

Responses and preferences of rural Islamic university EFL learners for written corrective feedback

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Manuscript received May 17, 2023, revised July 14, 2023, accepted July 22, 2023, and published online November 7, 2023.

Recommended APA Citation

Mudra, H. (2023). Responses and preferences of rural Islamic university EFL learners for written corrective feedback. *Englisia: Journal of Language, Education, and Humanities*, 11(1), 163-183. <https://doi.org/10.22373/ej.v11i1.17943>

ABSTRACT

The primary objective of this current investigation was to provide a detailed account of the experiences of English as Foreign Language (EFL) learners in their response to Written Corrective Feedback (WCF). Additionally, the study aimed to explore the preferences of these learners regarding the utilization of WCF in their thesis writing within the context of a rural Islamic higher education institution. The participants of this study consisted of twenty-two senior EFL learners who were in the process of writing their theses as their final projects. To gather the necessary data, semi-structured interviews were extensively utilized. The findings of this study revealed that EFL learners employed various strategies when responding to WCF, including a focus on grammatical error correction, an emphasis on overall error correction, the utilization of online grammar checkers, and seeking guidance from their supervisors. Furthermore, the learners' perception of WCF included their preferences, disfavored aspects, advantages, and disadvantages. These results indicate that EFL learners are expected to engage in intensive learning of grammar and writing. Additionally, it is crucial to establish standardized approaches to providing WCF. In conclusion, WCF proves to be a valuable tool for EFL learners in their thesis writing endeavors.

Keywords: *Written corrective feedback; EFL learners; Thesis writing*

1. Introduction

Writing as a complex process has become a pedagogical issue among pre-service teachers (Ahmed & Zhang, 2023; Chmarkh, 2021; K. L. Li & Razali, 2019). Teachers have to ensure that EFL learners are capable of building a written text. The teachers are

to maintain the learners' better performance in writing texts and enhance their understanding in language use. Moreover, performance and language use are two interrelated factors in writing. This implies that the learners utilize various strategies during the writing process in order to improve performance and language use as the main content in writing. However, bad performance and misunderstanding in using language may cause a problem in writing such as error (Heydari & Bagheri, 2012; K. L. Li & Razali, 2019; Mubarak & Budiono, 2022). Error in the writing process is, then, one of the indicators that the learners' writing skill needs to be improved. Proper instruction is needed to increase the EFL learners' understanding and knowledge (Mudra, 2018) towards problems in writing. It has been a common finding that one of the effective techniques to cope with such issues is by giving some written correction as feedback toward the learners' work.

Written corrective feedback (WCF), focused on written form, is one of the proper techniques in writing that assists learners to correct written errors by offering them several appropriate corrections (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Mawlawi Diab, 2015). WCF seems to be a potential tool for every learner that their written texts are improved based on the errors as they emerge within the texts. In the process of writing which consists of four stages namely prewriting, drafting, revising, and editing (Chmarkh, 2021; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022), WCF is used in the third step, revising. A draft has to be and reviewed and revised (Puengpipattrakul, 2020; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022) by considering several elements in writing such as linguistic features consisting of grammar, vocabulary, and structures. The linguistic features have to be considered as different parts because of which the features are prompted in terms of different strategies and performed in terms of different steps (Alangari et al., 2020; Casal & Yoon, 2023).

A number of studies (Fen et al., 2017; Kim, 2013; Maleki & Eslami, 2013; Nurie, 2018; Pakbaz, 2014; Salimi, 2015; Sarvestani, 2015; Shintani et al., 2014; Shintani & Aubrey, 2016) found the effectiveness of WCF in enhancing quality of learners' L2 writing by correcting emerging errors and the contribution of WCF in term of L2 teaching and learning, particularly in writing contexts.

The studies were generally concerned with finding out the effectiveness of WCF for L2 learner writers by comparing WCF with other conventional techniques in correcting learners' written texts. Nevertheless, little study has been conducted in terms of investigating live experiences of the EFL teachers who apply WCF and the EFL learners whose written texts are checked and corrected through WCF. Therefore, this current study describes live experiences of the learners and their perceptions on working with WCF. In other words, in this study, the following questions are proposed to be investigated: (1) How do EFL learners respond to WCF? and (2) What are the preferences of EFL learners for using WCF?

