



## INDIRECT WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK (WCF) IN TEACHING WRITING

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### Abstract

Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is a type of feedback on linguistic errors without giving the correct target form. This type of feedback is recommended under the consideration that teachers are not editors, but facilitators who provide hints to assist students work on their own text. This research investigated the students' affective reactions toward indirect WCF in the process of learning writing. It was also purposed to investigate its impact on students' writing quality. The subject of the research was the first-year students of English Study Program. The method of the research was descriptive qualitative. The instruments of interview and writing assignment were deployed as the data. It was found there were positive affective reactions toward the implementation of Indirect WCF. Students thought that it was useful, helpful, motivating, corrective, and informative. Nevertheless, a few students felt that the time given was too short and demanded for more accurate and clear correction codes. It was also found that Indirect WCF helped the participant students gain better quality of their paragraph writing indicated in the significant reducing number of errors after receiving feedback. Though the most types of linguistic errors were found in the case of tenses, students were able to minimize those errors into a few.

**Keywords:** Indirect WCF, Writing, Linguistic Errors

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### INTRODUCTION

Writing has been applied in learning activities for long time and nowadays become more essential than ever. Writing is an important skill that enables people to take a part in global communication. It is a skill to encompass learning, thinking and interconnecting with others. University students who learn English as a foreign language are inevitably demanded to be able to write good English (Rachmawati, D., Juniardi, Y., & Fawziah, Z, 2018). The ability to create a good writing represents the writer's communicative skill which is not easy to be developed and achieved (Ahmed, 2010, p. 212) because to be successful in writing is not an easy task (National Assessment of Educational Progress, 2011). In other words, writing is a skill which requires a long process to obtain by students. Hence, it is the job of lectures to help students achieve the skill.

My experience when teaching paragraph writing to the first-year students of university where I work has inspired me to carry out this research. The goal of the writing course is to

provide students with writing skill at the level of paragraph development. As a writing lecturer, evaluating and assessing students' writing assignment has become the most part of my job which is quite exhausting and time consuming. Like other writing teachers, I am frequently bored with the never-ending corrections for assessment. To make it worse, most of my students are not fully aware of their weaknesses and, therefore just make a little effort to improve their writing skill.

To reach good writing quality, instructional approaches must be designed, and be effective in boosting students' writing skill (Shang, 2019). One recommendation to help students generate better writing is by providing written corrective feedback (WCF). In teaching writing, feedback session is an important part to enhance writing quality (Liu, 2018) and is also considered as an essential factor to the better writing (Megan, 2017). Hence, investigating teachers' feedback in teaching writing has educational worth.

Several researches have shown the advantages of providing written feedback on students' writing. Feedback can be effective when the students comprehend and have desire to work on the revision (Price, Handley, Millar, and O'Donovan, 2010) and in improving language accuracy (Beuningen et al., 2012), growing up critical thinking skills (Wu, Petit, & Chen, 2015), introducing learners to paragraph structure (Ho, M. C., & Savignon, S. J. (2007) and enhancing motivation (Chang, 2009).

Writing with grammatically good sentence structure has become the major problem among students. Since the quality of writing is mostly measured from linguistic point of view, giving feedback is of great importance in teaching writing. Most EFL teachers, when assessing students' writing, commonly pay attention to the three major issues. The first one refers to linguistic aspect such as tenses, word order, sentence structure, punctuation, spelling, and so on. The second is content, which highlights the logic, unity, and coherence of the writing. The third is organization which is related to how ideas are organized into a good paragraph (Ariyani, Yusefa, I., 2016). Assessment in this context relates to the process of teaching writing allowing teachers to create a corrective feedback with the purpose of facilitating and motivating students to improve their writing' performance before turning-in the task.

As the method of written corrective feedback on the linguistics elements gains much attention from researchers, this research focuses on the Indirect WCF which is a type of corrective feedback without giving the correct target form. This method is intended to give a chance to students to work on their texts without having teachers as the editors but facilitators. This research investigated the students' affective reactions toward the Indirect WCF as well as the impact of this method on their writing quality.

