

# The Shifting of Lecturers Beliefs in Written Corrective Feedback

Iis Sujarwati\*, Mursid Saleh, Dwi Rukmini, Sri Wuli Fitriati

Pascasarjana  
Universitas Negeri Semarang  
Semarang, Indonesia

\*iissujarwati@radeninta.ac.id, mursidsaleh@gmail.com, wiwidwirukmini@yahoo.com, sriwuli.fitriati@mail.unnes.ac.id.

**Abstract**—Writing is often claimed as the most difficult and complex skill to be mastered by students. Moreover, compared to the other skills, writing is more thoughtful. In order to produce a good writing, the students-writer needs a sufficient guidance from the teacher (lecturer). Providing feedback to students' writing is one the way to help students become a good writer. This article aimed at exploring lecturers' beliefs, lecturers' practices and the possibility of the shifted of their beliefs regarding the provision of written corrective feedback on students' writing. The participants of this study were three lecturers of English Education Department of an Islamic State University of Lampung, Indonesia who taught writing. Interviews and document analysis were employed in collecting the data. Thematic analysis was used in analysing the data. The findings have shown that most of lecturers' practices are incongruent with their beliefs. Moreover, the result of interview after some teaching practices has shown that their beliefs transform by the time.

**Keywords**—lecturers' beliefs; lecturers' practices; written corrective feedback

## I. INTRODUCTION

Writing as the ultimate skill of language is considered as the most difficult ability to be mastered. As stated by Candlin and Widdowson that everybody learns to speak at least one language fluently, but many are unable to write with confidence [1]. It is harder to be able to write correctly than speak, since written language has more complex pattern than spoken.

Furthermore, academic writing is one of the most critical skills for Indonesian university students as EFL learners. The ability to produce a good writing also becomes an essential to EFL students' academic success. Since, most of universities, especially in Indonesia, obligate their students to write an undergraduate thesis (skripsi) as one of the requirements in finishing their study.

In order to produce a good writing, it is needed a sufficient guidance from the teacher (lecturer). Providing feedback to students, in the form of written commentary, error correction, teacher-student conferencing [2], is one of the ways that can be done by the teacher in enhancing the students' writing ability. Besides, feedback plays a central role in second language writing pedagogy and influences both teachers and learners

greatly. By its importance, much of scholars investigated the implementation of teacher's corrective feedback in the teaching learning activity [3-6].

From teachers' perspective, giving feedback is necessary for three main reasons: providing a reaction to learners' efforts, helping them improves their writing skill, and justifying the grade the learners are given [7]. Furthermore, as discussed by Mory that feedback can support the process of teaching and learning activity in four perspectives [8]. First, feedback can be considered as an incentive for increasing response rate and/or accuracy. Second, feedback can be regarded as reinforce that automatically connects response to prior stimuli. Third, can be considered as information that learners can use to validate or change a previous response. The last, feedback can be regarded as the providing of the scaffolds to help students construct internal schemata and analyze their learning processes.

Research on language pedagogy has demonstrated that teachers' practices are greatly affected by personal theories and beliefs [9]. Moreover, the way of teachers provides written CF on students' writing is greatly influenced by their assumption, knowledge, beliefs, and teaching experience [10]. However, the teachers' practices regarding the provision of corrective feedback on students' writing do not always correspond to their beliefs. It occurs when their beliefs are influenced by the context that might along with them.

Hence, the writers intend to probe the lecturers' beliefs, lecturers' practices and the transformation of their beliefs regarding the provision of written corrective feedback on students' writing. By this, the writers attempt to formulate the research questions to meet the research objectives of the study as the followings:

- What are the lecturers' beliefs regarding the provision of written corrective feedback on students' writing?
- What are the lecturers' practices regarding the provision of written corrective feedback on students' writing?
- How is the shifted of the lecturers' beliefs during their teaching practices regarding the provision of written corrective feedback on students' writing?

## II. RELATED LITERATURE

### A. Teachers' Beliefs

The term 'belief' is one of the most complex concepts to be defined [11]. In reviewing the research on this topic, Basturkmen et al. argued that beliefs are "statements teachers made about their ideas, thoughts and knowledge that are expressed as evaluation of what should be done, should be the case and is preferable" [12]. Moreover, some definitions have been proposed by some experts. Rust described beliefs as "those socially constructed representational systems that people use to interpret and act upon the world" [13]. Beliefs have also been defined as "an individual's representation of reality that has enough validity, truth, or credibility to guide thought and behavior" [14]. Meanwhile, Borg has used the term 'teacher cognition' as an overarching term that encompasses teachers beliefs, knowledge, theories, assumptions and attitudes, stating that all these terms are just superficial artefacts producing more confusion than clarity, but which nonetheless reflect only the overlap in meanings [9,15]. Green defines beliefs are personally (subjectively) held as true by individuals, but do not have a truth condition in them [16].

