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## PROCEEDINGS

*English Language Curriculum Development:  
Implications for Innovations in Language Policy and Planning,  
Pedagogical Practices, and Teacher Professional Development*



ENGLISH EDUCATION DEPARTMENT  
TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION FACULTY  
SEBELAS MARET UNIVERSITY

**BOOK 2**



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## STUDENTS' NOTICING OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON WRITING (Case Study for Low Learners)

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**Abstract:** This study investigated low-proficient students' notices towards teacher's indirect corrective feedback that focused on lexis, grammar, and content. Observation on the students' noticing towards the revised versions of the essay and interviews to six subjects were conducted to reveal the phenomena. This study revealed that low-proficient students were weak in noticing errors, failed to recall their knowledge, tended to make unintended changes in processing the feedback, guesses the problem, reordered the sentence, rephrased the sentence structure by using simpler words, and avoided the use of the complicated words, and removed the idea when they got difficulties in revising the sentence.

**Keywords:** *Noticing, Corrective Feedback, Writing*

In an L2 writing classroom, students often make occasional errors on some language aspects, i.e., grammar and lexis. In response to this matter, teachers occasionally provide corrective feedback (CF) prior to the students' errors in writing. The underlying assumption for giving CF is that it supposes to help students notice their errors and, subsequently, produce the correct forms. Based on teaching practices the researcher's own experience, a series of questions are frequently posed by colleagues whether all the students noticed the CF given. Importantly, the researcher was also curious on how students process the feedback she provided.

Formerly, feedback on written production becomes the hot issue in SLA since Truscott (1996) initiated a debate over the effectiveness of error correction. He strongly argued that, contrary to its commonly perceived, error correction is actually ineffective and even harmful for the students' writing. Contrary to the Truscott's idea, Ferris (1999) advocated that feedback is beneficial for students to improve the quality of their writing. It is confirmed that students who are given corrective feedback have greater self-correction abilities than those who get no corrective feedback.

To date, although some recent studies reveal that corrective feedback can be effective (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Sheen, 2007), extensive reviews of the available empirical research conclude that the findings about the efficacy of corrective feedback are mixed and thus inconclusive (e.g., Hayland & Hyland, 2006; Russell & Spada, 2006; Truscott, 2007). The contradictory findings may be attributed to some critical factors and variables being overlooked or underplayed, and that one of these variables may be students' preferences and noticing strategies. In most of the research studies, the subjects are perceived as passive receivers of corrective feedback, presupposing a direct feedback-effect relationship (e.g., Bitchener, Young and Cameron, 2005; Chandler, 2003; Polio, Flek and Leder, 1998; Sheppard, 1992), but in fact it seems that students have their own unique beliefs about corrective feedback and that, based on these beliefs, they have developed a set of strategies to notice the feedback.

Schmidt (1990) defines noticing as subjective experience and one's ability to report such experience. In this point of view, noticing entails a certain level of awareness, and such awareness is necessary for language learning to take place. As a conscious process, noticing may enable students to carry out a comparison of what they have learnt in the input and what they can actually produce on the basis of their current interlanguage systems (Cross, 2002). This process, known as noticing the gap, has been asserted as an essential step of second language acquisition in which noticed discrepancies can prompt interlanguage restructuring by kicking off a process of comparison and integration (Gass, 1988). However, the question on to what extent students use noticing strategy remains unclear. This is due to the fact that students' noticing is regarded as an internal process and cannot be observed directly. It requires a high degree of inference from observation of behavior (Schmidt, 1990).

This study attempted to explore in greater depth on how low-proficient students (henceforth abbreviated LPSs) noticed the gap between their incorrect forms and the target language forms given by the teacher. Particularly, this present study was aimed at examining the noticing strategies used by the student in processing indirect corrective feedback. In this study, the term noticing was defined as the process of attending consciously to linguistic features in the input, while a noticing strategy was defined as the way how students noticed and responded to a mismatch or gap between some aspects of language.



## Methods

This study is qualitative in nature. Two methods of data collection were used for data collection: observation on the subjects' composition and in-depth interviews with the subjects. To get the valid data, this study employed two observers. First, subjects were required to write a 750-words argumentative. Afterwards, the lecturer provided indirect corrective feedback focused on the three aspects of language: lexis, grammar, and content. Then, the subjects were assigned to diagnose and correct the errors. To trace the evidence of subjects' noticing and their strategy in noticing of the corrective feedback, the researcher and a colleague analyzed the subjects' revision and compared it with the teacher's feedback. The interviews were intended to identify the subjects' noticing strategies they actually used upon receiving the corrective feedback. Six subjects were individually asked to describe in their own words how they had experienced the corrective feedback they had received.

