Teacher Feedback and Student Writing Improvement in EFL Classrooms: A Longitudinal Study

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Abstract *In English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts, teacher feedback is pivotal in facilitating student writing development. However, limited longitudinal research has explored how sustained feedback practices influence student improvement over time. This study aims to investigate the impact of teacher feedback on student writing performance in EFL classrooms, with a focus on the progression of writing skills throughout an academic year. Employing a longitudinal research design, this study followed 60 English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students from a secondary school in Indonesia over two consecutive semesters. Data were collected through student writing samples, teacher feedback forms, and semi structured interviews. A mixed-methods approach was used: quantitative data were analyzed using repeated-measures ANOVA to assess changes in writing scores. In contrast, qualitative data from interviews were coded thematically to explore student perceptions of feedback. Findings indicated a statistically significant improvement in student writing performance over time, particularly in coherence, vocabulary usage, and grammatical accuracy. Students reported that timely, specific, and formative feedback contributed to their writing development. Furthermore, dialogic teacher feedback (i.e., allowing for student response and reflection) had a more substantial impact than solely corrective feedback.*

Keywords: *teacher feedback, student writing improvement, EFL classroom, longitudinal study, formative assessment, feedback perception*

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1. Introduction

Writing in English as a foreign language (EFL) requires a nuanced understanding of linguistic structures, a comprehensive vocabulary, and the ability to organize ideas logically and cohesively. In practice, EFL students often struggle to develop writing that meets academic standards, particularly in terms of text organization and grammatical accuracy (Hyland, 2019; Richards & Renandya, 2002; Nation, 2009). This problem is exacerbated by the limited learning time in class and the lack of consistent writing practice in formal learning environments (Astuti, 2017; Sukyadi & Mardiani, 2018; Mistar et al., 2020).

To improve the quality of student writing, the role of teachers in providing feedback has been recognized as one of the most effective pedagogical strategies. Consistent and constructive feedback has been shown to help students revise their writing and understand their mistakes (Lee, 2017; Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ellis, 2009). Amid the demands of the national curriculum, which emphasizes formative assessment and competency based learning, the effectiveness of teacher feedback is an important aspect that warrants further study (MoEC, 2021; Sadler, 2010; Carless, 2006).

Theoretically, different types of feedback have been classified in the literature, including direct and indirect, as well as corrective and formative feedback. Direct feedback is considered to provide faster improvement on linguistic aspects, whereas indirect feedback contributes to student metalinguistic awareness (Ferris, 2006; Ellis, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Research also shows that students benefit more from specific and continuous feedback than from generic and one way feedback (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Shintani et al., 2014; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). An initial study of 60 high school students in West Java showed consistent improvement in writing scores after receiving three types of incremental feedback.

Table 1. Average Writing Score of EFL Students After Feedback

Writing Session	Average Score	Feedback Type
First Task	62.4	General Corrective
Second Task	70.1	Specific Corrective
Third Task	78.7	Corrective + Reflective

The table above presents the average writing scores of students across three writing sessions, each associated with a different type of feedback. The scoring was based on a standardized rubric that assessed key components of academic writing, such as organization, coherence, grammar, vocabulary, and task achievement. Each task was graded on a scale of 100 points.

In the first session, students received general corrective feedback, which included broad comments such as "check your grammar" or "improve your structure" without pointing to specific errors. This group had the lowest average score of 62.4. In the second session, students received specific corrective feedback, where instructors identified particular errors and suggested corrections (e.g., underlining incorrect verb tenses and providing alternative forms). This led to an improved average score of 70.1.

The third session combined corrective feedback with a reflective component. Students were informed of their errors and encouraged to reflect on their writing choices and revise their drafts accordingly. This most effective approach resulted in the highest average score of 78.7. The reflective element may have contributed to deeper learning, as students engaged more actively in the revision process and internalized writing principles more effectively.

Several previous studies have made significant contributions to understanding the impact of feedback on writing learning, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. Ferris (2010) demonstrated that direct feedback offers short term benefits, whereas indirect feedback is more effective in fostering long-term linguistic awareness. Hyland and Hyland (2006) underline the importance of interpersonal aspects in the feedback process. Other Southeast Asian studies, such as

Srichanyachon (2012) and Nguyen (2013), have found that student perceptions of feedback significantly influence their responses when revising their writing.

While these studies findings provide important insights, most are cross sectional and do not consider long term changes in student performance (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Evans et al., 2010; Storch, 2010). Moreover, few longitudinal studies in Indonesia focus on how teacher feedback affects EFL students writing skills over time (Sukyadi & Mardiani, 2018; Mistar et al., 2020; Wahyuni, 2021). This raises the need for studies that can track the process of writing development systematically and contextually.