### **Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)**

There are two types of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) namely direct and indirect. The direct WCF assists students to identify their writing errors and teachers directly provide the correct target form. Indirect written corrective feedback (WCF), on the other hand, is a type of feedback on linguistic errors without giving the correct target form (Bueningen, V.C., 2010). Hence, it forces students to work on their own writing. This method of feedback is recommended considering that teachers are not editors, but facilitators providing only the correction codes to assist students work on their own text (Cook, 2013). Teachers point out the weaknesses and strengths in writing as well as the strategies to cope with the weaknesses assist students to know what to do with the text.

In-text marking by Cook (2013) as the corrective feedback on linguistic aspect is intended to have students identify their errors including sentence structure, words, mechanics, and so on. To provide feedback on those elements, the correction symbols for error identification are used as the guideline for both teachers and students. The correction symbols in table 1 below were given to the students in order to help them work with the feedback.

**Table.1**  
**Error Correction Symbols**

<b>sva-</b>	<i>Error in subject verb agreement</i>	<b>fused –</b>	<i>Sentence (two complete sentences fused into one).</i>
<b>wd-</b>	<i>Wordy, word not needed</i>	<b>part –</b>	<i>Improper parts of speech (article, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction)</i>
<b>wn-</b>	<i>Word needed</i>	<b>nonst –</b>	<i>Nonstandard usage (not academic English, slang)</i>
<b>awk_</b>	<i>Awkward phrase/sentence construction.</i>	<b>c-</b>	<i>Error in capital</i>
<b>run-</b>	<i>Run-on sentence</i>	<b>s/p-</b>	<i>Error in singular or plural</i>
<b>tw-</b>	<i>Improper transition word</i>	<b>v-</b>	<i>Error in verb form (passive, infinitive, to infinitive, gerund, etc)</i>
<b>cn -</b>	<i>Comma needed</i>	<b>tense –</b>	<i>error in tenses</i>
<b>co-</b>	<i>Comma omitted</i>	<b>ref –</b>	<i>wrong word reference</i>
<b>fs-</b>	<i>Full stop needed</i>		
<b>diction –</b>	<i>Poorword choice/awkward phrases</i>		
<b>frag –</b>	<i>Sentence fragment (sentence is missing subject, verb, or other parts)</i>		

Adapted from Cook, Sara (2013)

The following is an example of how the in-text indirect written corrective feedback (WCF) was given to the students in order to help them identify errors and, therefore revise the errors.

Data 4

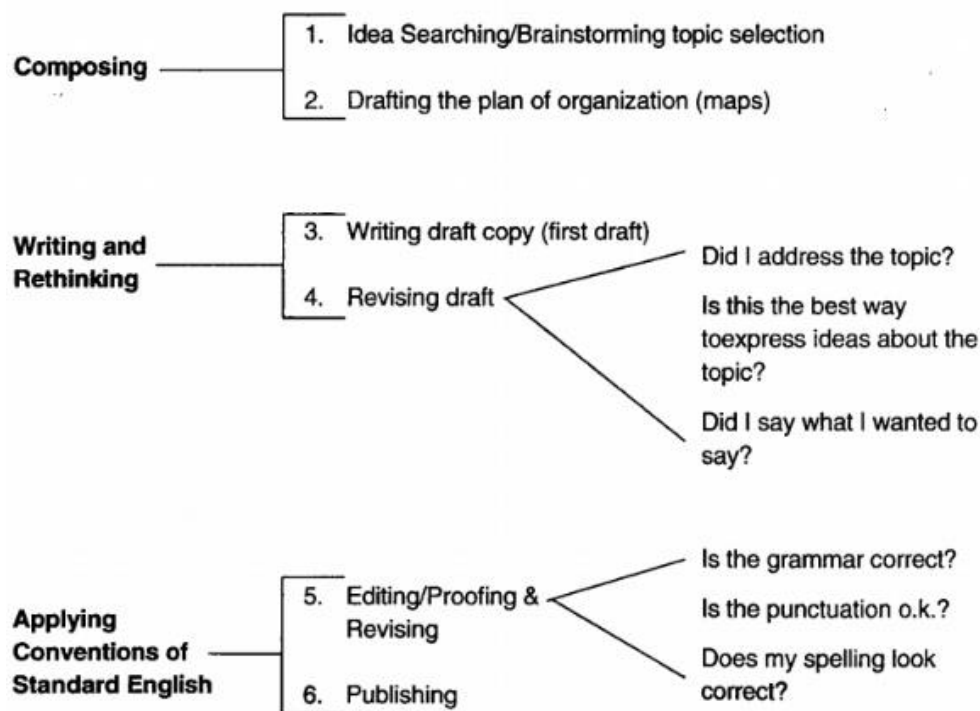
Last Sunday, <sup>co-</sup>my mother and <sup>c-</sup>i went to the traditional market. The distance from my house to the market <sup>tense-</sup>is near. We <sup>tense-</sup>were shopping <sup>parts-</sup>since 06:00 a.m until 07:15 a.m. my mother <sup>tense-</sup>buys many goods and <sup>diction-</sup>foodstuffs for making some cookies. <sup>fs-</sup>when we arrived at home, my mom <sup>part-</sup>panic! Because she <sup>tense-</sup>cannot found some plastic bag of foodstuffs <sup>frag-</sup>previous was bought. <sup>wd-</sup>And after <sup>c-</sup>my mom remembered <sup>co-</sup>some plastic <sup>s/p</sup>bag that <sup>diction-</sup>lost abandoned at the market. My mom forget to bring it because <sup>frag-</sup>really hurried. Finally, my mom <sup>part-</sup>go back to the market <sup>part-</sup>for take it, and luckily <sup>tense-</sup>its still exist there. <sup>ref-</sup>

