



## **EFL STUDENTS' PROBLEMS IN DEALING WITH TEACHER WRITTEN FEEDBACK**

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### **ABSTRACT**

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This study aims to determine EFL Students' problems in dealing with teacher written feedback and their strategies to deal with them. This study used a qualitative method. Data were collected using one instrument, namely interviews with 10 students who have lowest writing scores in 10 grades. The results of the study reported that there were several problems experienced by students, such as difficulty understanding teacher's comments, difficulty understanding error codes, inability to correct errors based on teacher written feedback and students' fear of asking questions. In addition, students used several strategies to deal with these problems, such as rewriting the teacher feedback with their own words, looking up the meaning of incomprehensible symbol and sentences on the internet/dictionaries and trying to be brave to ask the teacher. This study concludes that the teacher's written feedback must had several aspects namely, effective, easy to understand, easy to follow and precise. This research was expected to find out students' problems and provide solutions to improve their writing skills.

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### **Introduction**

Writing is one of the challenging skills among four skills for EFL Learners ([Salma](#), 2015). Students faced several problems in writing process such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar and mechanics. Moreover, some writers, ([Nicol](#), 2010) believe that feedback is one of the ways to solve the students' problems in writing and it can help students to improve their writing. As quoted by ([Berewot](#), 2001), ([Conijn et al.](#), 2020) said feedback is last step of writing process in order to fix the writing result. It means when EFL learners finish their writing, they need correction from others. Furthermore, ([Shepard et al.](#), 2018) states, "Feedback can generate motivation so that students can improve their writing and write better in the next work. Without feedback from others such as their teacher and peer, they will think that their writing is well communicated. They also think that their writing is good and does not need revision." (p. 149).

Feedback can be classification into several types based on the source, function and form. According to ([Philippakos](#), 2017), there are three types of feedback based on the sources, e.g., teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-evaluation. Furthermore, as quoted by ([Pratiwi](#), 2013), based on the function, there are two of feedback, namely informational feedback and affective feedback. Then, ([Ashford & Cummings](#), 1983) states that there are two forms of feedback such as oral feedback and written feedback.

Therefore, teacher written feedback (TWF) become the focus of this research. Teacher written feedback is written feedback given from the teacher to the students such as comment, suggestion, error correction or question that be used by the students in revising their writing ([Srichanyachon](#), 2012). In this study, there

are two types of teachers written feedback used which are direct teacher written feedback and indirect teacher written feedback. ([K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006](#)) states that direct teacher written feedback is the type when teacher directly and explicitly gives the feedback on the students' writing. Whilst, ([Faroha et al., 2016](#)) says that the second type which is indirect teacher written feedback, this type of feedback occurs when the teachers mark students' writing by using symbols such as circle, underline, square without giving explicit correction. This type of feedback requires the students to revise the errors that have been marked by the teacher on their own.

Teacher can directly comment the students' work or give the symbols such as underlining, circles, etc. The teacher should provide the specific comments on students' errors with suggestion how to improve their writing. Both educator and EFL learners consider teacher written feedback an important part of the writing process. Next, TWF has been shown to facilitate improved writing accuracy in students' revised drafts, while students can absorb knowledge from The vocabulary and syntax is increased through the efficient delivery of WCF.

Moreover, Teacher written feedback is more effective than peer feedback. It is supported by the result from the study conducted by ([Bitchener & Knoch, 2008](#)), students pay more attention to teacher feedback than peer feedback. As mentioned by ([K. Hyland & Hyland, 2006](#)), teacher feedback makes students notice more to the correction and immediately revise their writings. Furthermore, teacher feedback appears to push students to modify their output. This kind of pushed output may be necessary for EFL context. In addition, the teacher checks the students' scratch paper to identify some errors in the scratch paper. The teacher will correct any errors found, whether implicit or explicit.

However, there were previous studies explored about positive and negative perspective of teacher written feedback but there was none of the study focused on the student' problems toward teacher written corrective. To fill the gap, the researcher assumed this study is important to be conducted. This study is about to explore the students problems in dealing with teacher written feedback. It is hoped that the result will provide a greater understanding of how and how well written feedback addresses the needs of students, and also how to overcome the students' problems. This study aims to determine EFL Students' problems in dealing with teacher written feedback and their strategies to deal with them.

## Method

Regarding the aim of this study, the researcher used qualitative study as a research design. This study involved 10 students (6 female, 4 male). The researcher chose 10 EFL students with the lowest writing score for the interview. Semi-structured interview conducted to learn more details about the students' problems and students' responses about receiving the teacher's feedback. Moreover, interview also wanted to explore how to overcome the students' problem. There were five main questions being discussed in the interview, such as: 1) why did you get a bad score? 2) which one did you prefer between teacher feedback or peer feedback and explain the reason! 3) what were your difficulties in understanding teacher feedback? 4) What did you do to deal with those problems? 5) What were your suggestions to your teachers?

Furthermore, the interview's result transcribed into paragraph. The researcher organized the data and specify what should be reported. Then, analyze the relevant data and described the data by categorizing them based on the research question would be the next step. After that, the researcher made a conclusion from the analysis and explain the students' perception towards teacher written corrective feedback.

### **Result And Discussion**

Teacher feedback was applied by the teacher expected to improve students' writing ability. The data that taken from ten grade of Senior High School in Bojonegoro. There are 10 students in the class but only ten students who had the lowest writing score in English subject that had been interviewed. There were several questions asked for the students, the questions were related with the students' problems towards teacher feedback. It might be several problems that cause the students had the lowest writing score but, in this study, just focused on the teacher written feedback.