This study offers a longitudinal approach by combining quantitative data from student writing scores and qualitative data from interviews to provide a thorough understanding of the effectiveness of teacher feedback. The novelty of this study lies in the integration of a blended approach as well as the focus on reflective and dialogic feedback practices in the context of writing classes at the secondary school level (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Dörnyei, 2007; Yin, 2018). Thus, this study fills a gap in the literature and provides practical recommendations for teachers and policymakers.

The main purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which teacher feedback influences the development of EFL student writing skills over an academic year. In addition, this study aims to understand how students make meaning of the different types of feedback provided and how they respond to the revision process based on that feedback (Lee, 2017; Carless & Boud, 2018; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

2. Method

This study employed a mixed methods, quantitative and qualitative approach with a longitudinal design. This approach was chosen to holistically capture the dynamics of EFL student writing development over the course of one academic year. Specifically, the research design used was a convergent parallel design, in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously but analyzed separately and then interpreted integratively (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018; Dörnyei, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004).

The population in this study was all grade XI students in one of the public high schools in Bandung City who took English as their subject. A purposive sampling technique was used to select the research sample, taking into account the teachers' willingness to provide continuous feedback. The final sample consisted of 60 students from two classes taught by the same teacher, ensuring consistent learning treatment (Fraenkel et al., 2012; Cohen et al., 2018; Sugiyono, 2017).

Furthermore, these two classes were comparable in academic level and demographic background, making them suitable for controlled observation. The

selection was also based on logistical feasibility, as the study required close coordination and sustained observation over multiple writing sessions.

Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge that selecting only two classes with 60 students may affect the generalizability of the findings. While the choice was methodologically justified to maintain internal validity, the limited sample size and single school context may not fully represent the broader population of grade XI students. As a result, the findings should be interpreted cautiously, and further studies involving more diverse samples are recommended to validate and extend the conclusions.

The research instruments consisted of three main types: (1) an academic writing rubric based student writing scoring sheet (analytical scoring rubric), (2) a teacher feedback documentation format classified by type (direct, indirect, corrective, formative, and reflective), and (3) a semi structured interview guide to explore student perceptions of the feedback received. Instrument validity was assessed through expert judgment and content validation, while rubric reliability was evaluated through interrater reliability testing between two independent raters (Ary et al., 2010; Brown, 2007; Creswell, 2012).

Data collection techniques included collecting student writing three times over a two semester period, documenting teacher feedback on each writing cycle, and conducting interviews with ten students purposively selected to represent high, medium, and low performance levels. All data were collected in the context of routine learning to maintain the naturalness of the intervention (Marshall & Rossman, 2011; Patton, 2015; Yin, 2018).

The research procedure was divided into three primary cycles. At the beginning of the semester, students were asked to write a first argumentative text without any special intervention. The teacher then gave general corrective feedback. Two months later, students wrote a second text, where the feedback was specific and included supporting comments. In the third writing, students received reflective feedback and were asked to reflect on and discuss the feedback with the teacher. Each writing cycle lasted 4 to 5 weeks. Interviews were conducted after the third cycle (Miles et al., 2014; Creswell, 2012; McMillan & Schumacher, 2010).

Data analysis techniques were conducted separately for quantitative and qualitative data. Student writing scores were analyzed using repeated measures ANOVA to examine the significance of changes in performance over time. Before the analysis, normality and sphericity assumption tests were conducted to ensure statistical validity (Field, 2013; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

The two selected classes were comparable regarding student general English proficiency levels, as determined by prior academic records and preliminary assessments. This similarity was a crucial criterion in the sampling process, aimed at minimizing variability unrelated to the treatment and ensuring that any observed

changes in performance could be attributed more confidently to the type of feedback provided, rather than initial differences in student ability.

Furthermore, the same teacher taught the classes using similar instructional methods and curricular content. This was a deliberate methodological choice to maintain consistency in teaching style, classroom management, and feedback delivery throughout the study. Selecting only two classes also allowed for more manageable implementation of continuous feedback and closer monitoring of student progress over multiple sessions, which would have been more difficult with a larger or more varied sample.

Meanwhile, qualitative data from student interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis techniques outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). This process included transcribing the interviews, systematically coding the data, and identifying emerging themes related to student perceptions and experiences. Finally, the results of both quantitative and qualitative analyses were combined to explore the alignment between students' self-reported perceptions and their actual writing performance outcomes.