2. Literature review

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) has become an interesting topic to be discussed regarding scientific writing processes such as a thesis or a journal article. It is noted that in an L2 context, many students are challenged with various writing barriers such as linguistic problems. Although WCF has been faced by the EFL students on many occasions, its concept remains complicated. Its strengths encourage students to increase motivation in revising corrections. However, it affects stress or burden to revise negative feedback which is considerably compulsory for a writer or a researcher.

2.1. *Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)*

WCF refers to some kinds of feedback offered to a learner, from any source that consists of evidence of error of language form made by the learner (Evans et al., 2010). Lightbown and Spada (2006) defined WCF as the input given by the teacher as an indicator that use of the target language might cause a grammatical inaccuracy. WCF consists of the objectives to help learner author construct awareness, understanding, and language competence (Dahlia et al., 2023) so that they can increase skills to properly control their own written work in the future time (Sarvestani, 2015; Shintani et al., 2014). Thus, learners' writing can be corrected through written correction or WCF.

A number of studies (Marzban & Arabahmadi, 2013; Mujtaba et al., 2021; Pakbaz, 2014; Sarvestani, 2015) reveal that WCF has greater impacts on writing efficiency and it is also helpful for improvement of the accuracy of writing among L2 writers. Other studies (Bitchener, 2008, 2009; Bitchener et al., 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010) investigated the long-term effectiveness of WCF on improvement of writing accuracy. Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) focused their research on the impact of WCF on types of linguistic errors such as article system, the past simple tense, and prepositions. They found that WCF is a proper technique to assist L2 writers enhance writing accuracy based on rule-governed categories excluding idiosyncratic use of prepositions. Other studies in written CF (Fen et al., 2017; Kim, 2013; Puengpipattrakul, 2020; Salimi, 2015) emphasized that indirect WCF is more effective in helping L2 teachers to improve L2 learners' writing during the revision process. Moreover, the impact of two different types of WCF and the results of the study show that WCF enhanced L2 writers' accuracy in writing (Bitchener et al., 2005; Fen et al., 2017; Kim, 2013; Pakbaz, 2014; Salimi, 2015; Zohrabi & Ehsani, 2014).

2.2. *WCF strategies*

WCF strategies are of various types such as direct (explicit) and indirect (implicit) WCF which are the main types of WCF. Hosseiny (2014) states that treatable errors were shown through indirect feedback and direct feedback is used to process untreatable errors. A number of studies (Crosthwaite et al., 2022; Hosseiny, 2014; Kim, 2013; Nurie, 2018; Puengpipattrakul, 2020; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022) compared the use of both direct and indirect WCF and their impact on accuracy in writing. Other studies (Han, 2017; Mao &

Crosthwaite, 2019; Pakbaz, 2014; Sarvestani, 2015) investigated the use of various types of direct and indirect CF in relation with correction of errors in writing. A study on the impact of WCF on linguistic features by Casal and Yoon (2023) found that linguistic features are treated differently as they represent a particular source of knowledge which can be determined through individual steps.

Previous studies compare several methods in providing feedback. Ashwell (2000) investigated comparisons among four methods in providing feedback consisting of grammar-content feedback, content-grammar feedback, form-content feedback, and without any feedback at all. In this study, it is found that groups that were feedback receivers showed significant improvement in terms of accuracy in writing compared to those which did not get any feedback. This study revealed that WCF as a part of the integrated process in writing has a greater impact on writing accuracy. Puengpipattrakul (2020) investigated the comparison among different direct WCF combinations consisting of direct error correction and oral meta-linguistic explanation; direct error correction; and correction without WCF. The results show that the group who were treated with direct error correction and oral meta-linguistic explanation produced fewer errors for the definite article and the past simple tense but it did not result in such an effect for prepositions. It is expected that oral meta-linguistic explanation can be used as a predictor in facilitating enhanced accuracy.

Li and Roshan (2019) concerned the study with metalinguistic feedback of regular past tense and it is found that metalinguistic feedback which is an explicit WCF was more appropriate than recasts which are implicit WCF in enhancing learners' knowledge on the regular past tense. The researchers designed and used the instruments for testing comprehension on both explicit and implicit WCF. As for the results, metalinguistic feedback enhanced learners' comprehension toward both explicit and implicit CF after time extension of post-test was made. Implicit WCF with metalinguistic notes helps to determine the development of both implicit WCF and explicit understanding of target language. Furthermore, Fen et al., (2017) further research was on the effectiveness of other direct combination of WCF toward accuracy such as direct error correction with written meta-linguistic explanation and oral meta-linguistic explanation; direct error correction with written meta-linguistic explanation; direct error correction; and correction without WCF. Teachers provided WCF over two functional uses of the article (the indefinite article "a" for first mention and the definite article "the" for subsequent or anaphoric mentions). The study revealed that the groups with WCF produce less errors compared to those without any WCF.

