

THE TEACHERS' BELIEFS IN TEACHER WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON THE STUDENTS' WRITING

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Abstract

Examining EFL writing teachers' beliefs is becoming an essential study since teaching is no longer being noticed merely in a behaviour term but rather as thoughtful behaviour as teachers are active, thinking decision-maker. This study addresses the teachers' beliefs in the specific teaching writing strategy that is commonly used by the teachers in Indonesia to assist students' writing, teacher written corrective feedback. It was designed as a case study surveying two teachers from a secondary school in Lampung as its respondents. This current study aims at (1) exploring teachers' beliefs in providing teacher written corrective feedback both in the explicitness and the amount of feedback, and (2) describing the factors that shape teachers' beliefs in providing written corrective feedback. The data were collected by using mixed-type questionnaire and interview adapted from Lee (2009) consisting of three items related to the beliefs in written corrective feedback, followed by the factors that shape the beliefs teachers may hold on. The findings show some underlie different beliefs regarding the explicitness and amount of teacher written corrective feedback between the teachers. However, they agreed that academic background in the secondary school and college was counted as the contributed factor that shapes their beliefs in providing written corrective feedback on students' writing. Further, teacher added practical experience when they are teaching writing as her additional factor.

Keywords: EFL Writing Instruction, Teacher Written Corrective Feedback, Beliefs, Factors

INTRODUCTION

Dealing with students' error is becoming an essential aspect in the learning second or foreign language. It may happen since many teachers feel that they should provide a correction for the students' error as a reaction for the students' effort, assist students to keep progressing in writing and justify the grade that would be given from teacher to the students (Alshahrani, 2014). They believe that providing error correction or comment as a response to their students could develop students' writing accuracy, for instance, the accuracy in lexical error and grammar, than they did not (Chandler, 2003).

Error feedback is defined as the feedback given on the students' errors provided by the agent such as teacher or other students (peer) on the students' understanding or performance aspect (Lee, 2003; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Despite the oral and peer as the sources of feedback increase lately, the teacher written corrective feedback continues to play central role in the most of the second and the foreign language classroom (Alshahrani, 2014). Nevertheless, the effectiveness of correcting students' error by using feedback nowadays is still becoming debatable issue among researchers and classroom practitioners resulting pros and cons. Pros may argue that students' writings need to be corrected as their writing process and their errors should be identified. Whereas cons, led by Truscott's controversial essay in 1996, provokes that students need to create writing mistakes as a part of their L2 learning process (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). Further, Truscott (1996) argues that error correction could be time and energy consuming for the teacher. Those are why cons believe that any kind of error correction should be abandoned.

Therefore in countering the cons statement, Ferris (1999) argues that Truscott's opinions were too impulsive and excessively given the promptly developing research evidence highlighting to the ways in which effective error correction could and does assist at least minimally several students on writing instruction, giving that it is clear, prioritized, and selective. Moreover, Chandler (2003) states that the previous research of Truscott's finding was sometimes lack of data support on the original study with the statistically noteworthy evidence. Therefore, Truscott approves the idea that has been proposed by Ferris (1999) by exploring which approaches, techniques or methods to the error correction that lead to students' development in a short or long term.

Hence in recent years, the growing research attempt to answer many questions related to written corrective feedback provided by teachers as the result of idea proposed by Ferris. However, only a few of the studies were reported investigating what present teachers' beliefs are. Beliefs are seen as the strongest factors that can predict teachers' teaching behavior (Pajares, 1992). Thus, some researchers (e.g. Borg 2006; Lee, 2009) start to identify the

importance of investigating beliefs that not only related to their influence on the teaching behavior but also for forming part of the understanding process on how teachers conceptualize their work (Richards, Gallo, & Renandya, 2001). Specifically, Icy Lee (2009) states that teachers who are willing to reflect their beliefs by identifying beliefs that do not support the students' needs could assist them to identify contributed factors toward effective corrective feedback.

