The Implementation of E-Feedback in Improving Students' Writing Quality: The Importance and Perspective

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ABSTRACT

In the digital age, where conventional methods of feedback may no longer be sufficient, e-feedback presents a modern approach that aims to provide clarity and efficiency. This study investigates the effectiveness of electronic feedback, or e-feedback, in enhancing students' writing skills. This descriptive qualitative study involved 25 students from a university in Central Kalimantan and used a diverse range of data collection methods, including open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires, observations, interviews, and analysis of student papers. Throughout ten instructional meetings, participants expressed positive feedback regarding the e-feedback method, highlighting its time-saving nature, clarity, and user-friendliness. They particularly valued the opportunity to correct their mistakes, with the use of color-coded highlights to understand different types of errors adding an engaging element to the feedback process. While the advantages of e-feedback were widely recognized, some participants noted a desire for more verbal explanations to accompany their written feedback. Overall, the findings indicate that e-feedback not only boosts students' enthusiasm and participation in writing classes but also significantly improves their writing skills.

Keywords: e-feedback, writing skills, student engagement, higher education

ABSTRAK

Di era digital, di mana metode umpan balik konvensional mungkin tidak lagi memadai, umpan balik elektronik muncul sebagai pendekatan modern yang bertujuan untuk memberikan kejelasan dan efisiensi. Penelitian ini menyelidiki seberapa efektif umpan balik elektronik, juga dikenal e-feedback, dalam meningkatkan keterampilan menulis siswa. Studi kualitatif deskriptif ini melibatkan 25 mahasiswa dari salah satu universitas di Kalimantan Tengah dan menggunakan berbagai teknik pengumpulan data, termasuk kuesioner terbuka dan tertutup, observasi, wawancara, dan analisis penulisan siswa. Selama sepuluh pertemuan, peserta memberikan umpan balik positif mengenai metode umpan balik elektronik, yang menekankan bahwa metode ini menghemat waktu, jelas, dan mudah digunakan. Mereka sangat menghargai kesempatan untuk memperbaiki kesalahan mereka, dengan penggunaan sorotan berkode warna untuk memahami berbagai jenis kesalahan membuat proses umpan balik lebih menarik. Secara keseluruhan, hasil menunjukkan bahwa umpan balik elektronik meningkatkan antusiasme dan partisipasi siswa dalam kelas menulis serta meningkatkan keterampilan menulis mereka secara signifikan, meskipun beberapa peserta menyatakan bahwa mereka ingin memberikan penjelasan yang lebih verbal untuk umpan balik tertulis mereka.

Kata kunci: e-feedback, keterampilan menulis, keterlibatan mahasiswa, pendidikan tinggi

INTRODUCTION

In the twenty-first century, both teachers and students are faced with the continuous demand to improve their learning practices, particularly in providing effective written feedback. Feedback is an important part of the learning process because it serves as a guide for by informing students about their current abilities while also motivating them to grow and improve (Orsmond & Merry, 2011). It has an important role in developing students writing since it allows them to identify their strengths and weaknesses, which can improve their academic achievement (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Through constructive criticism from teachers and peers, feedback offers valuable insights into students' linguistic errors (Ai, 2017; Norcini, 2010). Additionally, it acts as an interactive medium that facilitates self-assessment and empowers students to take control of their educational experiences. Furthermore, when used effectively, feedback can serve as a strong motivator, increasing students' enthusiasm to learn (Hyland & Hyland, 2019; Szlachta et al., 2023).

The effectiveness of corrective feedback is significantly influenced by the methods employed to deliver it. Feedback is generally categorized into two types: conventional and electronic. Conventional feedback, which is typically presented in handwritten comments on students' work, frequently comes with problems. Many students struggle to understand their teachers' handwritten notes and may not receive immediate clarification for their questions (Paltridge, 2014; Higgins et al., 2002). While students often prefer direct corrections from their teachers, they frequently face difficulties in interpreting written feedback (Wiggins, 2012; Hyland, 2003). This disconnect can lead to dissatisfaction with the feedback provided and hinder students' progress due to ineffective revisions (Hattie &

Timperley, 2007). Studies have shown that effective feedback strategies, especially those involving direct corrective feedback, can significantly enhance students' vocabulary accuracy and overall writing performance (Bitchener et al., 2005; Binglan & Jia, 2010; Shirazi & Shekarabi, 2014; Elhawwa et al., 2018). However, teachers' and students' perceptions of corrective feedback often differ significantly (Topping, 2010; Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Conventional methods are sometimes viewed as time-consuming and can frustrate students when feedback is unstructured or ineffective (Higgins et al., 2002).