2.2.1. Direct WCF

Direct feedback refers to the practice wherein teachers offer students the accurate version of the errors they have made (Lalande, 1982; Robb et al., 1986). Direct feedback refers to the act of a teacher correcting errors made by students. According to Ellis (2016), direct error correction involves the identification of both the error and the target form.

Direct corrective feedback offers learners explicit guidance on how to rectify their errors, thereby presenting several advantages.

According to Ferris and Roberts (2001), it is posited that providing direct corrective feedback may be more effective than utilizing indirect corrective feedback when working with students who possess limited proficiency in writing. It was found that the utilization of direct corrective feedback has the potential to effectively facilitate the acquisition of particular grammatical features (Sheen, 2007). Lee (1997) defines direct or explicit feedback as the act of the teacher identifying errors and providing the correct forms.

2.2.2. *Indirect WCF*

Indirect feedback is a form of communication that signals the presence of an error without explicitly offering the necessary correction. Lee (1997) defines indirect correction as a pedagogical approach wherein the teacher highlights errors made by learners without explicitly providing the correct forms. Instead, learners are encouraged to identify and rectify their own errors. The participants were instructed to identify and rectify the mistakes they had made (Zaman & Azad, 2012), while the instructor offered the accurate version through direct error correction (Ellis, 2009). It has been suggested that the utilization of indirect feedback is more effective in facilitating error correction among students (Bonilla, van Steendam, & Buyse, 2017). The teacher employs various methods such as underlining, highlighting, or coding to indicate errors, after which the learners are given the opportunity to make the necessary corrections. Additionally, Cánovas Guirao, Roca de Larios, and Coyle (2015) differentiate between indirect feedback strategies that utilize a code and those that do not. Coded feedback pertains to situations in which the instructor identifies the specific locations of errors and employs a system of codes to indicate the types of errors present. The term "uncoded feedback" refers to a scenario in which a teacher utilizes visual indicators such as circles, underlines, or tallies in the margins of a student's work. This approach allows learners the opportunity to identify and rectify errors in their work (Ellis, 2016). When utilizing indirect feedback for paper editing, students are expected to not only recognize the specific type of error but also take responsibility for self-correcting the error. In contrast, direct feedback involves the student simply transcribing the teacher's corrections onto the paper (Ferris, 2006).

According to a number of studies conducted by error correction researchers (Evans, Hartshorn, & Tuioti, 2010; Ferris, 1996; Ferris & Helt, 2000), it has been found that providing indirect feedback to students is more advantageous in terms of facilitating their progress in accuracy over time. Additionally, this type of feedback has been found to enhance students' ability to edit their own compositions (Bitchener, 2005; Chandler, 2003). Furthermore, according to the results of a longitudinal study conducted by Ferris (1999), it was discovered that providing verbal feedback in the form of concise explanations regarding error patterns, along with the use of in-text underlining to highlight instances of these error types, resulted in successful revision in 73% of the

instances. Additional research has also demonstrated that approximately 80% of the errors identified by instructors were effectively revised by students (Chaney, 1999; Komura, 1999).

3. Method

3.1. Study design

This study was conducted based on a descriptive qualitative approach which stresses on the emphasis of lived events experienced by participants as social subjects (Frechette et al., 2020). Moreover, a descriptive qualitative approach as narrative is defined as an oral or written work giving a point of view towards a series of phenomena which is systematically interrelated (Nassaji, 2015). It is in line with the purpose of this current study. The purpose was to investigate the participants' experiences and perceptions toward WCF.

3.2. Participants

The present study involved 22 students (15 females and 7 males) at a rural public institute in Jambi province who enrolled in a required course. They were senior students aged between 20 and 21. They had 4-year experience attending research courses at the English department. They have been writing their thesis as a final project. In this case, they obtained regular corrections from their supervisors. The corrections were in the form of WCF.

