

EFL Students' and Teachers' Perceptions on Written Corrective Feedback during Blended Learning

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Abstract

This study aims to determine EFL students' and teachers' perceptions on written corrective feedback (WCF) during blended learning. Interviews, and focus group discussions (FGD) were the instruments used in this study. The researchers used a descriptive qualitative methodology for the research design of this study. Two English teachers and eight students in the IX grade for the academic year 2022–2023 served as the study's subjects. They were selected through a purposive sampling technique. The findings showed that the implementation of WCF was perceived positively and negatively by the EFL students at SMP Negeri 3 Galesong Selatan. The students who had favourable opinions reported that the implementation of WCF was motivating, interesting, and useful. Meanwhile, the students with negative perceptions confirmed that they were demotivated because they had to clarify the WCF provided by the teachers. Further, the EFL teachers also had favourable opinions of WCF as it applied to students in blended learning. They argued that WCF was important, motivating, and helpful for students to recognize their errors. In summary, the researchers concluded that both EFL students and teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Galesong Selatan had favourable perceptions of WCF implementation during blended learning.

Keywords: *Perception, written corrective feedback, and blended learning.*

1. Introduction

Giving feedback is the act of responding to something that has been received from one or more people for a variety of reasons. Feedback is not only used in the business world or related to activities on social media, but it is frequently employed in education. The practice of giving feedback between students and teachers during the teaching and learning process has various terms in different languages. This term can be "corrective feedback, error correction, or grammar correction." However, the most commonly used term in the teaching process is "corrective feedback" (CF). According to Nassaji and Karrrtchava (2017), referenced in Karim and Nassaji (2019), CF is a way of

correcting pupils' errors so that they can use the target language more accurately. Therefore, through this CF, teachers know how to react to students once they exhibit their knowledge, understanding, and critical thinking.

The implementation of CF in the teaching process, particularly in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) in Indonesia, continues to be discussed among scholars. These findings are closely related to differences in the findings of studies that are divided into two major groups, namely: studies that show CF results in positive student learning outcomes through an increased activity during the learning process, facilitates teacher-student interaction, and improves

comprehension in writing (Ahmad, Saeed, & Salam, 2013; Al-Saleh, 2018); meanwhile, other studies demonstrate that CF has a detrimental effect on students' motivation levels, particularly for those who have a mid-to low-level of writing proficiency when learning English as a foreign language (Elsaghayer, 2014; Bhuana, & El Fauziah, 2021).

Giving feedback to students can be done in two ways, namely, orally and in written form. Oral feedback is a type of feedback that becomes the basic form of the communication process between teachers and students. Meanwhile, written correction can be defined as a type of feedback used by teachers to revise students' errors in written form. Further, in this present study, the writer emphasized providing feedback, particularly written feedback, also known as written corrective feedback (WCF).

There have been several previous studies discussing WCF for students. The first study is written by Mahmood (2019). The findings revealed that almost all of the students expected to get WCF from their teachers and benefited from it, although Kurdish EFL students had contradictory opinions. Even though this study has similarities with the present study, there is still a significant difference. This present study explores further not only EFL students' perceptions but also EFL teachers' opinions in terms of implementing error corrections. In addition, this present study reveals the application of WCF during the blended learning process.

The second study is written by Chen, Nassaji, and Liu (2016). Through the mix method, the findings revealed that while participants had a neutral attitude toward the role of explicit teaching grammar, they had a positive attitude toward error checking overall. This section becomes the research gap between those studies because this present study only uses a qualitative method. Furthermore, the geographical locations of the studies are another indicator of differences in this current study.