However, the introduction of electronic feedback has the potential to help many of these issues. By using digital or electrical tools, teachers can identify errors and provide hyperlinks to resources that demonstrate correct usage, thus making the feedback process more dynamic and engaging (Saadi & Saadat, 2015). Researchers like Sain et al. (2013) and Shang (2019) assert that this innovative approach enhances the effectiveness and interest of feedback, which meets the evolving needs of students.

The rapid development of technology necessitates the integration of computer-based feedback into writing instruction, with researchers increasingly investigating how these tools influence writing proficiency (Chun et al., 2016; Yeh & Lo, 2009). E-feedback, in particular, empowers teachers with immediate tools that help students self-assess and correct their writing errors, which fosters greater independence in the learning process (Ellis 2009). The accessibility of electronic feedback through platforms such as email and Microsoft Word makes it easier for students to engage with the feedback, they receive (Nobles & Paganucci, 2015).

E-feedback therefore not only improves the feedback process but also gives students a

sense of independence while enhancing the educational experience. This approach encourages students to actively engage with the feedback they receive, thus improving their critical thinking and problem-solving skills in writing tasks. As students use electronic tools to guide their revision, they become more engaged in their writing processes and contribute to their overall academic success.

Finally, this study aims to investigate the significance and perspectives of using e-feedback in improving students' writing skills. By examining the advantages and disadvantages of different feedback methods, particularly the transition from conventional to electronic methods, we seek to better understand how the feedback process can be optimized to achieve better learning outcomes. The findings of this research will contribute to the ongoing conversation about effective writing instruction and the crucial role of technology in shaping educational practices in the 21st century.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study used a descriptive qualitative research approach to investigate electronic feedback (e-feedback) in writing instruction among first-semester computer science students at a university in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia, during the academic year 2020/2021. Descriptive research is defined by Ary (2014) as an investigation that seeks to explain the nature, occurrence, or distribution of variables without manipulation, which makes it an appropriate framework for this investigation. Initially, the study included a sample of 30 students; however, connectivity issues and inconsistent electricity in their communities reduced the number of final participants to 25 during the 10-week research period.

Data collection involved a comprehensive strategy employing four primary instruments: online interviews, classroom observations, analysis of student's written work, and both open-ended and closed-ended questionnaires. The online interviews facilitated the collection of qualitative data from both students and lecturers regarding their experiences and perspectives on e-feedback. Classroom observations provided valuable insights into the practical implementation of e-feedback in writing classes, focusing on the lecturer's teaching strategies and the level of student engagement throughout the process.

To gain a comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes toward e-feedback, the study used questionnaires that were specifically designed to be clear and accessible for participants. Adapted from Chen et al. (2016), these questionnaires were divided into two sections and translated into Indonesian, the students' native language, to enhance comprehension. The first section collected demographic information, such as the students' names, academic programs, semesters, and gender. The second section consisted of eight items that assessed students' perceptions of various aspects of grammar instruction and e-feedback, using Likert-type scale responses ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree," as well as definite options regarding their feedback preferences. In addition to the questionnaires, semi-structured interviews were conducted using five key questions that examined the importance of grammar skills for writing, perceived benefits of e-feedback, preferred types of feedback, actions taken after receiving feedback, and preferences for direct versus indirect feedback. The transcriptions of these interviews gave valuable qualitative data about students' perspectives and attitudes toward the e-feedback process.

The quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics, which helped summarize overall trends in students' perspectives and preferences. In contrast, the qualitative data from the interviews were processed interpretively, allowing for deeper insights that connected the quantitative findings to participants' narrative descriptions. This thorough analytical approach facilitated a deeper understanding of how e-feedback influences students' writing skills and their overall academic experiences.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The study investigated online corrective feedback (e-feedback) in a writing course designed for first-semester computer science students at a university in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. In the academic year 2020/2021, classes met once a week for ninety minutes, excluding the independent writing task students were required to complete. From the very beginning of the course, students were informed that their writing instruction would follow a process-based approach, which included planning, drafting, revising, and producing a final draft. Each week, students submitted drafts reflecting their progress, which the lecturer reviewed and provided various types of feedback, including comments, questions, and markings such as cross marks and underlines. This feedback was given both in written form on students' papers and orally during online sessions.

When students had difficulty understanding the correct forms of language, content, or organization, the lecturer provided clarifications via text messages via WhatsApp or email. Students then revised their drafts based on the feedback received and resubmitted the documents along with their original drafts, which helped the lecturer assess the effectiveness of e-feedback. The course included basic writing concepts such as paragraph organization, the writing process, and practical exercises in various genres, including descriptive, narrative, expository, and persuasive writing. The final assessment was based on a portfolio that included the final draft and all previously corrected drafts.

