

**THE EFFECTIVENESS OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT
WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK
IN IMPROVING EFL LEARNERS' HORTATORY EXPOSITION WRITING**

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Abstract: At present, research has not adequately dealt with corrective feedback (Mirzaii & Aliabadi, 2013). Adam (2003) claims that written production and feedback are important for SLA. It pushes learners' awareness towards the problems in their interlanguage. Corrective feedback has always been a challenge (Sadeghpour, 2013). This study, thus, aims at investigating the impact of feedback on students' writing. Thirty EFL learners at UNISBANK participated in this study. They were divided into Direct Feedback Group (DFG) and Indirect Feedback Group (IFG). Both did pretest before the treatment. Subsequently, they were asked to write Hortatory Exposition texts in groups and individually. DFG's texts were provided with direct feedback while the IFG's with indirect one. Afterwards, posttest was administered. The results show that direct feedback is more effective than indirect feedback. However, the difference is statistically not significant. The pedagogical implication is that in giving corrective feedback teacher should consider learner's level of competence, since the effectiveness of the feedback depends on the learner's competence level, the lower proficient learners might be unable to correct their own errors based on indirect corrective feedback.

Keywords: *direct feedback, indirect feedback, Hortatory Exposition*

Background

Learning language means learning the receptive and productive language skills. Kellog (1994) and Schoonen et al. (2003) in Van Beuningen (2011) state that one way for promoting productive language use in an instructional setting is requiring students to write. So one of the tasks of L2 teachers is guiding their students through the difficult process of becoming able writers in the target language. It is necessary for target language teachers to provide learners with more opportunity to practice writing and to provide feedback. Han (2002) claims that learners' output should be accompanied with corrective feedback in order to be beneficial to the language learning process.

Adam (2003) claims that written production and feedback are of special importance for SLA. Swain (1995) in Van Beuningen (2011) explains that producing output, combined with feedback pushes learners' awareness towards the gaps and problems in their interlanguage (IL). Corrective feedback is indication to the learner that his use of the target language is incorrect (Lightbown and Spada, 2006). It aims at providing information concerning of what is written versus well-established language convention.

Van Beuningen (2011) states that corrective feedback strategies vary with respect to their explicitness, focus, the person providing the feedback, the feedback medium, etc. Ellis (2009) classifies corrective feedback into focused vs. unfocused, direct vs. indirect, meta-linguistic, reformulation, electronic, peer corrective feedback.

Sheen (2007) states that the effectiveness of direct and indirect corrective feedback depends on a learner's level of (meta-)linguistic competence. It is hypothesized that lower proficient learners might be unable to correct their own errors based on indirect corrective feedback.

Ellis (2009) explains that in giving direct corrective feedback the teacher provides both an indication of the errors as well as the corresponding target forms. In giving indirect corrective feedback, on the other hand, the teacher provides some indication of the errors, but it is left to the learners to derive the target forms. Van Beuningen (2011) says that indirect corrective feedback can take different forms that vary in their explicitness, e.g. underlining errors, coding errors.

The role and usefulness of written corrective feedback are still controversial and remain a topic of considerable debate. Therefore, researchers in the field of L2 writing are interested in investigating corrective feedback.

Mirzaii and Aliabadi (2013) investigated the impact of written corrective feedback in the context of genre-based instruction on job application letters to Iranian advanced-level EFL learners. The results show that direct corrective feedback is more effective than indirect corrective feedback.

Lalande (1987) compared the effect of direct and indirect correction on the accuracy development of 60 learners of German as a foreign language. The researcher reported an advantage of indirect over direct corrective feedback. However, the difference is not statistically significant. Similar with Lalande, Ferris (2006) reported an advantage of indirect correction over direct correction.

Chandler (2003) investigated 20 ESL learners receiving direct and three types of indirect corrective feedback. The research results show that direct written corrective feedback is the most effective method. Similarly, Nakayama's (2002) study concludes that direct corrective feedback is superior to indirect corrective feedback overtime.

This study attempts to compare the impact of two different types of corrective feedback, direct and indirect feedback on EFL students' achievement in writing Hortatory Exposition genre. It is a genre to persuade the readers or listeners that something should or should not be. The difference of this research with the previous studies is on the research subjects and the research object.

With respect to the background above, the hypotheses of this research can be stated as follows: Direct Feedback Group performs better on the posttest than on the pretest; Indirect Feedback Group performs better on the posttest than on the pretest; Direct Feedback Group performs better than the Indirect Feedback Group on the posttest.

Method

Thirty students of UNISBANK participated in this study. They are randomly divided into Direct Feedback Group (DFG) and Indirect Feedback Group (IFG).

The data of this study were collected by asking the students to do pretest and posttest. The DFG and IFG took pretest which required them to write a five-paragraph Hortatory Exposition text in class for 60 minutes. The topic for DFG and IFG was the same, i.e. the impact of smoking cigarettes. Subsequently, the texts were scored using the scoring rubric proposed by Jacobs et. al.'s (1981).

After the pretest, instruction on writing Hortatory Exposition text in line with Gerrot and Wignell (1995), Derewianka (1995) began. Overall seven sessions X 50 minutes were devoted to teach the participants. To control for the teacher variability, the two groups were taught by the same teacher, i.e. the researcher.

