A Phenomenological Investigation of International Students' Perceptions of Corrective Feedback on Grammar in English Writing

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Abstract

A growing body of research has examined the perceptions of written corrective feedback, which is defined as correction or advice on students' written work (Tatawy, 2007; Lee, 2008; Ellis, 2009; Baleghizadeh & Rezaei, 2010; Lightbown & Spada, 2013). Corrective feedback (CF) can be given in six different forms, namely: direct, indirect, focused and unfocused, metalinguistic, electronic and reformulation (Ellis, 2009). The research for this paper studied the perceptions of written corrective feedback on grammar in English writing and has been conducted among 11 international students on a foundation course at a university in Northern England. This qualitative research aimed to examine students' perceptions and preferred types of CF, as well as how they made use of CF, by means of one-to-one interviews and think-aloud protocols. It concluded that the participants' perceptions of CF were primarily positive, the preferred type was direct and unfocused CF, and students did not always make revisions. Pedagogical implications of the study are discussed. This study recommends that teachers consider each student's motivation, English proficiency level, and preferred type of CF before providing the feedback.

Keywords

Corrective Feedback, typology of corrective feedback, students' perceptions, students' preference, use of corrective feedback for revision purposes

Introduction

Students learning English, particularly English writing, commonly make errors because they lack sufficient language skills to write in a comprehensible way (Myles, 2007). Thus, giving corrective feedback (CF) on students' writing and the impact of it is an important issue when teaching English. Studying CF has immediate practical applications for teachers and it is beneficial for the progress of learners, because the way students view feedback can be an integral part of their learning process and it can be used as a teaching technique in the classroom (Schulz, 2001). Knowing how students view CF, and the type of CF they prefer is significant because this could influence their reactions to it and the way they use it in their studies (Montgomery & Baker, 2007).

It is important to evaluate and to select the most suitable definition of CF for this research. Various authors have defined CF differently, for example, Lightbown and Spada (2013) considered CF as an indication of incorrect target language used by the language learners. In contrast, Tatawy (2002) viewed CF as the teacher's reaction to an error, which informed the student about the error. Tatawy's approach is somewhat different from Lightbown and Spada's because, while CF was described more as a sign post to the errors by Lightbown and Spada, Tatawy emphasised the teachers' role and stated that CF reflected teachers' thoughts about the errors. Others referred to CF not only as a response to learners' second language production with an error, but also as a type of feedback that corrects any errors made by language learners and tells them the correct response. (Lee, 2008; Baleghizadeh & Rezaei, 2010; Ellis, 2009). Comparing this to the first two definitions, the authors here focused on the role of CF, which, according to them, ensured learners deliver their messages with correct form and meaning in their writing.

Having different kinds of definitions is significant, because it indicates that there are different types and preferences of CF. All types of correction or advice on students' written work are considered as CF in this study, because, on the course in question, it is the teachers' choice what types of CF they use based on their beliefs.

Aims of this study

The aim of this study was to examine the perceptions of international students, students who came to study in the UK from overseas, with regard to written CF. The investigation also aimed to explore their preferences as to the types of CF and their reasons for this as well as how they make use of CF, if at all.

This study aimed to investigate the following research questions:

1. What are international students' perceptions of corrective feedback on their writing?
2. What types of corrective feedback do students prefer?
3. How do students make use of the feedback they receive on their written work?

Typology of corrective feedback

In identifying the choices for correcting students' grammatical errors in a systematic way, it is important to determine if written feedback is favoured by students and, if it is, which kind of feedback they prefer. There are some influential typologies of corrective strategy, for instance, Lyster & Ranta (1997) and Tedick & Gortari (1998. However, in this research, Ellis's typology of corrective feedback is adopted as a framework, because Ellis explicitly focuses on written feedback on grammar. It is relevant to an exploration of written corrective strategy, and it gives ideas which help to answer the research questions. According to Ellis (2009), CF supports learners

not only to revise their own writing in order to produce a better second draft, but also to assist them in acquiring the correct form, meaning or use. Ellis (2009) listed six types of feedback:

- Focus of the feedback is divided into focused and unfocused types. Focused CF corrects one or two types of error and leaves other errors uncorrected, whereas unfocused CF corrects all or most of the errors.

- Direct CF is where explicit and clear feedback is given. The incorrect text is crossed out and the corrected form is inserted above the error.