The paragraph above contains errors in tenses, mechanics, sentence structure, spellings, and pronoun reference. The in-text corrective feedback marked the symbols of those errors. Editing for revision was assigned to the student with the help of correction codes given. This is expected to encourage students for grammatically better writing.

### The Process of Writing

As students have learned how to construct grammatically correct sentences, they must be ready to develop sentences into a paragraph. “A paragraph consists of several sentences that a writer develops about a subject. The first sentence states the specific point, or idea, of the topic. The rest of the sentences in the paragraph support that point” (Oshima, 2007). Many books of teaching paragraph writing are available provided with step by step writing guideline describing the stages as the process of generating a good writing. The following figure is the stages of writing process adapted from Cronin, Sinatra, & Barkley (2015).

Figure.1  
Writing Process



By Cronin, H. et.al (2015, p. 41)

Model of writing instructions pushes students to take a step by step going through the entire writing stages such as getting a topic, gathering information, organizing the information, writing the paragraph, proofreading, editing and revising it before finally handing it in for assignment (Hansman, Catherine & Wilson, Arthur, 2015). Teachers should know the concept of the thinking processes which include revising and editing stages. Revision stage has thing to do with clarity and figure out the text organization and arrangement of ideas, while editing and proofing concerning the standard written conventions.

Teachers are recommended to put in strategies as to lead students doing step by step writing. In other words, teachers should possess adequate knowledge of the writing process. The complexity of the writing process demands teachers’ ability to draw writing instructional design. In other words, the teaching and learning writing is designed by engaging students into a series of activities as represented in figure.1 above; getting a topic, gathering data,

organizing the data, writing, proofreading, editing and revising have been the common steps in writing activities.

### **Linguistic Features in Writing**

In many cases, article writings are rejected due to the lack of using appropriate words or sentence structures as language facilitates readers to comprehend the text. The inconsistencies in the use of language or error in linguistics may distort the meaning of the text and result in confusion in the mind of readers (Jabulani, 2015). Linguistic feature is an essential element in academic writing (Sekhar, Chandra. R, 2018), and is required to better understand writing proficiency (Witte & Faigley, 1981) as cited by (McNamara, Danielle, S., Crossley, Scott A., & McCarthy, Philip M., 2009).

In EFL writing, assessment focuses particularly in the local-level corrections of sentence complexity, grammatical accuracy, and lexical density (Shang, 2019). The quality of a text is often determined by its linguistic feature including conventional linguistic and grammatical devices which direct to a typical linguistic feature like style, word choice, word form, and punctuation (Brinker et al., 2014). Hogue (2008) put the discussion of linguistic features of a text into sentence structure, words (diction), and mechanics.