The third previous study is from Saragih, Madiya, and Siregar (2021). The researchers explore how Indonesian university students' perceptions influence their acceptance of feedback. Moreover, they mention their preferences for different types of WCF. Even though these studies align with each other (both conducted in Indonesia), the gaps still exist. The previous study just tried to focus on one side of perception (students' perception), whereas this present study tries to investigate both students' and teachers' points of view of WCF. In addition, the previous study was conducted through the face-to-face learning process; meanwhile, this present study is conducted through blended learning.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Perception

How is perception defined? Robbins and Judge (2013) defined perception as the process of humans collecting and interpreting their sensory experiences to give meaning to their surroundings. Walgito (2010) also stated that perception is a sensory process because it is a natural process of receiving a stimulus through sensory experience preceded by sensing. Moreover, Amir et al. (2020) revealed that perception is someone's interpretation of something. This means something that someone can interpret through his or her experiences, which can be things, animals, people, or experiences. In conclusion, it can be inferred that perception is the process of receiving stimuli through the senses, accompanied by awareness, in order for individuals to recognize, assess, and acknowledge something previously experienced.

2.2. Feedback

Feedback is a process of giving review or other information that students acquire regarding their achievement on learning assignments, whether from teachers or others (Richards & Schmidt, 2013). In line with this statement, Hornby (2005) defines "feedback" as forms of recommendations, comments, or details

regarding how effective or beneficial this feedback is for learning and teaching. Feedback is a means of sharing knowledge in response to the student's learning and teaching challenges. According to the interpretations provided above, the researchers conclude that feedback is one of the methods used by teachers in the teaching process to inform students about how well they performed in relation to the learning outcomes or objectives. In addition, when this term refers to "written corrective feedback," it means that the error corrections are provided in the form of written corrections or responses given by teachers or even their friends, and it is usually presented on students' written tasks or assignments.

Sari (2020) assumed that teachers provide WCF to assist students in writing assignments in written form. It means that this is a technique for identifying mistakes and their causes made by students, which can offer advice on how to correct the errors. Additionally, Ellis (2009) divided six types of WCF, namely: 1) direct CF; 2) indirect CF; 3) focused and unfocused CF; 4) metalinguistic CF; 5) electronic CF, and 6) reformulation. However, in this present study, the most common types of WCF applied by the teachers are only:

- a. Direct CF, which can be described as a type of CF that teachers provide through the structure or linguistics form of the chosen language.
- b. Indirect CF, which can be described as the feedback that implies to the writer that an error is made, usually through a symbol or an acronym. In other words, the teacher only shows an error, but no correction is provided.
- c. Metalinguistic CF, which is defined as CF in which the instructor makes an explicit comment about the nature of the error.

2. 3. Blended Learning

The phrase "blended learning" is made up of two words: blended, which means mix, and learning, which means studying. Melbourne (2012) described blended learning as a mixture of face-to-face and mobile learning approaches

through the use of applications. The components of this learning method consist of both synchronous and asynchronous online learning choices. Moreover, Mohammed (2015) defined blended learning as a learning technique in which learners conduct face-to-face class meetings as well as some classroom meetings that are complemented with distance classes using specific applications. In short, it can be concluded that blended learning is the method by which the learning process is integrated into face-to-face learning and computer-based learning.

There are several characteristics of blended learning environment. According to Husamah (2014, p. 225) a blended learning model is required when the following circumstances and environments occur: 1) the teaching-learning process will be not only face-to-face, but interactive virtual technology extends learning time; 2) greatly simplify the never-ending process of communication among teachers and students; 3) position students and educators as learning parties; 4) aid in the acceleration of the teaching process; 5) essentially reconsidering course design in order to maximize students' motivation.

Furthermore, the forms of blended learning can be categorized into six forms. These are: 1) rotation, which means students take a given course and have their schedule to follow the subjects online, face-to-face, or conventionally; 2) face-to-face, in which the vast majority of the content is delivered through lectures; 3) online lab, which uses an online tool to convey the full subjects, although in a physical lab setting; 4) flex, in which the majority of the learning is conducted through a combination of the online and face-to-face models; 5) self-blend, which enables learners to select more than one virtual class to support their conventional school's curriculum; 6) online driver, which uses both an online site and a lecture to convey the curriculum (Santosh 2013).