From a general perspective, every lecturer holds his/her own beliefs regarding what, how, and why s/he teaches. The present study develops a definition that combines elements from the previously mentioned definitions. It defines teachers' beliefs as a set of assumptions, values, knowledge, feelings, and attitudes that might be consciously held by writing teachers, which are evaluative in nature and which can be expressed in the statement of what "should be done".

### B. Written Corrective Feedback

Benne defined feedback as verbal and non-verbal responses from others to a unit of behavior as possible, and capable of being perceived and utilized by the individual initiating the behavior [17].

Written corrective feedback, as one of the feedbacks, refers to all reactions to, formal or informal, from teacher in the form of written commentary, error correction to a draft or a final version of students' writing [2]. Written corrective feedback according to Bitchener and Ferris can be divided into two main types of delivery; direct or indirect [3]. Direct written corrective feedback occurs when teachers mark the errors and provide explicit correction [3]. It includes clearly marking the errors and providing correct linguistic forms or structures, crossing out unnecessary words or phrases, inserting missing words or connectors, and referring to grammar rules or commonly used examples. Meanwhile, indirect written corrective feedback is defined as indicating an error through circling, underlining, highlighting, or otherwise marking it at its location in a text, with or without a verbal rule reminder or an error code, and asking students to mark corrections themselves [3].

One thing that lecturers must take into account is whether to mark a specific error in a focused manner (i.e. selective) or to mark all errors (i.e. comprehensive) in an unfocused manner [18]. Some previous researchers Bitchener and Ferris [3], Lee [19], did not agree to mark all students' errors. They believe

that giving more chance to the students in correcting their errors by self-editing, which is process writing, is more useful than the final product. Inverse, some researchers Evans et al. [20], Hartshon et al. [21] argued that teachers' comprehensive errors feedback is necessary to help students to focus on the range of problems and issues that might present on their text. Moreover, they believe that accuracy and perfection in writing are important. It means that students need to learn to edit their entire texts, not only for two or three selected error patterns.

Another important thing in providing written corrective feedback that lecturers must think about is the focus of their feedback. There are three components of writing that might become their focus; language form, content, and organization. The question of whether writing teachers should focus on local errors which relate to language form more or less than the global ones -related to the content and organization- has been heavily debated.

Despite of the amount and the focus feedback, there is a distinction about the source of written corrective feedback. Many researchers Coffin et al. [22], Leki, [23] Hyland and Hylan [10] believe that teacher is as the key in giving feedback on students' work. Conversely, some researchers Lundstorm and Baker [24], Min [26], Storch [25] argued that peer-feedback is more effective and authentic than teachers' response.

Teachers' feedback has been divided into two major categories; positive and negative feedback. Positive feedback asserts that students' writing is correct (e.g. "good job", "yes", "nice writing"). Students should receive positive feedback to support and bring up their motivation [27]. Meanwhile, negative feedback might indicate disapproval (e.g. "poor writing", "messy text") from the teacher towards students' writing.

## III. METHODOLOGY

This study was a qualitative research as it aimed at exploring and describing the thinking (beliefs) of writing lecturers regarding the provision of written corrective feedback on students' writing [28]. More specifically, it was a case study, "an intensive description and analysis of a phenomenon or social unit such as an individual, group, institution or community" [29]. Three lecturers of writing course at the English education study program of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training Faculty of Islamic State University of Lampung were purposively selected as the participants of this study. The writers employed indepth interview, classroom observation and video-stimulated recall as the tools in collecting the data.

An interview was done by the writers as the first stage in collecting the data. It was purposed to know the lecturers' beliefs regarding the provision of written corrective feedback on students' writing before doing teaching practices. The second phase was analyzing students' writing. This phase was done after some meetings of teaching practices. The aimed was to know the lecturers' written corrective feedback practices. The last, the writers conducted interviews to the lecturers in order to clarify the information got from the data analysis. Besides, this interview was done to elicit their beliefs after doing the teaching practices.