In addition, mostly published written corrective feedback researches have been conducted in the L1 and L2 college context, and in the English-dominant countries especially in the USA (Icy Lee, 2014). Therefore, none of the studies conducted in Indonesia so far that has investigated teachers' beliefs regarding teacher written corrective feedback and examined the factors of those beliefs. The existing researches in Indonesian context mainly focus on the experimental study about whether corrective feedback could be an effective way to improve writing accuracy and what type of corrective feedback is more effective (e.g., Kadarisman, 2016). Therefore for fulfilling the gap, this current study is one of the limited studies trying to investigate the teachers' beliefs in providing written corrective feedback in EFL contexts in general and in Indonesia in particular. This study is important reminded that teachers in Indonesian context due to beliefs may differ across individuals as well as across contexts.

METHODS

Participants

This study has been conducted in one of secondary schools in Lampung, Indonesia. Two participants were selected to contribute to this study since they met the criteria of the chosen teacher. They consist of teachers who are teaching in a secondary school and utilise teacher written corrective feedback in their writing instruction. At the time of this study, T1 (pseudonym) has graduated from English education department and enrolled as one of master candidate at a governmental university in Lampung. She has been teaching for one-half years and using teacher written corrective feedback since her first time teaching writing. Meanwhile, the second teacher, T2 (pseudonym), has graduated from English education department at a non-governmental university in Lampung. She has been teaching English for fourteen years and utilising written corrective feedback around five to seven years.

Research Design

This current study employs a case study research design with purposive sampling of its case selection. The case study ultimately fits to this research since case study focuses on the detailed investigation of specific instance of a

phenomenon within “a bounded system over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information, and reports a case description and case-based themes” (Creswell, 2007; Kohlbacher, 2006). It guides the researcher to compressively understand and describe related case to be provided as intelligible qualitative finding. In conducting this study, T1 and T2 were given a mixed-type questionnaire followed by in-depth interview adapted from (Icy Lee, 2009).

The interview had two major parts. The first part consists of items related to the beliefs of the explicitness, and amount of teacher written corrective feedback, while the second part deals with the factors that shape their beliefs in providing written corrective feedback on students’ writing. The questionnaire data were subjected to the Likert analysis, yielding mostly descriptive data. Meanwhile, the interview data were analysed using data analysis technique by (Creswell, 2012) including preparing and organizing analysing the data, exploring and coding the data, coding to build description and themes, representing and reporting qualitative findings, interpreting the findings and validating the findings accuracy. Thus, to validate the finding’s accuracy the researcher utilised: 1) member checking to confirm the data got from the participants, and 2) triangulation of sources and technique of collecting data by exploring two teachers using mixed-type questionnaire and followed by in-depth interview. The research questions that guided this study were as follows.

1. What are the teachers’ beliefs in providing written corrective feedback?
2. What are the factors that shape teachers’ beliefs in providing teacher written corrective feedback?

FINDINGS

In the findings of teachers’ beliefs regarding teacher written corrective feedback, three themes were highlighted: (1) teachers’ beliefs in the explicitness of teacher written, (2) teachers’ beliefs in the amount for teacher written corrective feedback, and (3) the factors that shape teachers’ beliefs in providing teacher written corrective feedback.

Teachers’ Beliefs in the Explicitness of Teacher Written Corrective Feedback

In accordance with the data taken from the questionnaire, both teachers had different beliefs in the type of written corrective feedback. T1 believed in the direct corrective feedback (marking the error and provide the correct form of the error) is more effective than indirect corrective feedback. She expressed the direct corrective feedback could directly bring the students into the correct form. The given transcript below explained the way she believed in providing written corrective feedback by using direct type of feedback.

“By using written form. By giving mark like underlining or circling the students' mistake and then giving it correction.” (Int1/T1)

Conversely, T2 heavily believed in the indirect corrective feedback that is more effective than direct corrective feedback. She believed that indirect corrective feedback could build students' independence in learning process.

“I believe in indirect feedback is more effective because it can be trigger for student to think independently about their work. Of course, it is under monitor of teacher.” (Int1/T2)

In addition, T2 added the importance of using indirect corrective feedback to her students. That is because indirect corrective feedback could be a trigger for students to think more critically and analytically since it needs students' effort to seek the correct answer by themselves under the teacher' guidance. Conversely, the reason for T1 using direct corrective feedback is that she realized that her students' ability in correcting their own error were still low. She argued that her students had not on the level of analysing errors in their writing yet so that they needed help to correct their own errors. For that reason, she believed in providing the correct answer directly is the most effective way to correct students' error in writing instruction.