### **Research Questions**

1. What are students' affective reactions toward the Indirect WCF involved their writing activities?
2. Does the Indirect WCF give positive impact on the students' paragraph writing quality?

### **METHOD**

This research used a qualitative method. The researchers are intended to describe the a qualitative research study is classified as a descriptive study that tries to describe systematically a situation, problem, phenomenon, service or program or provides information about, say, the living conditions of a community, or describes attitudes towards an issue (Kumar, 2011, p.30). The major purpose of this study is to describe what is prevalent with respect to the implementation of Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) in teaching learning writing.

### **Participants**

The sample of the study was the first-year students of English Study Program where the researcher taught. The writer took randomly five students as the sample.

### **Data Collection**

To get information of the students' affective reactions toward the method of indirect written corrective feedback in learning writing activities, an interview was carried out. Interview is a method which has a purpose to collect or exchange the information from person to person or two or more, either face to face or otherwise (Kumar, 2011). Interview was chosen because this method was considered being able to give accurate information based on the immediate natural responses from the students engaged in the research.

To collect the data of writing quality, students were assigned to write a narrative paragraph after the explanation and practice all about aspects of writing including paragraph structure, types of sentence construction, tenses, mechanics, and cohesive devices. Those learning materials were delivered in five sequential sessions. The writing activities went through several processes; getting a topic, gathering data, organizing the data, writing the paragraph, proofreading, editing/revising and submitting the paragraph in the form of word files during

the rest of four sessions. Written corrective feedback was provided by marking the linguistic errors along with the correction symbol paper.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The following is the data of interview with the 5 sample students along with the interpretation of their statements in response to the questions dealing with the implementation of indirect written corrective feedback (WCF) by getting the key words (the words/phrases in bold) from the statements.

### Student 1

*Saya kira metode ini sangat **berguna dan memudahkan** bagi saya, karena dengan adanya WCF saya **dapat mengetahui secara spesifik** bagian-bagian mana saja yang harus di revisi dan langkah apa yang seharusnya saya ambil tanpa perlu mengubah keseluruhan teks yang sudah saya buat. Dengan adanya feedback seseorang dapat memperbaiki dan meningkatkan kemampuannya dengan belajar dari kesalahan yang sudah dilakukan dan **dapat menjadi motivasi** untuk menjadi lebih baik lagi dari sebelumnya. Namun akan lebih baik apabila ada informasi sebelumnya mengenai waktu pemberian soal dan pengerjaan agar kita lebih bisa mempersiapkan dan **tidak terburu buru** dalam mengerjakan sehingga tercipta jawaban yang baik dan benar.*

Keywords: *berguna dan memudahkan* – useful and helpful, *dapat mengetahui secara spesifik* – informative, *dapat menjadi motivasi* – motivating, *tidak terburu buru*- too short time.

### Student 2

*Saya baru sadar kalau saya banyak sekali membuat kesalahan yang tadinya saya merasa yakin tulisan saya bagus. **Menunjukkan kesalahan** saya dan saya harus memperbaiki **membuat saya berpikir keras** supaya tidak membuat kesalahan yang sama.*

Keywords: *Menunjukkan kesalahan* – informative, *membuat saya berpikir keras* – motivating.

### Student 3

*Alhamdulillah ini **memudahkan** saya. Karena, ada code yang memudahkan saya untuk mengoreksi kesalahan saya. Dan saya adalah tipe murid atau mahasiswa yang senang dengan cara take and give secara langsung yang berarti ada hubungan emosional antar pendidik dan peserta didik. Akan tetapi mungkin kode koreksi kesalahn **diperjelas** pak  
Conclusion: *helpful, colaborative.**

Keywords: *memudahkan* – helpful, *diperjelas* – less accurate

### Student 4

*Metode ini **memudahkan** karena lebih jelas letak salahnya dimana dan memudahkan kita apa yg harus diperbaiki. Saran saya **tambahkan lagi catatan** apabila dalam 1 kalimat yg banyak revisian **agar tidak bingung** dLm merevisianya, dan pemberitahuan revisi jangan mendadak.*

Keywords: *memudahkan* – helpful, *tambahkan lagi catatan* .....*agar tidak bingung* – difficult to understand .