3. Result & Discussion

Development of EFL Student Writing Skills over Time

Analysis of the student writing scores showed a significant improvement from the first to the third task. The mean score increased from 62.4 in the first task to 70.1 in the second and 78.7 in the third. The repeated measures ANOVA test showed significant results at the $\alpha = 0.05$ level ($F(2,118) = 37.82$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the gradual provision of feedback had a tangible impact on the development of student writing skills (Field, 2013; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Gravetter & Wallnau, 2017).

The most notable improvements were seen in cohesion and paragraph structure. In the first task, most students wrote paragraphs that were not logically organized, but the argumentation structure significantly improved in the third task. This finding aligns with the research results of Hyland (2003), Ferris (2010), and Bitchener & Knoch (2010), which suggest that continuous feedback can help students organize their ideas systematically.

The data also showed significant improvements in academic vocabulary and grammatical accuracy. This supports the theory proposed by Nation (2009), Ellis (2009), and Hinkel (2011) that exposure to corrective feedback enriches students linguistic awareness in the use of more complex language structures. This finding reinforces the urgency of using feedback not only as a correction tool but also as a linguistic development strategy.

Table 2. Average Score of Writing Aspects in Three Cycles

Assessment Aspect	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3
Coherence & Cohesion	63.2	71.8	80.1
Grammar	60.5	67.9	76.3
Academic Vocabulary	62.8	70.2	78.6
Argumentation Structure	61.1	69.7	79.0

Source: Primary data analysis by researchers (2025)

The consistent improvement in scores also reflects that students can correct their mistakes when given time, clear instructions, and appropriate feedback. This supports the findings of Chandler (2003), Van Beuningen et al. (2012), and Storch (2010), who assert that feedback interventions provided over multiple cycles produce a more substantial impact than single interventions.

Effectiveness of Teacher Feedback Types

The types of feedback used in this study include general corrective, specific corrective, and reflective feedback. Reflective feedback was shown to be the most effective, facilitating interaction and discussion between teachers and students. This supports the dialogic feedback theory proposed by Carless & Boud (2018), Nicol (2010), and Sadler (2010), which emphasizes the importance of two way communication in the feedback process.

Students reported that feedback accompanied by questions or invitations to reflect motivated them to revise their writing more seriously. In addition, they felt they had a better understanding of where their mistakes were and how to correct them. This finding aligns with studies by Lee (2017), Hyland & Hyland (2006), and Ferris (2006), which suggest that student perceptions of feedback significantly influence the effectiveness of the revision process.

In contrast, general corrective feedback in the first task was seen as less helpful because it was too broad and nonspecific. This finding aligns with the results of Shintani et al. (2014), Evans et al. (2010), and Bitchener & Ferris (2012), who reported that ambiguous feedback tends to be ineffective in supporting writing improvement. On the other hand, reflective feedback used in the third task appeared to be the most effective in enhancing student writing performance. This may be attributed to several key elements of the reflective feedback process. First, the feedback was often delivered through open ended questioning, encouraging students to think critically about their writing choices. Second, discussions between the teacher and students were more frequent and interactive, providing opportunities for clarification and deeper engagement with the feedback. Third, the teacher's responses were corrective and

exploratory, prompting students to consider alternative approaches and take ownership of their revisions.

These elements likely contributed to students' increased awareness of writing strategies and their ability to self-regulate their learning. Therefore, the effectiveness of reflective feedback may lie not just in identifying errors, but in fostering metacognitive engagement, helping students understand the 'why' behind the correction, not just the 'what'.

Differences in perceptions of feedback types also suggest that the effectiveness of feedback is determined not only by its content, but also by the way it is delivered and the learning context. Thus, teacher training in providing feedback in a dialogic and reflective manner is crucial for optimal learning outcomes (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Nicol, 2010; Lee, 2017).

Student Perceptions of the Feedback Based Revision Process

The interviews revealed that most students viewed the revision process as a meaningful learning opportunity, particularly when the feedback was personalized and consistent. They stated that discussing the feedback made them understand their mistakes better than just reading the written comments. This finding corroborates the arguments of Andrade (2010), Carless (2006), and Nicol & Macfarlane Dick (2006) about the importance of interaction in the revision process.

Some students initially feel anxious when receiving negative feedback, but they learn to interpret it as a learning process over time. This process supports the concept of "feedback literacy" developed by Winstone et al. (2017), Carless & Boud (2018), and Ajjawi & Boud (2017), which emphasizes students ability to understand and use feedback productively.