- Indirect CF indicates and locates errors without correcting. For example, teachers might leave notes in the margin, and underline or circle the errors.

- Metalinguistic CF uses error codes and provides more linguistic information. For example, it numbers errors and relates the numbers to grammatical descriptions.

- Electronic CF is used in software programmes that contain a language database, and it provides students with metalinguistic comments or examples of correct usage from electronic resources.

- Reformulation CF consists of direct correction and revision, which brings learners' texts closer to the target language and preserves the meaning of the original. In other words, it is creating an own language version of the students' original text.

It is also important to mention that these types of CF can trigger two types of learner responses: revision required and no revision required (Ellis, 2009). These approaches to dealing with CF will be further discussed in a later section.

Students' perceptions of corrective feedback

Second language (L2) learners' perceptions of written CF might influence their academic success and, thus, the view of students regarding written CF is an important area of study (Brown, 2007). According to Baker & Bricker (2010), using cognitivist theory, it is suggested that feedback can either be positive or negative. In recent years, numerous studies have highlighted the role that students' perceptions of positive feedback plays in determining the usefulness of CF in writing (Lee, 2004; Hamouda, 2011; Ishii, 2011; Chung, 2015; Rosdiana, 2016; Hyland, 2003; Chandler, 2003; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006;Chin, 2006; Kim, 2005; Brick, 2004 For example, Chung (2015) conducted a survey questionnaire, adopted from Ishii (2011), to investigate how EFL students perceive CF. Its results further endorsed the finding of Nassaji (2015) who, over a period of three weeks, used both semi-structured interviews and stimulus recall to investigate ESL students' opinions of CF. In both studies, participants indicated that CF was useful in terms of correcting their errors they intended to use it in their future writing. This was an interesting finding: despite their differences in context, methodology and scope of research, participants from both studies indicated the positive influence of CF on their writing. Another two pieces of research (Hamouda, 2011; Lee, 2004), produced strong evidence of positive views on the usefulness of CF despite the fact that these studies used different approaches and targeted different ages within the student group to investigate the same research questions. According to Hamouda (2011), the majority of the participants (93.5%) declared they enjoyed receiving CF because it did not only help them to know what they did wrong but also corrected their errors in writing. Furthermore, 75% of the students felt their writing had improved with the help of CF. This finding was similar to a mixed-method research carried out by Lee (2004),

where most participants also claimed that CF was helpful because it aided them to make less errors and make progress in their writings. Both studies used the same research questions but different methodologies and different ages of participants. They concluded that participants felt CF was useful in that it identified the recurring errors, provided correction, helped in reducing the errors, and provided an opportunity for further improvement in writing quality. This result was significant because it was in accord with several other studies (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Lee, 2008; Chen & Nassaji & Liu, 2016; Nassaji, 2015; Listiami, 2017; Elwood & Bode, 2014). However, not all researchers found positive perceptions of CF from students. According to Norouzian and Farahani (2012), 46% of the participants felt that they made little progress with grammatical accuracy and 37% of students felt they made no progress at all. Only 11.1% of participants expressed the view that they made some progress and different factors, such as individual differences and amount of motivation, could be the reasons for such a result.

Several studies found perceptions of CF to be associated with expectation, motivation and proficiency (Elwood & Bode, 2014; Loewen, Li, Fei, Nakatsukasa & Ahn, 2009; Rosdiana 2016; Lee, 2007).

Students' preferences

Several studies underlined learners' preferences with regard to CF, finding that students had their own preferences and opinions about certain types of CF (Schulz, 2001; Hyland, 2003; Lee, 2008; Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Alduais, 2012; Chen et al., 2016). Students' preferences for certain types of CF seemed to affect their use of CF for learning (Schulz, 2001; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). For example, if a student believed one type of CF to be more useful, he or she might be more likely to

pay greater attention to that feedback and make use of it on their later assignments, than if he or she did not believe in its effectiveness. Thus, Students' preferences for each type of six types of CF identified by Ellis (2009) is discussed.

Some studies found direct CF was highly favoured because it identified both errors and correction, which enabled students to learn some grammar rules (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Liu, 2008). Although processing direct feedback did not require much cognitive involvement which minimised students' learning process (Alduais, 2012), the majority of participants in studies by Russell and Spada (2006), Lee (2013) and Chandler's (2003) also preferred direct CF. They indicated that it provided the fastest and most convenient way to help learners produce more accurate language. This finding was to some extent replicated by a study conducted by Montgomery and Baker (2007), which revealed that the students preferred a kind of feedback that is easy for them to incorporate. An interesting result was found in Ishii's (2011) study, which showed that teachers' instructions was another reason for students' strong preference for direct CF.Students also preferred a type of CF which they were familiar with.