3.3. Instruments

The instruments used to collect data were semi-structured interviews and documentation. The purpose of having the interviews was to collect detailed information regarding the participants' experiences and perceptions toward WCF. As for the documentation, the researcher collected the participants' thesis which had been corrected by their supervisors. It was used to enlist any kind of WCF and then compare it with the participants' responses through the interviews.

3.4. Data collection

Several steps were undertaken in order to complete the study. First, the participants were asked to collect their thesis after their supervisors gave some written correction. Second, the researcher enlisted every written correction within the thesis. Third, the participants were interviewed by asking them several questions. In this case, the questions about their experiences and perceptions toward WCF were asked respectively.

3.5. Data analysis

This study adapted qualitative approaches to analysis (Lester et al., 2020) which consists of data reduction through coding, data display, verification and conclusion. First, the results of interviews were transcribed and organized thematically based on the

purposes of the study. The data were coded based on each category. It enabled the researcher to identify the main data. In other words, this step was done to select whether the data were included into or excluded from the analysis.

Second, the data, divided into its category, were displayed in the findings and analyzed through the deep discussion. Previous studies concerning WCF were added to the discussion. The studies were compared with the result of the current study. The researcher formulated the results of the discussion into future implications. Finally, the data were concluded based on the results of the findings and discussion.

4. Findings

This section presents the interview results in two main subsections, namely experiences in responding to WCF and perceptions towards the use of WCF. Given the various results collected in the interviews, each of the results will be divided into several groups which are of similar topics. In addition, to keep the identities of each learner as the participants whose names were not allowed to be mentioned, the researcher used the term “Learners” (L1 – L22) in the entire findings section.

4.1. EFL Learners’ responses towards WCF

Learners’ experiences in responding to WCF vary in terms of focusing on grammatical error correction, utilizing online grammar checkers, focusing on overall error corrections, reconciling with the supervisor, and ignoring grammatical error correction.

4.1.1. Focusing on grammatical error correction

One of the learners’ experiences in responding to WCF is focusing on grammatical error correction. It deals with the use of parts of speech (e.g verbs, adjectives, adverbs, nouns) within the sentence, subject-verb agreements, tenses, and vocabularies. Focusing on grammatical error correction implies that the learners only concern with correcting errors in grammar use within their written works. One of the learners (L3) stated:

When I received some corrections from my supervisor, I suddenly highlighted the use of grammar. I know my grammar is not too good. My supervisor corrects my tenses and my sentences. I want my thesis to become better and correct, so I just correct my mistakes and errors in grammar. I do it all day and I like my supervisor’s written corrections.

The learner who has a problem in using grammar accepted his supervisor’s written correction focusing on errors in using grammar. One of the strategies that L3 applied is highlighting every grammatical error correction and concerning revising the correction. The written correction seems to be more helpful that L3 believed his sentences became grammatically correct after following the supervisor’s correction. Thus, supervisor’s

comments, suggestions, or even criticisms over grammar use are expected to help the learners improve their writing. In line with L3, another learner (L6) said:

My concern is the sentences I write inside my thesis. I always think it is a good idea for a student like me to learn grammar more. My supervisor's correction is one of the choices for me to make my thesis look good. The more sentences he corrects, the more I understand how to make good sentences.

Beliefs on the supervisor's effectiveness of grammatical error correction towards thesis writing can improve learners' positive attitudes in writing. L6 believed that her supervisor's grammatical error correction allowed her to figure out the ways of using grammar properly. L6 considered that such error correction helped her improve her sentences and encouraged her motivation to learn grammar as well. This implies that learning how to use grammar properly does not only take place in grammar courses, but also during thesis writing. Regarding a particular strategy in responding to WCF, L7 has the answer. He stated:

How I respond to lecturer's corrections to my writing is simple. My lecturer corrects my sentences, my tenses, and how I build the sentences. After he corrected the elements, I responded to them quickly. I make some lists about the mistakes for each chapter. I read some grammar books because I can see many examples about the correction.

L7 used a strategy in responding to his supervisor's comments or suggestions. Errors in each chapter were identified and grouped into each kind of error such as sentence structure and tense. The use of various grammar books allowed L7 to find useful information on grammatical sentences and tenses. Enlisting the errors and comprehending the examples of using sentence structures encouraged him to revise his grammatical errors.