Teachers' Beliefs in the amount of Teacher Written Corrective Feedback

With respect to the questionnaire data, T1 and T2 held different beliefs regarding the extent of the corrective feedback. T1 believed in the comprehensive feedback or marked all of writing aspects at once (both local and global aspects) while T2 believed in the selective feedback or marked some selected writing aspects. The reason for T1 in providing comprehensive feedback strategy is that students sometimes kept repeating their error. Therefore, she kept marking and correcting all aspects to notify her students about their errors, as displayed in the following excerpt.

“Yes, it should be marked like grammar, vocabulary, idea, and mechanics. Not all, but mostly I mark them. Sometimes they repeat those mistakes not only once they write, but also tomorrow they will repeat.” (Int1/T1)

Contrariwise, T2 preferred to believe in the selective marking as it is contextualized on the learning objectives. Therefore, she planned to select the focused aspects of writing. Her reasons for believing the selective marking are keeping students to focus on selected aspects and keeping them not to feel English as a burden that leads to dislike English subject. Furthermore, she argued that marking all aspects on the students' error could be tiresome not only for the students, but also for teacher, as shown in the transcript below:

“If I teach them about diction and grammar. For example, I will only focus on those aspects. I will ignore other aspects, and it will be corrected another time. Because if teacher should give correction to all aspects, it would be tiresome. Teacher would feel dizzy, students also feel that way.” (Int1/T2)

Factors that Shape Teachers’ Beliefs in Providing Teacher Written Corrective Feedback

Anchored with the questionnaire data, T1 and T2 agreed that academic background is the factor that shapes their current beliefs. T1 obtained her feedback experience when she was on her college. Her lecturer might not teach her about what corrective feedback is and how to do it. However, her lecturer asked T1 and her classmates to do peer correction. As she stated, “I ever did that in the college but, it is usually peer feedback. So, the peer provided the feedback”. This experience made her familiar with corrective feedback. Therefore, she adapted it for her teaching writing process by changing peer feedback became teacher feedback.

Having different experience with T1, T2 had bad experience in having corrective feedback on her secondary school. At that time, her teacher provided corrective feedback comprehensively, creating a burden for her. She thought that writing assignment is a burden since so many feedback corrections coming from her teacher. As she stated in the following excerpt:

“For me, once there was an assignment then the teacher corrected it. So many errors were made, it was already burdening me. ‘There is so much to do; it turns out very complicated in English.’” (Int2/T2)

That experience finally made her think how to provide feedback correction without making students feed burden. That is by employing selective corrective feedback. Additionally, T2 mentioned that practical experience also plays a role in shaping her current beliefs. She felt that her first belief several years ago differs with her current beliefs. She stated that her first belief was employing direct corrective feedback and now it turns to indirect corrective feedback.

“I use written corrective feedback maybe around five to seven years. Compared to current practice, former I gave a mark, circled the error and gave them the correct way. Now, I just give a mark or circle, and then ask questions to trigger my students to analyse the error.” (Int2/T2)

She further understood that her students were fast to forget the given feedback and she felt that students were dependent on her when she provided the correct form of feedback directly.

DISCUSSION

Considering the aforementioned findings, it can be deduced that both teachers yielded some different beliefs regarding the type of teacher written corrective feedback. T1 heavily believed in the direct corrective feedback while T2 strongly believed in the indirect corrective feedback. The reason that this finding yielded two opposing results may be due to the different aims of teachers when selecting the appropriate type of feedback for their own students. T1, for instance, believed that her students might not come at the level of analyzing and correcting their own error yet. Therefore, she believed to select direct corrective feedback as a means to help them correct their error.