Other studies showed indirect CF was favoured by students over direct CF, and they did not want teachers to become correction providers (Ji, 2015; Sampson, 2012; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Students felt that they learned from indirect CF because it did not only engage students in problem solving and reflection, which engaged long-term learning, but also allowed them to do self-correction and resulted in meaningful improvement of grammatical errors (Lee, 2005; Ji, 2015; Sampson, 2012). However, the findings of Lee (2008) from a student questionnaire, a teacher interview and feedback analysis, indicated that students who had not experienced such indirect CF

in the past might get frustrated because they could not always completely understand it. (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010).

Chen, Nassaji & Liu (2016) found that all groups showed the most favourable attitude towards metalinguistic CF, because coded errors aided them both in recognising their mistakes and in self-correction (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Sampson, 2012). On the contrary, the result in Rosdiana's (2016) exploratory research showed only 30% of students preferring metalinguistic CF. These students agreed that metalinguistic CF helps learner autonomy. However, they said that they could not be sure that their revised version was correct if the teacher did not provide the correct answer. Moreover, students who did not prefer metalinguistic CF were concerned that they might not make the correct amendments because error codes that they were not familiar with could be confusing.

The findings from Hamouda's (2011) and Lee's (2008) studies concluded that a majority of students expected all their errors to be corrected all the time, which referred to an unfocused CF in this study. Students felt unfocused feedback enabled them to improve their writing when all of their errors were pointed out and corrected by the teacher. However, students might then become dependent on the teachers' CF when revising the papers and not make any individual attempt to correct their work (Lee, 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hamouda, 2011). This finding was to some extent replicated in a study by Ellis et al. (2008), which compared the focused and unfocused corrective feedback and found that students thought both focused and unfocused feedback helped their writing improve.

Although electronic CF was not a popular type of feedback in the class (Ene &

Upton, 2014; Ducate & Arnold, 2012), several studies revealed that students appreciated receiving electronic feedback and believed teachers provide more cohesive comments when using it (Tuzi, 2004; Bridge & Appleyard, 2008; Ducate & Arnold, 2012). Both McVey (2008) and McCabe, Doerflinger, and Fox (2011) conducted a survey and concluded that many students considered electronic CF was a useful tool which adds clear and helpful information and would recommend such CF for future use in the course.

Lazaro Ibarrola (2013) conducted exploratory research on a group of sixteen 17-year-old Spanish students and found reformulation CF helped them reduce errors on a given text because an explicit correct form of the error was provided. Students found reformulation CF had, to some extent, a similar effect to direct CF.

What students do after receiving the corrective feedback?

Students' application of preferred CF was categorised according to whether revision or no revision was made to the errors (Ellis, 2009). Two studies found a similar result: 68% of students in Hamouda's (2011) research and 63% of participants in Halimi and Sisilia's (2008) research stated that they read every CF carefully because they found it actually helped them to improve their writing. Three reasons that hindered students from taking follow up action in terms of revision were also addressed. Firstly, 20% of the participants from Hamouda's (2011) study said they were discouraged from revising when there were too many errors pointed out on their paper, and this result was similar to the findings by Gulcat and Ozagac (2004). Secondly, Hyland (2003) explained that 35.5% of the participants did not make a revision due to their fear of making other new mistakes. Thirdly, according to Mungungu-Shipale & Kangira (2017), students admitted that they tended not to

revise their work because they did not understand the CF that was provided by teachers, such as error codes.

Research methods

The aim of the research was to find out individual's perceptions, feelings, and beliefs about feedback based on actual experiences. Therefore, a phenomenological design provided appropriate data in support of this research (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Semi-structured, face-to-face, one-to-one interviews and think-aloud protocol (TAP) were the two methods of data collection chosen to gain a deeper knowledge of the topic and to answer the research questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Donker & Markopoulos, 2002).