4.1.2. Utilizing online grammar checker

The group of learners who wrote the thesis also experienced an interesting strategy in grammatical error correction. They utilized online grammar applications to revise their sentences. One of the learners (L1) stated:

I use grammar checkers on the internet. First, my supervisor corrected my grammar error in my thesis. Sometimes, he did not give the right one. I think it is the right sentence. Second, I copy and paste to the online checker. The third is I copy and paste the right one from the internet to my thesis.

The use of online applications can be effective for some learners. L1, for example, described several steps in using the online application to revise her incorrect sentences. Such experience emerged when L1 thought that she was not knowledgeable enough to revise her writing only by following her supervisor's written correction. The use of online applications for checking grammatical errors is supposed to be an automatic process. L1

only provided texts to be checked by an online system. With L1's experience, L5 was asked by his supervisor to use an online grammar checker. He said:

My strategy is by going to a website to check my writing again. Not only that, some websites can also check our sentences and our tenses like past tense. My supervisor asked me to check my tenses using an online application. He also gave more corrections.

The difference between L5 and L1 is that L5 received a lot of written corrections from his supervisor. Moreover, his supervisor also allowed him to use an online grammar checker during his revision. L5 kept referring to both his supervisor's comments and suggestions and online grammar application.

4.1.3. Focusing on overall error corrections

Overall error corrections towards thesis writing have become tangible responsibility for supervisors. Once a thesis is proposed, every part has to wait for its turn to be corrected comprehensively. Regarding learners' experiences in responding to such error correction, L4 stated:

Because my advisor corrected everything in my thesis such as sentences, verbs, to be tenses, of course, vocabulary, then hmmm.... I have to replace all errors with the correct form. I begin from chapter one. I continue to chapter two, three, four, and five.

As stated by L4, it seems that overall error correction is an effective strategy to improve learner's writing as detailed as possible. L4 admitted that he obtained more options to revise his writing from his supervisors. Although every part of the thesis needed to be revised, L4 believed that such error correction improved his writing.

4.1.4. Reconsulting with the supervisors

Some learners need to reconstruct their thesis supervisors when they do not understand written error correction in their thesis. Two learners (L9 and L17), for example, described their experiences in consulting to their supervisors. L9 described:

I go to the lecturer's office to consult with him again. Why I do this is because I do not understand his correction he writes. I cannot read his writing. He always uses a red ink pen. At first, my friends asked me not to meet the lecturer. I forced myself to ask the parts I do not know. He is fine and he explains every mistake I make.

Another learner (L17) also described her experience:

I check every correction with my supervisor and I correct the error. I leave the corrections I do not understand. The next day, I met my supervisor to ask for an

unknown correction. I keep humble when I consult with him. He gave a detailed explanation because I am humble in asking him.

Reconsulting to the supervisor is a better strategy for those who do not understand the error correction as stated in their written work. Based on their experiences, L9 and L17 admitted that lack of understanding towards grammatical knowledge and explanation caused a problem for them to revise the thesis. Reconsulting with the supervisors helped them in explaining the error corrections. In this case, both learners believed that both written error correction and direct explanation of the errors were much helpful rather than mere written error correction.

4.1.5. Ignoring grammatical error correction

Not all learners are pleased with the use of grammatical error correction in the thesis writing. Some learners (L10 and L14) did not seem to respond to grammatical error corrections addressed to their written works. L10 stated:

I think I am not smart like my friends. I feel difficult to figure out corrections from my lecturer. I know little grammar knowledge. That is why, I do not want my lecturer to correct my grammar. I don't really like grammar. I never check correction in grammar.

L14 stated:

My first supervisor always checks the content of my thesis. This is what I like more. My second supervisor checks all grammar errors. I find it is more difficult to correct grammar than content. Sentence has many parts, subject and predicate, I do not know. I do not have an idea.

One of the learners (L10) felt that she lacked grammatical knowledge. This does not encourage her to read and revise the grammatical error correction. Another learner (L14) also believed that grammar was difficult for her as she did not understand how to construct correct sentences. Fortunately, her preference for the content allowed her to work with her thesis writing.

4.2. Preferences for utilizing WCF

This subsection presents the interview results of learners' preferences towards the use of WCF in thesis writing in terms of several topics. These include preference for focused WCF, preference for direct WCF, preference for unfocused WCF, unpreferred indirect WCF, and preference for WCF through use of technology. In addition, the interview results of both advantages and disadvantages of working with each kind of WCF integrated with both preference and unpreferred WCF.