## Findings and Discussions

In most cases, the low-proficient subjects (LPSs) seemed to face difficulties when they processed the indirect corrective feedback that was especially related to contents. Most of them found it difficult to resolve the error in this aspect as they did not know which part was weak or needed to be revised. They had no exact clue to help them process the feedback. In addition, due to the lack of knowledge in grammar and lexis, most of the feedback in these two aspects was also not successfully resolved. In other words, most of the low proficient subjects had difficulties to optimize their noticing strategy in processing the indirect corrective feedback. The example below describes how the subject noticed the teacher's indirect corrective feedbacks towards grammar.

Teacher's Feedback : They just teach the students so<sup>(g)</sup> go home in the last  
time of class<sup>c</sup> ( unclear sentence, I don't get the point! may you  
change the underlined phrase!)

Student's Correction: They just teach the students and back in finishing  
time

The excerpt shows that the subject had two errors in grammar and content. The teacher underlined the phrase "so go home in the last time of class" to indicate that the subject made a grammar error. The error made the sentence meaningless. The subject actually wanted to say that teacher's job was relatively simple since the teacher was only in charge of teaching. Then, he was free to go home after the class was over. However, the way the subject expressed this message was not clear. After feedback was given, the subject knew the error and changed the sentence by adding the conjunction "and", but she still missed the verb in the second phrase. When it was crosschecked in the interview, the subject claimed that she knew she had made an error, but she did not know what the correct one was. However, she did the revision because the teacher had put an underline in the sentence. She said that when noticing the error errors, she preferred to change all the words rather than corrected the error being indicated because replacing the whole words was easier for them than correcting the error indicated. It can be concluded that the subject had less noticing in the area of grammar. She did not want to think hard with the error. Further, after receiving the feedback, the subject made only a minor change on the content. She tried to simplify her thought by dividing the original sentence into two more specific ideas. The result of interview also supported this analysis. She knew that the sentence was poorly constructed, but she did not know which part should be corrected since the teacher only gave a sign of feedback tallied out of the margin.

The example excerpt below shows how the subject rewrote her sentence based on an indirect corrective feedback given by the teacher in the aspect of lexis.

Teacher's feedback : If<sup>v</sup> teacher mastery<sup>(1)</sup> all of those elements,  
he<sup>v</sup> easier to teach and know the best  
element<sup>(1)</sup> will to teach their<sup>(1)</sup> students.

Revised version : If the teacher have all of those elements in  
her/his own self, he/she can teach the students  
effectively and know the best way to teach the  
students

The revised version in excerpt above shows that subject failed to resolve the problem concerning the word "mastery". However, she was successful to resolve other two cases "the best element" and "their". In the first case, the subject failed to change the word "mastery" into "master". She then tried to replace it with the word "have", but "have" did not agree with the subject.

The data on the excerpt below is used to analyze how the subject noticed the indirect corrective feedback given by the teacher in the aspect of contents.



Teacher's Feedback : They just teach the students so<sup>(g)</sup> go home in the last  
time of class}<sup>c</sup> ( unclear sentence, I don't get the point! may you  
change the underlined phrase!)

Student's Correction : They just teach the students and back in finishing  
time

In the sentence above, the subject faced the problem with the clarity of the content. From the revision she made "They just teach the students and back in finishing time", it was obvious that formerly the subject tried to understand the feedback attentively. She tried to revise the sentence although the revision was still poor. She admitted she got difficulties to convey her idea using a good sentence structure. She just tried to rewrite the sentence by using more simple words without paying attention to the grammar.

### Conclusion and Suggestion

In a broader sense, this study has taken into account some evidence of the crucial role of noticing in processing indirect corrective feedback in writing as Schmidt (1990) points out. Noticing is a device that facilitates students to analyze errors on their own based on the feedback they receive. Noticing encourages students to be aware of the gaps or mismatches that exist and to reinforce them to use their own strategies, i.e., using comparison, connection, analysis, assumption, inquiry and so forth.

The findings, however, reveal that the subjects tended not to show all of the aforementioned strategies consistently. They seemed to ignore or make an unintended change in processing the corrective feedback. The student had less noticing towards errors and mostly failed to recall their knowledge. They tended to guess the problem, reordered the sentence, and rephrased the sentence structure by using simpler words and avoiding the use of the complicated words. They also preferred to remove the idea when they got difficulties to make correction. Shortly, the quality and quantity of subjects' noticing in processing the indirect corrective feedback depended much on their own language ability and prior knowledge.

Since noticing is crucial for processing the corrective feedback in writing, it is suggested that teachers increase the quality of students' noticing strategy, i.e., by involving the students in such collaborative writing activity with the teacher, peers, or groups.

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**Biodata**

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