3. Research Methodology

This study used a descriptive qualitative method to find out: EFL junior high school students' perceptions of WCF, and EFL junior high school teachers' perceptions of WCF. Through analyzing information (gathering, grouping, investigating, and interpreting data) from the respondents, the method can indeed determine the perception of EFL students and teachers. The primary goal of the descriptive qualitative method used in this study is to focus on how the researchers can encourage a deep understanding of certain phenomena, for instance the surroundings, processes, or even perceptions.

This research was carried out for approximately three weeks (a month), which is from October to November 2022. The subjects of this research were students in grade IX at SMP Negeri 3 Galesong Selatan for the academic year 2022–2023. The researchers selected four classes (IX D to IX G) as the research subjects. The researchers selected 8 (eight) students from those classes and 2 (two) English teachers to be interviewed. The researchers applied the purposive sampling technique. This technique was used because the required sample should fulfill the necessary requirements for the study conducted. Moreover, the researchers selected these classes because the students were very interested in being the subject of research related to the use of WCF during the blended learning process. Additionally, this qualitative study had only one variable, namely, a single variable. The variable was students' and teachers' perceptions of WCF during blended learning.

The researchers used two instruments, namely an interview, and focus group discussion (FGD), to gather information from the samples. In this study, a semi-structured interview was used. The findings section shows the results of the analysis of the study conducted. In this study, there is one research question: How do EFL students and teachers perceive the implementation of WCF in blended learning?

used from among the three kinds of interviews, namely, structured, semi-structured, and unstructured. It was carried out orally through individual face-to-face meetings with eight ninth-grade students to determine their perceptions of WCF and their preferences through modified interview guidelines from Alkhatib (2015). The researchers used the theory from Miles, Huberman, and Saldana (2014) to analyze the data collected through these instruments. These techniques of data analysis consisted of: 1) data reduction, which means the researchers summarized, selected the main issues, and focused on the study's main problems. The data was then simplified by removing irrelevant items, so that the reduced data provided a clear understanding and allowed the researchers to collect the required information. 2) data display, which means the researchers presented data based on a narrative text by streamlining the data; 3) conclusion, which means the researchers made conclusions and main points from the collected data to make it abundantly clear.

Meanwhile, the researchers used a type of mini FGD session that consisted of 8 participants, and the researchers served as the facilitators to lead the discussion. Moreover, during the FGD session, notes were taken to record the students' perceptions. The findings of FGD were analyzed in several steps based on the theory of Creswell (2007). The researchers analyzed the FGD session by preparing the data by converting the recorded male and female FGD remarks from Indonesian to English. Then, the researchers eliminated unneeded information conveyed by the students, such as unnecessary talks. Following that, the researchers descriptively presented the data, and the data were used to draw a conclusion based on the FGD analysis.

4. Findings

The following lines provide the study's findings among students and teachers.

4. 1. EFL Students' Perception on WCF during Blended Learning

This part reveals the data for EFL students' perceptions on WCF in blended learning through an interview. The researchers used the theory of Irwanto (2002) about types of perception. According to the analysis of the interview, they found that the students had two different perceptions. Those were: (a) positive perception and (b) negative perception.

a. Positive Perception

The students' positive perception, reveals that feedback was frequently provided by the teachers and needed by the students during blended learning. They claimed that the implementation of WCF during blended learning was motivating, useful, and interesting. These findings can be described as follows:

1) Motivating

Based on the results of the analysis of student interviews regarding the use of WCF during blended learning, it was discovered that they were motivated through the implementation of WCF during blended learning. It was because this written correction helped students become more enthusiastic, made it simple for them to finish assignments, and corrected the errors in their written assignments. They also believed that this WCF inspired them to construct a better English sentence and be aware of their writing issues.

2) Useful

Apart from feeling motivated, the researchers also found that the implementation of WCF during blended learning was very useful for students learning English as a foreign language at school. It was because the students were able to expand their vocabularies according to the teachers' written correction. Additionally, they learned about how to use the proper English tenses within the sentences or paragraphs they composed.