The writers used thematic analysis to analyze the data obtained from interviews. It was adopted from Braun and Clarke [30]. Thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data [30]. Meanwhile, the students' writing papers were analyzed by using descriptive analysis.

IV. FINDINGS

A. Lecturers' Beliefs Regarding the Provision of Written Corrective Feedback

The table below describes the result of qualitative data obtained from interview before teaching practices.

TABLE I. THEMES AND CODES FOR LECTURERS' BELIEFS REGARDING THE PROVISION OF WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Themes	Codes
Lecturers correct students' error comprehensively	Lecturers prefer in marking all types of errors in the text
Lecturers corrects the errors in direct way	All lecturers prefer in giving direct correction on students' errors
Lecturers focus on language form and content	All lecturers believe in giving most attention on language form Two lectures believe in giving more attention on content
Lecturers use positive and negative feedback in correcting students' errors	Lecturers believe that good feedback should comprise both strengths and weaknesses of students' writing

B. Lecturers' Practices Regarding the Provision of Written Corrective Feedback

The following table describeS the data of lecturers' practices regarding the provision of written corrective feedback obtained from feedback analysis on students' work. The data are taken from 18 sheets of students' papers. It includes the focus, the explicitness, and the amount of lecturers' written corrective feedback practices on sudents' writing.

TABLE II. LECTURERS' PRACTICES REGARDING THE PROVISION OF WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Participant	Focus			Explicitness		Amount	
	Language form	Content	Organization	Direct	Indirect	Selective	Comprehensive
NPS	45 (64%)	10 (15%)	15 (21%)	74 (57%)	54 (43%)	15 (75%)	5 (25%)
DRW	30 (59%)	8 (17%)	13 (24%)	47 (49%)	48 (51%)	18 (90%)	2 (10%)
NSS	28 (52%)	9 (17%)	17 (31%)	62 (53%)	55 (47%)	12 (60%)	8 (40%)
Total	103 (59%)	27 (15%)	45 (26%)	183 (53%)	157 (47%)	45 (60%)	15 (40%)

C. Lecturers' Beliefs Transformation Regarding the Provision of Written Corrective Feedback

The table below describes the result of qualitative data obtained from interview after some teaching practices.

TABLE III. TABLE 3 LECTURERS' BELIEFS TRANSFORMATION REGARDING THE PROVISION OF WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Themes	Codes
Lecturers correct students' error selectively	Lecturers focus on particular errors while leaving others uncorrected
Lecturers corrects the errors in both of direct and indirect way	Lecturers provide corrective feedback directly at one time, and indirectly at another time
Lecturers focus on language form	Lecturers pay most attention on language form rather than on organization and content
Lecturers use negative feedback in correcting students' errors	Lecturers more focus on students' writing weaknesses than their strengths

V. DISCUSSION

A. The Comparison of Lecturer's Beliefs and Their Practices

Based on the pre-observation interview, the result revealed that lecturers believed they have to correct all students writing errors. This finding corresponds with a study of Jodaie and Farrokhi who examined college/university teachers who were teaching a writing course to students [31]. The result of their

study indicated that teachers favor the comprehensive approach, believing that a great amount of feedback is motivating while little feedback makes students depressed. In line with their beliefs, all lecturers tended to use the comprehensive approach in correcting students' errors. They correct all errors they met in students' text. According to Lee [19], the comprehensive approach is dominant in most EFL writing classrooms which is affected by the "more is better maxim", that is, the more teachers tend to feel responsible, the more errors they will correct.

All lecturers involved in this study preferred direct feedback as the most effective technique to mark errors. The findings are similar to those in Lee [32], Jodaie and Farrokhi [31] and Amrhein and Nassaji [33] in which studies the teachers claimed that direct written CF is more useful than the indirect one. However, disparities in beliefs and actual practice were observed during the teaching practices. In practice, lecturers used a combination of direct and indirect written CF. This finding is in accordance with Ferris [34]. Such a practice seems also to be in accordance with Bitchener and Ferris [3], who argued that providing a mixture of direct and indirect feedback is the most effective way to scaffold the students' learning and understanding of feedback.

Related to the focus of written CF, the lecturers believed that they have to focus their attention on the language form and content when correcting students' writing errors. However, the present study found that lecturers' beliefs were inconsistent with their practices regarding their focusing on language form

and focusing on the organization, the lecturers behaved in a way that contradicts their beliefs as they focused on language form more than the content. This finding is in accordance with most previous studies Ferris [34]. For instance, Ferris found that only 15% of the teachers' comments address student ideas and rhetorical development and the rest of the comments were directed to the language form [34]. The result that lecturers provided more comments on the students writing errors related to language and tended to ignore content-related errors can also be linked to the finding that writing is treated primarily by teachers as a product and that teachers tended to look at themselves as language instructors rather than writing teachers [2].