This result is actually supported by D. R. Ferris (2004), who stated that direct corrective feedback might be appropriate for beginner level of students and when the students' errors are 'untreatable', that is, when students are not able to do such self-correct. This finding is similar to the several results (i.e. I. Lee, 2003; Icy Lee, 2009) who has found that the teachers on those findings believed in the direct corrective feedback. Meanwhile, T2 believed in the indirect corrective feedback since she believed that students' should be encouraged to practice their critical and analytical thinking by letting them analyse and correct their own error. She believed that familiarizing students' critical and analytical thinking could help them build problem-solving skill that could be very important for their future. Al-Hajri & Al-Mahrooqi (2013) who say that indirect corrective feedback aims at encouraging students to analyse their error in order that they could build problem-solving skill has supported this finding. Additionally, this finding is in line with Icy Lee (2009) that shows most of the teachers on her findings believed in indirect corrective feedback type.

Teachers in this current also had contrary beliefs regarding the amount of feedback in providing teacher written corrective feedback. As stated by T1 in the data questionnaire and interview, she believed in the comprehensive feedback since her students keep repeating the error they have made. Therefore, she should correct students' error in all aspects, to remind them of the error they made. The comprehensive study in providing written corrective feedback is commonly used by L2 and EFL writing teachers as reported in the previous studies, (e.g. Icy Lee, 2009). In addition according to Icy Lee (2014), the comprehensive strategy is dominant in most EFL writing classroom which is affected by the "more is better maxim", that is, the more teachers tend to feel responsible, the more errors they would be corrected. In cons with T1, T2 believed in the selective marking as long as it is contextualized on the learning objectives. Her reason in believing the selective marking is that keeping students to focus on selected aspects and keeping them not feel English as a burden that leads to dislike English

subject. This finding also similar to the study that has been conducted by Icy Lee (2009) that finds that most of the teachers believed in the importance of applying selective marking. Ferris (in I. Lee, 2003) supports this finding by stating that “focuses on patterns of error, allowing teachers and students to attend to, say, two or three major error types at a time, rather than dozens of disparate errors”, that is when teachers believed in providing error feedback selectively. In addition, focused written corrective feedback is more manageable for both teachers and students (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Therefore, this statement might justify T2’s reason on selecting selective strategy in providing written corrective feedback.

Meanwhile as shown by questionnaire and interview data in the findings above, T1 and T2 agreed the factor that shapes their current beliefs is their academic background. Both of the teachers experienced feedback on their previous school or college even on the different form of feedback, which made them thought to use feedback correction with several modifications that fit their purpose in teaching writing currently. Moreover, T2 revealed that her practical experience for five to seven years using written corrective feedback also had contribution in shaping her current beliefs when she saw that her students might not indicate positive response when she provided direct corrective feedback. That reason could be her justification of her changing beliefs. These findings might support Borg (2006) who mentioned academic background and personal experience as two from four standing factors behind the teachers’ beliefs. This result is in accord with the study conducted by Issa (2009) who proves that teachers’ beliefs in her study are influenced by experience and knowledge.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study investigated the teachers’ beliefs in providing written corrective feedback at EFL writing. The teachers, T1 and T2, participated in the mixed-type questionnaire and in-depth interview adapted from Icy Lee (2009) to triangulate the data and enable us to get better understanding. The findings revealed that T1 and T2 held some different beliefs regarding providing written corrective. It was uncovered that T1 heavily believed in direct type of feedback while T2 believed in indirect corrective feedback. The reason for two opposing results might be due to the different aims of each teacher when selecting the type of feedback that might appropriate for their students.

Besides, T1 believed in correcting students’ error should be done comprehensively while T2 believed in marking selectively. This result might yield different beliefs since both of the teachers had their own consideration regarding the students’ need. Additionally, T1 and T2 mentioned that their beliefs came from their academic background when they were at secondary

school and college. Further, T2 added that her practical experience also contributed to her current beliefs since she was experiencing written corrective feedback around five to seven years.

While the current study contributes to the field of EFL writing and part of teacher cognition by taking into account of in-service teacher's beliefs in a natural setting, some limitations are acknowledged. The study focused on uniquely one in-service teacher working on specific context. Further, this study was done by using survey questionnaire and interview: it would be more valuable to examine how teacher's beliefs from teacher's perspective by using another additional data collection, such as journaling. This article hopefully could provide several insights as the springboard for discussion regarding the pedagogical implication as the teacher's reflection.

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