4.2.1. Preference for focused WCF

Written correction can be focused on a specific part of writing such as subject-verb agreement, vocabulary, content, writing style, and tense. Focused WCF has some advantages such as focusing only on a specific correction and requiring less time consumption. L2, for example, stated:

I like when my supervisor marks only a particular target in my thesis. The example is parts of speech only sentence parts or constructions only, contents, or concept of the topic only. That makes me focus on a particular correction, not all correction. So, I need less time to make it better again.

L2 viewed that focused written correction was effective for her in revising her writing. Such correction allowed her to focus on one kind error correction only. This, of course, also reduced her time in the thesis revision. Another learner (L8) has a similar opinion. L8 expressed “It is nice for me to improve my thesis with one specific correction. My advisor usually checks the sentences I write. I feel it is easy to correct any mistake in sentence construction”.

L8 found it interesting in revising her writing errors as her supervisors only corrected a specific element of her writing. Moreover, such correction does not burden learners in the revision process.

4.2.2. Preference for direct WCF

Errors in writing can be directly corrected by providing some marks, lines, or other codes towards the word, sentence, paragraph, ideas in a written work. One of the learners (L5) viewed the effectiveness of direct WCF. L5 described:

Even though my supervisor marks every error he found, he always gives the correct one. I can give one example like if I use the incorrect verb, he underlines the verb and gives the correct verb. This strategy is really helpful. I can revise it by retyping it directly on my computer.

The use of direct written correction gives clear explanations to the learners during thesis revision. For L5, direct correction was really effective for her writing improvement as she was directly offered with correct forms of grammar. Another learner (L16) has the same experience.

An interesting opinion towards the use of direct WCF in error correction is described by a learner (L22). She stated:

I learn many things from written corrections from my supervisor. I did not get much knowledge in the classroom before. About grammar I mean. Now, he teaches me correct grammar. He shows me the errors I make. So good he also shows me how to improve the errors.

Some learners think that learning grammar in the classroom is not enough for their grammatical knowledge. One of the interesting ways of learning grammar is during the writing of a thesis. L22 believed that direct error correction offered some advantages for the learners. Direct WCF can be a new additional course for some learners to learn grammar. Another advantage is that learners' errors are identified and correct forms or functions are provided.

4.2.3. Preference for unfocused WCF

When a supervisor corrects every error such as grammar, vocabulary, writing style, or even content ideas without any exception, then it refers to unfocused WCF. Such kind of WCF is advantageous for some learners who expect that all parts of their written work are corrected and provided with correct forms. This kind of WCF not only identifies learners' errors or mistakes in their thesis writing, but also enables them to learn both correct and incorrect forms or functions of a word or sentence. One of the learners (L12) said:

To me, if my supervisor gives red ink to all my errors, I appreciate it. Why? I know my mistakes. Many more mistakes I have in writing. Sometimes, I am happy to see the red ink in my writing, but finally, I know the red inks are very useful.

Unfocused WCF was helpful for L12 as she was informed with her mistakes or errors. For L12, various error corrections were a burden, but such corrections became much more useful when she believed in the effectiveness of unfocused error corrections.

Other learners (L20 and L22) found it difficult to deal with unfocused WCF in their written works. It was because they obtained various error corrections such as tense, vocabulary, grammar, and writing styles. L20 described:

Yesterday, I took my thesis from my second supervisor. I found in every page I have made errors. My supervisor underlined verbs, vocabulary. He marked many sentences using various lines. He wanted me to delete some paragraphs but I do not know. Today I still type the correct forms. He suggested that to me.

Unfocused WCF enabled L20 to receive more information related to grammar use, suitable tense, and appropriate tense.

4.2.4. Unpreferred indirect WCF

One of the difficulties of some learners in revising their written works is unavailability of solutions for their errors. Some supervisors, for example, only correct errors or mistakes and delete a word, sentence, or even paragraph without providing a correct form or function for each error or mistake. This kind of WCF discourages the

learners to work with their thesis revision. One of the learners (L7) who obtained indirect WCF admitted:

My supervisors usually check my thesis with no solution. They give me solutions for one part, but no solution for another part. There is only a red line everywhere inside my thesis. It is very hard to replace errors in my thesis. They do not give which correct uses for the errors. I just put the thesis on my table.