Based on the interview conducted with the lecturer, it was concluded that the lecturer was well-prepared to implement online corrective feedback in the writing class. The lecturer carefully organized lessons provided timely, detailed feedback via email, and frequently highlighted issues with Microsoft Word's "New Comment" feature. Students were typically expected to revise their drafts multiple times, often between two and four revisions, depending on the quality of their writing and cognitive competencies. In addition, the lecturer's encouragement for online consultations created a supportive learning environment. The lecturer's feedback was described as constructive and important for improving students' writing skills, and both the instructor and the students had positive attitudes toward this approach.

Based on the interview done with eleven students, the researcher found that those eleven students responded positively to the implementation of online corrective feedback in the writing class. The students emphasized that the online corrective feedback was easy to understand and that it significantly improved their revision process. They appreciated the detailed comments, consultations, and highlights that helped them identify their errors. For clarity, errors were color-coded as follows: grammar issues (green), spelling errors (red), unclear ideas (blue), and inappropriate word choices (yellow).

The researcher observed that this attitude was also expressed in classroom observations,

where students were highly engaged and enthusiastic about the writing course. Notably, 92% of the students were active participants in lessons, demonstrating their positive attitudes toward the feedback process, despite occasional difficulties in interpreting feedback colour coding and addressing various error types.

Discussion

The study aimed to investigate the implementation of online corrective feedback in the writing class with an emphasis on its importance and the perspectives of both students and the lecturer. The lecturer's preparation and attention to the student's needs were critical in creating a productive learning environment. By using detailed lesson plans and responding quickly to student submissions, the lecture created a supportive environment in which students were encouraged to improve their writing through iterative revisions. Different feedback modalities such as color-coded highlights for grammar, spelling, clarity, and pronunciation problems were particularly effective. Lee (2005) found that clear and accessible feedback helps students to understand and apply suggestions effectively.

Specifically, the study highlights the different feedback times required for different types of writing difficulties faced by students. Students who had fewer problems such as grammar or spelling errors generally needed revisions only once, whereas students with significant rewriting challenges due to idea organization required multiple revision cycles. This finding supports earlier research by Yunus & Chien (2016), which indicated that organizing ideas can represent a significant challenge for learners. Furthermore, the results showed that six out of 25 students required four revisions

due to significant issues with clarity and diction. To further assist these students, the lecturer emphasized the importance of verbal explanations and online consultations, recommending a responsive strategy that promotes better understanding and retention of writing concepts.

Finally, the students expressed a particularly high level of satisfaction regarding the implementation of online corrective feedback, with 93% acknowledging the usefulness of the color-coded feedback system and 94% confirming its effectiveness in improving their writing skills. This positive response is in line with the findings of Fithriani (2017), who emphasized that constructive feedback can encourage critical thinking, promote independence, and mainly improve writing quality. As observed, the increase in student engagement and interest underscores the importance of interactive, supportive teaching methods in shaping students' overall writing experience and confidence.

Lavolette (2015) additionally argued that accurate feedback, when delivered correctly, can significantly impact students' writing skill. Earlier contributions from Mubaro (2012) and Wijayanti et al. (2015) also highlight that consistent written feedback improves students' grammatical accuracy through regular practice. The end-of-course assessments revealed that 90% of the students achieved high scores, while the students' feedback indicated a strong interest and enthusiasm toward the writing course, reflecting the lecturer's role in motivating and convincing students of the value of learning to write. This complements the findings of Fong et al. (2014), who emphasize that effective feedback is integral to enhancing students' self-esteem, suggesting that more frequent feedback correlates with reduced writing errors.

CONCLUSION

Finally, after ten sessions of implementing various types of electronic feedback, it is obvious that all participants had positive attitudes toward how online corrective feedback improved their writing skills. Students highlighted the e-feedback method, the clarity of the lecturer's comments, and the value of online consultations. The use of color-coded highlights to indicate various types of errors was especially effective in increasing student motivation and engagement, resulting in an active learning environment.

This study also emphasizes the importance of educators remaining adaptable and responsive to the unique needs of their students, particularly those who face more difficult writing challenges. By encouraging clear communication and providing iterative feedback, lecturers can significantly improve student writing outcomes. Future research may consider the long-term effects of online feedback on student writing development, along with other technological tools that can improve the writing process. Overall, the positive responses to online corrective feedback point to an opportunity to improve writing instruction and develop student skills in an increasingly digital educational environment.

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