Based on the result of the interview there were several problems faced by students, such as difficulty understanding teacher's comments, difficulty understanding error codes, inability to correct errors based on teacher written feedback and students' fear of asking questions. In addition, students used several strategies to deal with these problems, such as rewriting the teacher feedback with their own words, looking up the meaning of incomprehensible symbol and sentences on the internet/dictionaries and trying to be brave to ask the teacher. Yet, 2 students said they were difficult to understand teacher's comments. Then, there were 4 students said that they could not understand the error codes, symbol from their teacher comments on their writing. Moreover, 4 students said that they could not correct their writing based on the teacher's comments but they afraid to ask. First problem, students said they were difficult to understand teacher's comments. The students' statements below demonstrate it:

"...the comments from the teacher were not direct so I had problem to understand what exactly she wanted me to correct ..."

"Yes, I was difficult to understand my teacher's comments because it was too long and wrote in English.... "

(Student 1)

"... Sometimes teacher just comment in negative things and did not give any suggestion...."

".... I could not understand because my teacher gave me English comments."

(Student 5)

Based on the answers written above, few EFL learners though that TWF was confusing because it was written in English. Students also said that sometimes teacher only commented their error without gave any positive suggestions. Moreover, TWF should be concise, short and clear.

Second problem, students said that they could not understand the error codes, symbol from their teacher comments on their writing. Those statements described below:

“It was confusing, looking for one x symbols and underline makes me confused, and it more confusing when I saw there were many symbols, circles and underlines.” (Student 2).

“... sometimes the comments are not clear, and some of our teachers refer to your errors by circling or underlining and do not tell you anything about your errors ...” (Student 3)

“When I saw there were some symbols with comments but I did not know how to revise it.” (Student 4)

“It was so difficult to me because I did not know what the meaning of several symbols for examples N for noun, C for clause” (Students 7).

Based on the answer, three students said that they were difficult to understand symbols given by the teachers. Based on the documents that researcher had from the students there were some symbols such as X, V, some codes like N, C, F, T and some underlines in their work. Those three EFL Learners also said that teacher gave comments and code in the same time, e.g.

“it should be N not V...”, “???” , “Check your notes about grammar, it should be Simple Present (with underline the sentence)”

The third problem, 4 students said that they could not correct their writing based on the teacher's comments but afraid to ask. Those statement described below:

“It is like not get feedback but just teacher correcting my work because I saw so many words but I did not understand it” (Student 6).

“I could not understand, but I was afraid to ask.” (Student 8).

“I prefer to ask my friends because I was afraid to ask my teacher and the teacher would ask me back” (Student 8).

“I think because I lack of verbs so that I could not understand my teacher's feedback” (Student 10).

The results of the study indicated that there were several students' problems deal with teacher written feedback. The first problem was students did not understand teacher's comments and error correction. It happened because the students did not know the grammatical rules. Thus, teachers needed to take into b tb6 the students' proficiency level when gave the comments ([Ferris & Roberts, 2001](#)). Furthermore, some of the students' problems with teacher written feedback were mainly caused by teachers' illegible handwriting and the general comments provided by them. These results were similar to those found by ([Irwin, 2017](#)) as they analyzed teachers' written commentary. Thus, teachers needed to make their comments legible and understandable in order that they will be incorporated by the

students in their subsequent drafts and their future written texts. Teachers also needed to avoid using too many general comments as they might demotivated their students to revise their written texts.

Another student's problem was enabled to understand the symbol used by the teacher in their writing. This outcome was in line with the result of the study by ([Havranek & Cesnik, 2001](#)) that said success of using error codes depended on the students' prior grammatical knowledge and their understanding of these codes. Thus, students with a good grammatical knowledge enabled to correct their writing better than the students who had lack of grammatical knowledge.

Moreover, students also indicated that they were not able to overcome their writing problems and they keep repeating the same errors and mistakes. They were difficult to revise their writing based on the teacher feedback. Students had several ways to overcome their problems namely rewriting the teacher feedback with their own words, looking up the meaning of incomprehensible symbol and sentences on the internet/dictionaries and trying to be brave to ask the teacher.

The EFL students also indicates that they were unable to correct their errors based on teacher written feedback and students' fear of asking questions. Additionally, a few students complained that their teacher only comments on their mistakes without giving any suggestion. They also said that teacher only gave attention on the weaknesses without giving compliment on the strengths of their writing. This statement was supported by ([F. Hyland & Hyland, 2001](#)) that focusing on the students' weaknesses could made students unconfident. However, much negative comments on the students' writing might demotivate them.

The researcher also asked about how to overcome their problems. A few of the students said that they rewrote the teacher's comment with their own words. The other students said that they found the meaning of the rare words or symbol in the internet/dictionaries and the rest said they tried to ask their teacher. As a result, they used these strategies to overcome their writing problems and improved their writing skills. This can also be explained by the fact that students have several strategies that allow them to find solutions to their writing problems and more independent in managing their problems dealing with TWF.

## **Conclusion**

Based on the findings, it can be concluded that there are student problems related to the teacher's written feedback. The first problem is that students do not understand the teacher's comments and corrections. In addition, some of the students' problems with teacher-written feedback were mainly due to the poor reading of the teacher's handwriting and the general comments given by the teacher. These results are consistent with the findings of Ferris, Sheen, and Ellis et al. They stated that the successful use of error codes depended on students' prior knowledge of grammar and understanding of these codes. Students can solve problems in several ways. Rewrite the teacher's opinion in your own words, look up the meaning

of symbols and sentences you don't understand on the Internet or dictionaries, and feel free to ask your teacher questions. EFL students also demonstrated an inability to correct errors based on written feedback from the teacher and a fear of student questions.

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