3) Interesting

Another response related to the students' perceptions of implementing WCF during blended learning was interesting. They mentioned that they felt interested in learning English with the use of WCF method during blended learning. They explained that this written correction could broaden their knowledge of English. Further, this WCF can be a way to assist students in understanding the materials provided by the teachers.

b. Negative Perception

On the other hand, the students with negative perceptions claimed that the implementation of WCF during blended learning was demotivating. This finding can be described as follows:

1) Demotivating

Different information was obtained from the 8 (eight) total respondents from the interview, it was discovered that 2 (two) students were demotivated through the use of WCF during blended learning. They believed that the teacher's WCF methods did not correspond to their level of English proficiency. Additionally, if the outcomes of their assignments did not match their expectations, this was reinforced.

This issue was emphasized through FGD session conducted with 8 (eight) students. It was revealed that the way the teacher applied WCF during blended learning did not go in line with the students' abilities. This situation led them to feel disappointed with the results of their assignments. Therefore, it can be concluded that during blended learning, the teachers were required to completely understand the students' capacity for WCF analysis. This was proven by the previous point, which suggested that students' lack of motivation resulted in their confusion when attempting to correct their mistakes or errors. Additionally, they were disappointed when they were corrected through WCF in their next written assignments.

4. 2. EFL Teachers' Perception on WCF during Blended Learning

This section reveals the data from the teachers' perceptions on WCF applied to students during blended learning through an interview. The interviews with the teachers took place between October 27th and November 27th, 2022. The researchers conducted interviews with the teachers face-to-face, particularly when they had a break. Based on the results of the interview conducted, it was shown that the teachers had positive perceptions on WCF applied to students during blended learning. This finding can be described as follows:

a. Important

The EFL teachers mentioned that the use of WCF to students during blended learning was important. They assumed that this method was used to measure students' ability, and as a way to show them appreciation to their assignments. Therefore, it can be inferred that the teachers' perception was in line with the students. WCF implementation for students during blended learning was critical, according to the teachers, because it could be used to assess students' comprehension of the materials. In addition, the teacher also mentioned that WCF applied because it was an appreciation for the students' work after finishing their assignments.

b. Motivating

The teachers' perceptions on WCF applied during blended learning are quite similar to the students' opinions. Even though this method was done through blended learning, they argued that this method would motivate students to learn English as a foreign language. They assumed that through this method they could provide error correction with different types of WCF. Moreover, it was motivating for students because it would assist them in identifying several errors made in their written assignments.

c. Useful

The implementation of WCF during blended learning was not only important and motivating students to learn English. However, this method was useful for them to identify and

be aware of their errors in their assignments. Therefore, it can be inferred that even though the teachers used blended learning as a relatively new learning method, they still had a great chance to convey their lesson appropriately due to the implementation of WCF. They also agreed that this method was useful because the students could easily identify the errors in their written assignments.

5. Discussions

This section includes a discussion to analyze data about EFL students' and teachers' perceptions on written corrective feedback (WCF) during blended learning. In this instance, there are two sources of data: data from EFL students' and teachers' interviews, and data from FGD sessions with the students.

The researchers started the discussion by answering the research question about how EFL students perceive the implementation of WCF during blended learning through the interview, and FGD session. Through these instruments, the researchers found that the EFL students at SMP Negeri 3 Galesong Selatan had two different types of perceptions during blended learning. There are positive and negative perceptions.

The first perception, which is the students' positive perception, reveals that feedback was frequently provided by the teachers and needed by the students during blended learning. This condition is certainly supported by the advantages of implementing a blended learning strategy within the past two years. This statement aligns with the findings of Aji, Ardin, and Arifin (2020), who revealed that through blended learning, students felt motivated when they had difficulties learning English, had flexible learning times, and could increase their interaction with each other.