A one-to-one, face-to-face individual interview is the most common form of interviews, where an interviewer and an interviewee sit in the same location and talk in person (Qu & Dumay, 2011; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). It provides in-depth information about informants' opinions, ideas and priorities, and it gives validity to the data because the interviews can be checked for accuracy and relevance as they are collected (Denscombe, 2014. In such interviews it is straightforward to get personal experience and opinion in depth in order to answer research questions and to capture verbal and non-verbal cues, such as body language or emotions more clearly (Lavrakas, 2008; Denscombe, 2014). In addition, in a face-to-face interview it is easy to clarify answers and probe for explanations of responses (Lavrakas, 2008).

A semi-structured interview was chosen for this study in order to get sufficient data to answer research questions, because participants' ideas and perceptions of CF could be developed and stretched out more widely and significantly during the interview

(Opdenakker, 2006; Oltmann, 2016). Sixteen open-ended questions were planned but the number of questions were added or reduced within the range of 15 to 18 questions depending on each interview, and they took around 10 to 15 minutes to answer. Some of the questions were based on items used in previous studies that examined similar research questions (Chung, 2015; Nassaji, 2015; Ishii, 2011; Lee, 2004), which increased the validity of the research tool. In addition, many researchers have used interviews to collect the data in their relevant studies of CF (Lee, 2004; Nassaji, 2015; Mohammad & Rahman, 2016; Chen et al., 2016). Before the interviews were conducted, they were piloted. Interviews were recorded and transcribed with promised anonymity, and all data will be deleted once the dissertation has been marked.

Qualitative data was also collected by means of the think-aloud protocol (TAP), which has become more common in educational research (Johnstone & Bottsford-Miller & Thompson, 2006). TAP can be thought of as the verbalisation of thinking during a task (McGannon & Spence, 2010; Cosh & LeCouteur & Crabb & Kettler, 2013), which means that participants verbalise reactions whist reading through their feedback. Unlike interviews, TAP does not require participants to recall their thought process or look back on their experiences (Donker & Markopoulos, 2002). This method is useful, because it not only provides rich information about how participants reason about their actions in specific situations but also instant reactions can be gathered from participants when they are reading through their written CF (Hannu & Pallab, 2002). TAP is also suitable for this research, because it is commonly used in individual performance evaluation, which can provide rich and qualitative data about participants' opinions, motivations, feelings, preferences and possibly the reasons for their response (Johnstone, Bottsford-Miller & Thompson,

2006, Donker & Markopoulos, 2002). However, some limitations of TAP have been critiqued (Young, 2005; Norenzayan, Nisbett, Smith & Kim, 2000). For example, participants varied with respect to their abilities to articulate thought processes. Students with low-level cognitive development would be less likely to report on thinking about their own thinking than those with high-level cognitive development (Young, 2005). Moreover, language might be another limitation because L2 speakers tend to process thinking in their first language, and thus TAP could lead to complications when verbalising thinking (Norenzayan et al., 2000). In spite of these disadvantages, researchers have revealed a wide range of self-regulated reading processes with TAP which indicates that it is still a powerful tool in qualitative research (Sharp, 2003).

All international students in the foundation course who were available to take part in this study were targeted. Therefore, convenience sampling was used as it askes those who are conveniently available to participate (Etikan, Musa & Alkassim, 2016; Lavrakas, 2008). Convenience sampling involves samples being gathered in a process that not all the individuals in the population have an equal chance of participating in, and it uses subjective judgements to select the samples (Given, 2008). Although convenience sampling does not represent the population and it is unable to generalise the results (Lavrakas, 2008), these limitations did not affect this study; because its purpose was to investigate international students from selected foundation course, so it was targeted at a particular group – not the total population.

The data of the interview and think-aloud protocol were transcribed by creating a coded Word document, and a clean-read transcription was adopted as the focus of the content (Elliot, 2005). A categorical content analysis that looked at separate parts

of the texts to find themes or contents was used to analyse the findings (Phillips, 2014). Coding was used to analyse both interview and TAP data into three categories: perception, preference, and the use of CF for revision purposes. This research adopted a deductive approach to analyse data, because preference types are based on Ellis's typology of corrective feedback that is an existing piece of research and theory (Gilgun, 2014; Hyde, 2000).

Results and discussion

Research question 1: 'What are students' perceptions of corrective feedback on their writing?'