### Student 5

*Ini sangat **berguna**, karena dalam pembelajaran writing sangat penting untuk **memberikan informasi** kesalahan hingga bisa mengasah kemampuan dalam menulis karangan atau*

*cerita, oleh sebab itu diperlukan banyak latihan dan juga feedback untuk dapat lebih memahami cara menulis yang baik dan benar. sistem pembelajaran seperti ini sudah sangat baik, tetapi mungkin dalam hal pengerjaan dan review mengenai karangan yang telah dibuat agar **diberikan waktu yang cukup** dan tidak terlalu mendadak agar kami dapat lebih teliti dalam pengerjaan nya.*

**Keywords:** sangat *berguna* – *very useful*, *memberikan informasi* – *informative*, *diberikan waktu yang cukup* – *too short time*.

The affective reactions toward the method of indirect written corrective feedback were mostly positive, with students showing that this method was useful (student 1, 5), helpful (student 1, 3, 4), motivating (student 1, 2), and informative (1, 2, 5). However, a few students also showed few negative affective reactions toward the implementation of this method during writing activities such as less accurate and difficult to understand the whole correction codes (student 3, 4). They also felt that the time given for revision was too short (student 1, 5) so that they could not work optimally in revising their writing errors.

To analyse the data of students’ writing quality, the writer conducted correction on the students’ paragraph writing with the help of e-feedback tool which can identify the errors in linguistic elements. The identification of errors found in the students’ writing is described in the table 2 below.

**Table 2**  
**Description of Linguistic Errors in Students’ Paragraph Writing before Feedback**

<b>Type of Errors</b>	<b>Data 1</b>	<b>Data 2</b>	<b>Data 3</b>	<b>Data 4</b>	<b>Data 5</b>
Subject-verb Agreement					1 error in subject-verb agreement
Fragment/awkward sentence	1 fragment sentence (missing subject)	2 awkward sentences	1 awkward sentence	-	
	1 run-on sentence 1 awkward sentence				
Words; spelling, diction, necessary and unnecessary word		2 spelling errors  1 word unnecessary  1 improper word (diction)	10 unnecessary words  1 word unnecessary  4 improper words (diction)  1 non-standard English word	3 incorrect words	5 Words unnecessary

Punctuation	1 comma not needed	2 commas needed	5 full stops needed 2 commas needed	2 commas unnecessary	3 full stops needed 2 commas needed 3 1 comma unnecessary
Capitalization	-	-	3 wrong capitals	2 wrong capitals	-
Articles		1 missing article	-	-	-
Nouns/pronouns	1 error in reference	-	1 error in plurality	-	-
Tenses	12 errors in tenses	27 errors in tenses	3 errors in tenses	6 errors in tenses	2 errors in tenses
adjectives					1 improper adjective
Verbs	1 improper gerund	-	-	-	-
Conjunction and Transition	1 improper conjunction	1 improper conjunction	-	-	-
Words					
Preposition	-	-	-	2 improper preposition	-
Total:	22	45	31	15	15

The errors were divided into two levels; sentential level and word level. Sentential level consists of subject-verb agreement, tenses, fragment, word order, punctuation, capitalization while word level describes articles, nouns, pronouns, prepositions, adjectives, adverbs, word choices, spelling, transition words as in table 3 below.

**Table 3**  
**Number of Errors in Sentential and Word Level**

Sentential Level	Number of Errors	Word Level	Number of errors
Subject-verb agreement	1	Articles	1
Tenses	51	Nouns: reference, plurality, other forms of noun	2
Fragments	6	Prepositions	2
Mechanics: punctuation, capitalization	33	Verbs; gerund, to infinitive, participle, passive form	1
Words: spelling error, diction, nonstandard English, unnecessary word, word needed	28	Adjectives	1
		Adverbs	-
		Conjunctions	2
	119		9



128 errors in both sentential and word levels were found. The cases of errors are varied in each category. The most errors made by the students occurred to the category of tenses which is 51 errors. Meanwhile, the other errors occur in mechanics 33, words 28, fragments 6, nouns, conjunctions, and prepositions each 2, subject-verb agreement 1, article 1, verb 1, and adjective 1. Further discussion of the data continues on the revision made by the students. How the WCF worked effectively on the students' writing quality was reflected on the revised paragraphs made by the students.

