachers to correct all their grammatical mistakes, but teachers often give focused WCF by correcting grammar mistakes that interfere with communication, neglecting some small grammar mistakes, for they want to build up students' confidence and stimulate students' motivation to practice writing. Also, students are willing to gain comments from teachers on their ideas; however, few teachers will give feedback on content, and they will focus more on grammar or vocabulary mistakes instead.

After summarizing the result of the preference of WCF given by students and teachers, the limitation of the paper should also be discussed. The paper only collect studies based on university students who have higher language ability compared with students in primary or high school. It seems that different groups of students have different needs, so the mismatch between teachers and different groups of students should be discussed further. Also, the fifth method, reformulation, seldom appears in the research of WCF, mainly because of many variables, so the paper may not conclude the discussion of reformulation.

All in all, based on the results, three suggestions will be given to enhance teachers' teaching methods based on the student's preference of WCF. First, teachers need to explain the meaning of codes and use the same code system continuously. Teachers can make practices for students to get familiar with the symbols that indirect and metalinguistic WCF contain, which can make indirect WCF easier for students to understand. In addition, teachers can combine metalinguistic comments with written feedback to influence students' interlanguage development. It not only helps students focus on their specific errors, but also gives them a chance to make reflections on their mistakes, thus improving their language quality. Last but not least, teachers should systematically give feedback, which means having a clear focus, for too many mistakes pointed out at a time may stress students and overload their minds.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, this paper reviews teachers' and students' preference for WCF. The main finding is teachers' preference of WCF is inconsistent with students' preferences. The paper only collect researches based on the university students who have higher language ability compared with students in primary or high school. It seems that different group of students have different needs, so the mismatch between teachers and different group of students should be discussed further. Also, the fifth method, reformulation, seldom appears in the research of WCF, mainly because of many variables, so the paper may not conclude the discussion of reformulation. This paper contributes to improve the teaching method of WCF. If teachers know the preference gap, a better teaching method with WCF is nearly achieved.

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