The implementation of WCF is always required by students in blended learning. They agreed that the implementation of WCF was motivating. This finding is similar to that of Saragih, Madiya, and Siregar (2021), who reported that WCF was motivating students to

improve their proficiency in writing. Through the feedback, the teachers can increase their enthusiasm and identify their errors, as it indicates what they did wrong in their writing assignments. Apart from feeling motivated, the researchers also found the results of the implementation of WCF during blended learning to be very interesting and useful. They explained that this written correction could broaden their knowledge of English. Further, this WCF can be a way to assist students in understanding the materials provided by the teachers. These justifications are in accordance with Rosdiana (2016), Listiani (2017), Mulati (2018), and Trabelsi (2019), who discovered that students rated feedback as a valuable method in the learning process. They discovered that the WCF encouraged them to improve their writing skills because it highlighted their mistakes.

However, the students with negative perceptions confirmed that the way the teachers applied this method made them need clarification. This finding goes in line with Zumbrunn's (2016), who found that WCF was negatively perceived by the students due to the teachers' unhelpful comments and made them confused. Additionally, the findings from Saragih et al. (2021) stated that applying non-comprehensive feedback directly in class sometimes makes students feel confused because the feedback is only sometimes perceived well. Additionally, the challenges of applying the blended learning strategy during the Covid-19 pandemic support the students' negative perception. Incomprehensible materials were one of the challenges that students faced in blended learning. This is closely related to the teachers' feedback, particularly in implementing WCF. This is consistent with the findings of Aji, Ardin, and Arifin (2020), who found that online learning with a blended learning system made students feel uninterested and misunderstood about the topic, which was influenced by the lack of teacher feedback on students. In short, the difficulties associated with implementing blended learning approaches at schools'

influence students' negative perceptions of the WCF method applied by the teachers.

Moreover, the findings of the interview sessions with two English teachers who applied WCF most commonly during blended learning revealed that giving comments on the students' assignments was crucial, particularly in blended learning. This finding goes in line with Mao and Crosthwaite's (2019), who discovered that the implementation of WCF, whether through codes or symbols, was important for students. They admitted that providing this feedback served two key purposes: assessing the students' grasp of the provided information and showing the students' appreciation for completing the assigned tasks. Of course, how WCF is applied differs from teacher to teacher; one teacher might use it immediately after presenting the material based on their notes and the outcomes of the assignments they have given. The other would apply WCF after each chapter discussed. Based on the theoretical implications discussed, the researchers can conclude that it is necessary to consider the appropriate implications before applying the WCF approach to blended learning. The students' learning outcomes will be impacted if the WCF is inappropriate for their abilities. The expected learning outcomes will likewise be satisfactory, especially in terms of vocabulary and writing, if the WCF is in line with the requirements and skills of the students. However, if the teacher is unable to determine the needs of the class for the WCF being applied, it will result in a decline in the students' motivation to learn English. As a result, the teachers need to be aware of the students' level in their classes in order to select the WCF types that will best aid students in understanding the information being taught. However, this study has limitations, such as a small number of participants and the types of WCF used at school. These have an impact on the study's findings since they might not be sufficient to account for a wider and more diverse context of students and educational settings.

5. Conclusion

This study showed that the EFL students at SMP Negeri 3 Galesong Selatan had two different perceptions of the WCF applied by the teachers during the blended learning environment. Those are positive and negative perceptions. The students with a positive perception confirmed that the implementation of WCF motivated them to learn new things, for instance, the use of articles or tenses when composing a sentence. They also argued that WCF was interesting and very useful in completing their assignments. This was because, through WCF, they could expand their vocabularies related to the lesson. On the other hand, two students had a negative perception, which means that WCF was demotivating to learn English during blended learning. They assumed that WCF did not meet their abilities and expectations in their written assignments.

Furthermore, the EFL teachers at SMP Negeri 3 Galesong Selatan also had positive perceptions of WCF during blended learning. The results of the interview session confirmed that the use of WCF during blended learning was important for motivating students to learn and for identifying students' errors in written assignments. It means that the comments provided may serve as an appreciation for students' efforts in completing their assignments related to the topic of the lesson.

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