L7 viewed that indirect WCF could not help her to revise the errors in the thesis. Some error corrections are unidentifiable, but some are identifiable. However, such unidentifiable corrections do not provide any solution for the learner to revise the thesis. In this case, error correction with its solution in term of correct forms can be effective for the learner. Another learner (L9) also described:

If we see my thesis, we will not be glad. Yes, many errors I make, but I do not understand the correction. My lecturer marks many sentences and paragraphs, but no notes. I do not know what kind of error it is. Now, I must find the correct sentence by myself.

L9 did not get any specific information about the errors in the thesis writing as the error correction did not provide a clear explanation. Such kind of WCF only consists of some lines or codes without any particular description for each error.

4.2.5. Preference for WCF through the use of technology

The use of technology has been widely experienced by learners who work with their thesis writing. Advanced technology such as computer application and the internet help the learners to deal with automatic systems that allow them to work more effectively. One of the most common computer applications for correcting errors is Microsoft Word. In this application, the Review menu offers Comments which can allow both supervisor and learner to work with error correction more effectively. A learner (L5) described her experience, as follows:

I like learning digital media, my supervisor likes learning like that too. I just sent my thesis file to his email. He gave it to me after he checked it. I just open Microsoft Word, review the menu. I read his comments in the right part. After that I revise the errors directly. I feel it is an easy way.

L5 found it effective to deal with the thesis writing through digital application. The use of email for sending a file and review menu to work with error correction from her supervisor were advantageous for her revision. She considered that such an application enabled her to read supervisor's comments and follow the comments or suggestions accordingly. Another learner (L18) described her similar experience:

All of my supervisors always use the Review menu on the computer. I think it is better than handwriting to check hmmm...mistakes, errors, bad sentences and many more. I always read their comments easily. So, easily I follow their comments when I correct my errors. Then, I delete the comments when finished.

L18 viewed that the use of the Review menu in Microsoft Word was more effective than manual error correction. Moreover, she found it easier to deal with supervisor's error correction as she was provided with direct comments and suggestions.

5. Discussion

This present study was undertaken to determine how learners apply a particular strategy in responding to WCF provided by their supervisors and how the learners view the use of WCF in their written works. Knowing the strategies used by the learners and their perceptions towards the use of WCF seems to be central to understanding of both current and future application of WCF foreign language writing. Regarding the learners' experiences in responding to WCF and perceptions towards the use of WCF, this present study reveals that the learners have their own focuses, strategies, and various views of WCF in revising their written work.

One of the preferred strategies applied by the learners is focusing on grammatical error correction. In this case, the focus in revising written work is figuring out grammatical errors and enlisting such errors. Probably, the grammatical error correction will allow them to work with subject-verb agreement, tense, and vocabulary use. The learners revise their written work by focusing on one element such as parts of speech (verb, noun, adjective, and adverb), diction, preposition, and article. This focused WCF seems to be effective in enhancing the use of appropriate grammar in their writing. This is in line with a study conducted by Heydari and Bagheri (2012) and Kim (2013) who stated that WCF focusing on grammatical error correction not only allows the learners to identify comparison between incorrect usage and correct forms, but also increases grammatical knowledge. Based on Mubarok and Budiono's (2022) research, grammatical error can be much helpful for the learners if the error is specific, selective, and systematic. Process-based writing technique helps to improve grammatical errors which lead to positive writing performance (Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022). Moreover, the findings of this current study are in harmony with several related studies (Daneshvar & Rahimi, 2014; Ellis et al., 2008; Frear & Chiu, 2015; Lee, 2020; Mawlawi Diab, 2015; Shintani et al., 2014) which claimed that focused WCF is one of the most effective strategies that increase the learners' grammatical accuracy for their writing.

The learners who revise their written work not only focus on grammatical errors, but also on all aspects of errors including vocabulary, writing style, and content ideas. This is because by receiving unfocused WCF, they will have more options to revise their written work compared to those who only receive grammatical error correction. Every part which is considered as a kind of error is corrected and marked with various codes, words, phrases, or sentences. The learners obtain more knowledge on the use of grammar

in L2 writing and the selection of vocabulary in appropriate writing contexts (Chmarkh, 2021). This is supported by the findings that overall error correction led the learners to improve their writing accuracy when they revised their written work and when they wrote new texts (Evans et al., 2011; Maleki & Eslami, 2013; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Salimi, 2015). In line with that, several related studies depicted that unfocused WCF provides both lexical and grammatical accuracy which is essential and controllable for writing revision (Kim, 2013; Mubarak & Budiono, 2022; Pakbaz, 2014; Su & Zhang, 2020).