**Table 4**

<b>Description of Linguistic Errors in Students' Paragraph Writing after Feedback</b>					
<b>Type of Errors</b>	<b>Data 1</b>	<b>Data 2</b>	<b>Data 3</b>	<b>Data 4</b>	<b>Data 5</b>
Subject-verb Agreement	-	-	-	-	-
Fragment/awkward sentence		2 sentence fragments	-	-	-
Words; spelling, diction, necessary and unnecessary word		-	1 unnecessary word	1 improper word	-
Punctuation	5 full stops needed	1 full stop needed	-	-	-
Capitalization	-	-	-	-	1 comma unnecessary
Articles	-	-	-	-	-
Nouns/pronouns	1 improper form	1 improper pronoun		1 error in singularity	-
Tenses	7 errors in tenses	4 errors in tenses	-	1 error in tenses	
adjectives					2 errors in tenses
Verbs	1 improper participle		-	-	
Conjunction and Transition	-	-	-	-	-
Words					
Preposition	-	-	-	-	-
<b>Total</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3</b>

In the same way as before feedback, the errors identification was put into the level of sentence and word.

**Table 5**  
**Number of Errors in Sentential and Word Level**

Sentential Level	Number of Errors	Word Level	Number of errors
Subject-verb agreement	-	Articles	-
Tenses	14	Nouns: reference, plurality, other forms of noun	3
Fragments	2	Prepositions	
Mechanics: punctuation, capitalization	7	Verbs; gerund, to infinitive, participle, passive form	1
Words: spelling error, diction, nonstandard English, unnecessary word, word needed	2	Adjectives	
		Adverbs	
		Conjunction	
	25		4

Viewing the data before and after receiving the feedback, the method of indirect written corrective feedback was considered successful in facilitating the students to revise their writing into the better quality. It was indicated with the number of errors in the students' writing before feedback which reached 128 cases of linguistic errors while only 29 errors occurred after feedback as in the table below.

**Table 6**  
**Linguistic Errors Before and After Feedback**

Categories of Linguistic Errors	Before Feedback	After Feedback
Subject-verb agreement	1	-
Tenses	51	14
Fragments	6	2
Mechanics: <i>punctuation, capitalization</i>	33	7
Words: <i>spelling error, diction, nonstandard English, unnecessary word</i>	28	2
Articles	1	3
Nouns: <i>reference, plurality, other forms of noun</i>	2	
Prepositions	2	1
Verbs: <i>gerund, to infinitive, participle, passive form</i>	1	-
Adjectives	1	-
Adverbs	-	-
Conjunction	2	
	128	29

The significant decreasing number of errors in the revised version indicated that the significant impact of Indirect WCF on the students' writing quality. Though, students still made errors in a few categories, generally they could cope with the errors indicated from the gap between the total number of errors in the students' writing before and after receiving feedback.

## CONCLUSION

The researcher drew some conclusion after analyzing the entire result of data analysis as follows:

1. The students showed positive affective reactions on the implementation of Indirect WCF. It was indicated from their statements that the provided Indirect WCF was useful, helpful, motivating, and informative. Nevertheless, a few negative reactions emerged due to the limited time given to complete the revision. They also felt that the correction codes are rather difficult to understand so that they could not work optimally in revising their paragraph writing.
2. Indirect WCF gave positive impact on the student writing quality. It was indicated with the number of errors in the participant students' writing before feedback which reached 128 while only 29 errors occurred after feedback. Though, students still made errors in a few categories, mostly they could cope with the errors indicated from the significant reducing number of errors before and after feedback. The most cases of errors occurred to the tenses which after all students could reduce the errors from 51 down to 14.

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