Lecturers in the present study believed in the importance of using praising terms to motivate students no matter how poor their writing is. In addition, they believe that negative terms should be avoided as they make students feel depressed. This finding is in accordance with some previous studies Amrhein and Nassaji [33], Zacharias [35] Jodaie and Farrokhi [31]. In opposite of their beliefs, the data analysis of lecturers' written CF provision drew that lecturers rarely motivate the high- and average- achiever and have never motivated low-achiever ones through praising their writing. However, they tended to use harsh terms with low-achieving students. Moreover, the lecturers give their more attention on the students' weaknesses than appreciate their strength.

#### *B. The Transformation of Lecturers' Beliefs During the Teaching Practices*

After analyzing the lecturers' practices regarding the provision of written CF on students' writing, the writers interviewed the lecturers to ensure whether or not their beliefs before and after teaching practices are consistent. The post-observation interview result showed that most of the lecturers' prior beliefs changed after attending the teaching practices. This condition is confirmed by Johnson that teachers' knowledge (beliefs) of teaching is constructed through experiences in and with students, parents, colleagues, and administrators, the processes of learning to teach are socially negotiated. In addition, mentioned by Johnson that "teacher cognition originates in and is fundamentally shaped by the specific social activities in which the teachers engage" [36]. Thus, teachers' knowledge and beliefs are constructed through and by the normative ways that have been historically and culturally embedded in the communities of practice in which they participate.

#### VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the findings of this study, the writers draw the conclusion as the following:

First, in general, lecturers believe in giving written corrective feedback on students' writing explicitly and responding the errors comprehensively. In terms of the focus of written corrective feedback, they prefer to focus on language form and content rather than the organization. As for the positive and negative feedback, they agree on the importance of using praising terms to appreciate all levels of writing and not to use harsh terms. Regarding the source of written

corrective feedback, the lecturers believe that students' classmate feedback (peer feedback) should be done in order to students learn how to identify their errors by themselves.

Second, lecturers' practices regarding the provision of written corrective feedback can be seen from students' work. The result shows that lecturers tend to correct students' error comprehensively in both of direct and indirect way. In terms of the focus of written corrective feedback, lecturers pay more attention on language form rather than on organization and content. As for the positive and negative feedback, they focus on weaknesses of students' writing by providing a negative feedback. Regarding the source of written corrective feedback, lecturers correct students' error by themselves.

Third, by seeing the result of interview before teaching practices and analysis of students' work it can be concluded that lecturers' beliefs transform by the time. Not all of their prior beliefs are reflected on their practices during teaching activity. Moreover, based on the interview after some teaching practices, the lecturers' change their beliefs regarding the provision of written corrective feedback.

#### VII. SUGGESTIONS

The writers would like to offer some suggestions as following:

- As the feedback investigation in this study was only limited to one type of feedback, written corrective feedback, it will be necessary to investigate lecturers' beliefs in both of oral and written corrective feedback.
- As this study was only examined lecturers' beliefs and transformation of their beliefs, it is necessary to do a research to explore the factors that might influence their beliefs in providing written corrective feedback.

#### REFERENCES

- [1] C. Candlin and H. Widdowson, *Writing*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.
- [2] D.R. Ferris, *Response to Student Writing: Implications for Second-Language Students*. New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003.
- [3] J. Bitchener and D.R. Ferris, *Written Corrective Feedback in Second Language Acquisition*. New York: Routledge, 2012.
- [4] M. Zaman and A.K. Azad, *Feedback in Tertiary Level: Teachers' and Learners' Perceptions*. *ASA University Review*, 2012, pp. 139-156.
- [5] S. Panhoon and S. Wongwanich, "An Analysis of Teacher Feedback for Improving Teaching Quality in Primary Schools," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 116, pp. 4124 – 4130, 2014.
- [6] B. Bal-Gezegin, "Feedback in L2 writing: Voices from native and non-native English speaking teachers," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, vol. 199, pp. 763 – 769, 2015.
- [7] K. Hyland, *Second Language Writing*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003.
- [8] E.H. Mory, "Feedback research revisited," *Handbook of research on educational communications and technology*, vol. 2, pp. 745-783, 2003.
- [9] S. Borg, "Teacher cognition in language teaching: A review of research on what language teachers think, know, believe, and do," *Language Teaching*, vol. 36, pp. 81-109, 2003.
- [10] K. Hyland and F. Hyland, *Feedback in second language writing: Contexts and issues*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006.