Both focused and unfocused WCF are common for many learners. These types of WCF help them revise their written work more effectively. None of these WCF is better than the other. Probably, it depends on the supervisor's preference in correcting learners' written work such as thesis. This is in line with a number of related studies (Frear & Chiu, 2015; Nurie, 2018; Puengpipattrakul, 2020; Salimi, 2015; Sarvestani, 2015) which revealed that both focused and unfocused WCF are helpful for learners' writing improvement as it enhances grammatical accuracy in writing. Sheen et al. (2009, p.556) states that "doing writing tasks is of value by itself". This indicates that learners can get knowledgeable ideas of writing when they focus on a particular part or overall parts of writing.

Besides, WCF can be in the form of direct and indirect corrections. This present study depicted that some learners prefer direct WCF, but they disprefer indirect WCF when revising their written work. This is because direct WCF provides clear explanations including correct forms, clear explanations, practical usage, and suitable contexts. This confirms the findings stating that direct WCF is useful for increasing knowledge on several features such as particular grammatical features and contextual explanation (Mudra, 2018). However, such preference might also be caused by each learner's choice.

Another kind of error correction, indirect WCF, was considered to be more inconvenient for qualified writing revision. It is because indirect WCF does not provide detailed errors and clear explanations. This is in line with a study by Frear and Chiu (2015) who stated that indirect WCF requires learners to integrate both cognitive and metacognitive awareness with the revision of their written work. Furthermore, the present findings match with several studies (Maleki & Eslami, 2013; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Sarvestani, 2015; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022) which depicted that indirect WCF has positive effects on learners' accuracy in a long term memory. It implies that by using indirect WCF, the learners are to figure out the errors and determine the correction.

WCF can also deal with online applications on the internet in revising grammatical errors. The underlying reason is that the use of internet applications can enhance the effectiveness of reviewing error correction and thus allow the learners to revise their errors automatically. Such an application is also faster that it offers clear and step-by-step procedures to follow. The learners will have more opportunities in revising a great number of written texts. Moreover, it can also help to increase learners' understanding towards grammar usage and vocabulary. The findings of this current study is in line with a study revealing that written error correction can be done via online community

application (Kessler, 2023; Mudra, 2018). In this study, the use of such applications for giving corrective feedback has two main strengths, namely satisfaction and usefulness. Another related research investigated the effectiveness of virtual environments on learners' error corrections (Kessler, 2023; Sundari & Febriyanti, 2022). They claimed that such online application gives various benefits for the learners including permanent access, efficiency, simultaneous revision and immediacy for revising their written work.

6. Conclusion

The EFL learners experienced how to apply several strategies in responding to WCF. The strategies can be both positive and negative strategies. The positive strategies include focusing on grammatical error correction, focusing on overall error corrections, utilizing online grammar checkers and reconciling with the supervisor. In grammatical error correction, learners' focus of correction and revision is on one of the following such as verb, noun, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and articles.

Meanwhile, in overall error correction, learners' focus tends to be comprehensive in that the learners revise grammar, vocabulary, writing style, content, and ideas. Some learners utilized online grammar checkers for correcting and revising their written work. The utilization of the online application in the internet is also focused on grammatical and vocabulary error corrections. However, some EFL learners ignored grammatical error correction. The underlying reason is due to lack of understanding of grammar use and usage.

The perception consists of preference and unpreferred WCF, advantage and disadvantage, and the implication of their experiences in responding to WCF. The preference of WCF includes preference for focused WCF, preference for direct WCF, preference for unfocused WCF, and preference for WCF through use of technology. Otherwise, the unpreferred WCF includes unpreferred indirect WCF. This current study implies that the EFL learners need to learn grammar and writing more intensively. By focusing on these skills, the learners are expected to write their thesis with little correction. In addition, the codes, lines, and explanations in WCF need to be standardized so that the learners will be able to comprehend the correction in their thesis.

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