In the first, second, and third sessions, the teacher taught the communicative purpose, schematic structure, and linguistic features of Hortatory Exposition genre. The teacher also asked the students to analyze the texts in groups and individually. In the fourth and fifth sessions, the students were asked to write two Hortatory Exposition texts in groups. While the students practiced writing, the teacher moved around the class helping them. In the sixth meeting, they were given opportunity to write a five-paragraph Hortatory Exposition text individually with the topic: the problem of garbage.

The next phase was giving feedback to the students' texts written in groups and individually, the DFG's texts were provided with direct feedback while the IFG's were provided with indirect feedback. In giving direct feedback, the teacher located and gave the correct form or order, and also provided the missing words. In giving indirect feedback, the teacher underlined and inserted the codes of the absent and/ or the mistaken words or stage. Subsequently, in the seventh meeting the students were asked to revise their own texts based on the teacher's feedback.

The last phase was administering the first posttest by asking the students to write about the problem of corruption. They wrote a five-paragraph Hortatory Exposition text with the topic for 60 minutes in the classroom, without the teacher's help. Afterwards, the texts were scored using the scoring rubric proposed by Jacobs et. al.'s (1981) covering content, organization, vocabulary, language use, mechanics.

To know more about the durability of the effect of the corrective feedback, one week after the first posttest, a second posttest was administered. Thus, in this research, a pretest, an immediate posttest, and a delayed posttest were administered.

Findings and Discussion

Pretest and posttest are administered to statistically investigate the impact of direct and indirect feedbacks. Both direct and indirect feedback groups perform almost equally well on the pretest, i.e. DFG gains mean score of 62.3 while IFG gains mean score of 63.5. The mean score difference does not show a statistical difference. Thus, at the beginning of the study, the research subjects show similar capability in writing.

The two groups improve their performance in the course of the study. After getting the treatments, they have posttest. The result is that all of the research subjects have better competence in composing a Hortatory Exposition text compared with when they haven't got the treatments. After getting the treatment, the IFG's mean score is 73.5 while the DFG's is 81.4. This research result confirms hypotheses 1 and 2: 1) Direct Feedback Group performs better on the posttest than on the pretest, 2) Indirect Feedback Group performs better on the posttest than on the pretest. The improvement both on the DFG and IFG is as the result of the treatments they accepted.

The DFG's posttest mean score is better than the IFG's, i.e. 81.4 and 73.5. DFG's mean score difference is $81.4 - 62.3 = 19.1$ while IFG's mean score difference is $73.5 - 63.5 = 10$. Thus, DFG improves better than IFG, the mean difference improvement is 9.1. This research result shows the superiority of the DFG. This research result is similar to Mirzaii and Aliabadi's (2013) reporting that direct corrective feedback is more

effective than indirect corrective feedback, and also similar to Hashemnezhad's and Mohammadnejad's (2012) reporting that direct feedback is more beneficial than indirect feedback. This is in line with Sheen (2007) stating that the effectiveness of direct and indirect corrective feedback depends on a learner's level of (meta-) linguistic competence, that lower proficient learners might be unable to correct their own errors based on indirect corrective feedback. This is in accordance with hypothesis 3: Direct Feedback Group performs better than the Indirect Feedback Group on the posttest.

In order to know the significance of the mean difference, *t*-test is calculated. The *t*-value is 0.0016. This is smaller than the *t*-value from the *t*-table: at the level of significance .01, and .05, i.e. 2.624 and 1.761. This means that the null hypothesis (Direct Feedback Group does not perform better than the Indirect Feedback Group on the posttest) is accepted. This also means that there is no significant difference between the DFG's posttest mean score and the IFG's.

To know whether after receiving the feedback the learners are able to maintain their ability to write, one week after the first post test, a second posttest is administered. The result is that the DFG's delayed posttest mean score is better than the IFG's, i.e. 80.7 and 73.2. The *t*-value is 0.00257, smaller than the *t*-value from the *t*-table. Thus, there is no significant difference between the DFG's mean score and the IFG's.

The results of this study indicate that written corrective feedback can enhance the accuracy of EFL writing. It has great potential to improve EFL writing and it helps the learners to improve and acquire the mastery of writing the target language. Since the DFG and IFG are taught how to write a Hortatory Exposition text by the same teacher with the same teaching material, the same teaching method and in the same time interval, so the mean gain difference between the DFG and IFG are caused by the type of corrective feedback received by the two groups on their written product.

Conclusions

Based on the data analysis, some conclusions can be drawn as follows: written corrective feedback, direct or indirect feedback, has potential to improve EFL students' writing. This study reveals that direct feedback is more effective than indirect feedback in improving the students' capability in composing a Hortatory Exposition text. However, the difference of the effect of the direct feedback and indirect feedback is statistically not significant. The more effective of the direct feedback than the indirect feedback is more likely because the participants of the study are of low proficient learners who might be unable to correct their own errors based on the indirect corrective feedback.

A pedagogical implication of the research results is that an EFL teacher should use written corrective feedback in writing classrooms since giving written corrective feedback provides students with a means to improve their writing accuracy. A teacher should introduce direct and indirect written corrective feedbacks to the students in order that they are familiar with those feedbacks. In giving the corrective feedback the teacher should consider a learner's level of (meta-) linguistic competence, since the effectiveness of direct and indirect corrective feedback depends on the learner's competence level, the lower proficient learners might be unable to correct their own errors based on indirect corrective feedback. Thus, direct corrective feedbacks should dominate the written products of the lower proficient learners.

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Biodata

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