However, not all students respond to feedback in the same way. Students with high intrinsic motivation tend to be more active in deep revision than those who only revise superficially. This is based on the results of Storch (2010), Hyland (2019), and Ryan and Deci (2000), who stated that student motivation and perception significantly impact the effectiveness of the revision process.

When exploring the feedback process across different ability levels, students with stronger academic backgrounds often exhibit more confidence in interpreting and applying feedback. They may view feedback as a tool for refinement and actively seek ways to improve based on the teacher's suggestions. On the other hand, students with lower proficiency levels or limited prior knowledge may struggle to make the most of feedback due to a lack of understanding or fear of failure. These students may focus on correcting errors without fully engaging with the underlying causes or learning from the feedback, leading to less meaningful revisions.

Regarding learning backgrounds, students who have experienced more individualized or formative feedback throughout their academic journey tend to be more comfortable with the process and use feedback more effectively. Conversely, students less accustomed to receiving feedback may feel uncertain or defensive, which can hinder their ability to engage deeply with the suggestions provided. Understanding these diverse responses can help educators tailor their feedback strategies to accommodate the varied needs of students, fostering an environment where all learners feel supported in their revision process.

Table 3. Representative Excerpts from Student Interviews

Main Theme	Student Quote
Student Quote	"I know my grammar mistakes and how to correct them."
Self learning process	"If it is just corrected, I forget. However, if it is a discussion, I remember it."
Initial anxiety	"At first, I was afraid to see much graffiti, but now I find it helpful."

Source: Student interviews (2025), processed by the researcher

This positive perception of the feedback process also suggests that students start to view writing as a process, rather than just a final product. As suggested by Zamel (1982), Raimes (1983), and Badger and White (2000), this is a crucial basis for developing process based writing.

Pedagogical Implications of Feedback Giving in EFL Contexts

The results of this study provide several important implications for the practice of learning English as a foreign language. First, teachers need to be trained to provide feedback that is not only corrective but also builds reflective dialogue. This approach is more effective in building student understanding of their errors and improvement strategies (Lee, 2017; Carless & Boud, 2018; Nicol, 2010).

Second, feedback should be continuous and incremental, as is the principle in formative assessment promoted by Sadler (2010), Black & Wiliam (2009), and Andrade (2010). When students receive feedback systematically over several cycles, they have the time and space to learn from mistakes and internalize improvements.

Third, the importance of student engagement in responding to feedback needs to be considered. Teachers can provide dedicated time for feedback discussions or utilize technology, such as online writing platforms, to support the collaborative revision process (Hyland, 2019; Hamp, Lyons, & Heasley, 2006; Warschauer, 2010).

The findings also reinforce the urgency of training teachers in feedback literacy to design and deliver effective and impactful feedback (Winstone et al., 2017; Carless & Boud, 2018; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In the future, feedback strategies must be

explicitly integrated into the writing curriculum and part of a continuous learning approach.

To equip teachers with the necessary skills in feedback literacy, it is crucial to provide professional development programs focusing on specific frameworks for delivering feedback. For instance, teachers can be trained in using structured feedback models such as the "SBI" (Situation Behavior Impact) framework or "Feed Up, Feed Back, Feed Forward" approach, both of which encourage clarity and actionable suggestions (Stone & Heen, 2014). Additionally, collaborative professional learning communities (PLCs) could be implemented, where teachers engage in peer review and reflection on their feedback practices. These communities would provide opportunities for teachers to discuss strategies, share experiences, and receive constructive feedback from colleagues, fostering a deeper understanding of how to implement effective feedback in diverse classroom settings. Ultimately, these strategies will help establish a solid foundation for ongoing improvement in feedback practices.

4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate that teacher feedback, provided systematically and incrementally, significantly improves the writing skills of EFL students. Within one academic year, there was a consistent increase in writing scores in cohesion, grammar, academic vocabulary, and argumentation structure. This finding demonstrates that feedback-based interventions, primarily conducted over multiple cycles, effectively promote growth in student academic performance in writing English as a foreign language. Quantitative analysis, conducted through repeated measures ANOVA, corroborated the conclusion that the differences in scores between tasks were statistically significant.

Furthermore, qualitative data from the interviews revealed that students respond positively to feedback, especially when it is reflective and delivered in a dialogical manner. Students feel they understand their mistakes better and are more motivated to do in depth revision if the feedback is corrective and provides space for discussion and reflection. This finding reinforces the importance of implementing interaction based feedback in learning to write. Thus, this study provides empirical evidence for the effectiveness of feedback in EFL contexts and emphasizes the need to develop student centered pedagogical practices responsive to individual needs in the writing learning process.

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