- [11] N. Mansour, "Science teachers' beliefs and practices: issues, implications and research agenda," *International Journal of Environmental and Science Education*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 25-48, 2009.
- [12] H. Basturkmen, S. Loewen and R. Ellis, "Teachers' Stated Beliefs about Incidental Focus on Form and their Classroom Practices," *Applied Linguistics*, vol. 25, no. 2, pp. 243-272, 2004.
- [13] F. Rust, "The first year of teaching. It's not what they expected," *Teaching and Teacher Education*, vol. 10, pp. 205-217, 1994.
- [14] F. Pajares, "Teachers' beliefs and Educational Research: Cleaning Up a Messy Construct," *Review of Educational Research*, 307-332, 1992.
- [15] S. Borg, *Teacher cognition and language education: Research and practice*. London: Continuum, 2006.
- [16] T.F. Green, *The activities of teaching*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971.
- [17] D. Burke and J. Pieterick, *Giving Students Effective Written Feedback*. New York: Open University Press, 2010.
- [18] D.R. Ferris, *Treatment of error in second language writing classes*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2002.
- [19] I. Lee, *Research into practice: written corrective feedback*. *Language Teaching*, 2013, 108-119.
- [20] N. Evans, K.J. Hartshorn, R.M. McCollum and M. Wolfersberger, "Contextualizing corrective feedback in second language writing pedagogy," *Language Teaching Research*, vol. 14, no. 4, pp. 445-463, 2010.
- [21] K.J. Hartshorn, N.W. Evans, P.F. Merrill, R.R. Sudweeks, E.D.I. Strong-Krause, "Effects of dynamic corrective feedback on ESL writing accuracy," *TESOL Quarterly*, vol. 44, no. 1, pp. 84-109, 2010.
- [22] C. Coffin, M.J. Curry, S. Goodman, A. Hewings, T. Lillis and J. Swann, *Teaching academic writing: A toolkit for higher education*. Routledge, 2005.
- [23] I. Leki, "Potential problems with peer responding in ESL writing classes," *CATESOL Journal*, vol. 3, pp. 5-19, 1990.
- [24] K. Lundstrom and W. Baker, "To give is better than to receive: The benefits of peer review to the reviewer's own writing," *Journal of Second Language Writing*, vol. 18, no. 1, pp. 30-43, 2009.
- [25] N. Storch, "Using activity theory to explain differences in patterns of dyadic interactions in an ESL class," *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 60(4), 457-480, 2004.
- [26] H. Min, "Reviewers' stances and writer perceptions in EFL peer review training," *English for Specific Purposes*, vol. 27, pp. 285-305, 2008.
- [27] R. Ellis, "Corrective Feedback and Teacher Development," *L2 Journal*, vol. 1, no. 1, pp. 3-18, 2009.
- [28] Z. Dörnyei, *Research methods in applied linguistics*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2007.
- [29] S. Merriam, *Qualitative research in practice: Examples for discussion and analysis* (1st ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass, 2002.
- [30] V. Braun and V. Clarke, *Using thematic analysis in psychology*. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, vol. 3, no. 2, pp. 77-101, 2006.
- [31] M. Jodaie and F. Farrokhi, "An Exploration of Private Language Institute Teachers' Perceptions of Written Grammar Feedback in EFL Classes," *English Language Teaching*, pp. 58-69, 2012.
- [32] I. Lee, "How do Hong Kong English teachers correct errors in student writing?," *Education Journal*, pp. 153-169, 2003.
- [33] H.R. Amrhein, "Written corrective feedback: What do students and teachers prefer and why?," *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, vol. 13, pp. 95-127, 2010.
- [34] D.R. Ferris, "The influence of teacher commentary on student revision," *Tesol Quarterly*, vol. 31, no. 2, pp. 315-339, 1997.
- [35] N.T. Zacharias, "Teacher and Student attitudes toward teacher feedback," *RELC Journal*, vol. 38, no. 1, pp. 38-52.
- [36] K.E. Johnson, *Second Language Teacher Education: A Sociocultural Perspective*. New York: Routledge, 2009.