With respect to the first research question, most of the participants showed positive perceptions of written feedback in this research. This result is in accord with previous studies that also presented positive views of CF (Chandler, 2003 Chin, 2006; Ishii, 2011; Kim, 2005; Hu, 2002). Quotations from two participants' interviews showed commonly held positive views of CF and indicated the importance of CF:

'Well, I feel it helps a lot because I can improve from the feedback that teachers given me, you know, you want to do good next time.'
'Um, it depends on students, but for me, I like it's good because it tells me what to do with my mistakes.'

This result is important because it showed similar findings to the studies carried out by Chung (2015) and Nassaji (2015) which concluded that students viewed CF as a learning tool to identify and correct errors. Around 63% of students used the phrase 'to write better' or 'write no mistake' during the interview to show the way in which they hoped for an improvement in English writing. Seven out of eleven participants

agreed that CF helped them to improve their writing, and six out of those seven students said it helped them to realise their errors and aided them to make less errors. Among the six, two students strongly asserted that their writing proficiency level had improved, in terms of making less grammatical errors, because the amount of CF they received on their writing now had reduced by half compared to their first writing assignment several months ago. Students from both Hamouda's (2011) and Lee's (2004) studies viewed CF as useful for further improvement in writing quality. Therefore, this research shared similar outcomes to these two studies despite the different methodology approach.

The role of CF was also emphasised by some interviewees when they were explaining why they needed CF in order to write with less errors. It was found that three students who expected to get higher marks in their next writing assignments showed a stronger desire for CF, and these students said: 'It's case by case, but personally, feedbacks motivate me to do better'. 'I will use feedback for my next writing, because I don't want to lose marks'."
"'When I do new assignmnets, I pull up my old papers and read through feedback first'."

Students who had a higher level of motivation showed a bigger need for CF, as well as a positive perception of CF. This finding supported a linked relationship between the motivation level and the perspectives of CF obtained by Rosdiana (2016). The perceptions of CF and the students' proficiency level also seemed to have a linked relationship, to some extent, in this research. The English proficiency level of students varied in this study and their proficiency level is measured by the international English language testing system (IELTS) which one of the most popular

English language test (British Council, 2014). Three students had approximately 7.0 to 8.0 IELTS scores (Group A), five students had approximately 6.0 to 7.0 IELTS scores (Group B), and three students had approximately 5.0 to 6.0 IELTS scores (Group C). Table 1 shows that, in spite of the difference in their language level, all students from different levels had positive perceptions of CF. This applied whether they had 5.0 IELTS scores or 7.0 IELTS scores.

Table 1

Statistics from interview

Group	Number of students	IELTS score range	Perception of CF
A	3	7.0 – 8.0	Positive
B	5	6.0 – 7.0	Positive
C	3	5.0 – 6.0	Positive

However, three students who had high proficiency levels all stressed a more positive perception of, and placed greater importance on, the role of CF and they all shared personal experience of how CF had impacted their English writing in detail. Students, from group C to A, expressed their views of CF respectively:

'I believe feedback helps to avoid same grammar mistakes.'
'Feedback is an actual advice to improve my English writing.'
'Feedback in writing is really really really important. It has helped to improve my writing.'

According to Lee (2007) and Hyland (2003), they suggested a linked relationship between students' proficiency level and their perceptions of CF, which concluded

that highly proficient students seemed to have a more positive perception towards CF than low-proficiency students. Therefore, this is a significant result because this research data shared a similar finding to that of Lee (2007) and Hyland (2003). Eight participants felt stressful or discouraged when they received a lot of CF that they were not expecting because this made them feeling their writing was not good. Three students from those eight students were upset because they expected to get less CF. One of the participants verbalised her frustrated feeling while recording the TAP: 'Oh my gosh, why is there so many mistakes? What did I do wrong?' Although they felt stressed because of the amount of feedback received, all of them commented that they still thought CF helpful and useful. A student voiced her opinion during the interview: 'I feel down but it motivates me to write better next time'. Another student stated: 'I won't be discouraged. Instead of taking it negatively, I will take it positively because I know corrections are there to help me to improve and get higher marks'. Answering an interview questions about how they feel when they receive less CF, most students said they felt happy because it indicated that what they had written was a good piece of writing. One student said he felt motivated to do better when he got less CF. Thus, this research data could conclude that expectation and students' perceptions of CF is not a linked relationship. This is a significant finding, because this result is different to Loewen et al.'s findings (2009).

Research question 2: 'What types of corrective feedback are preferred by students?'

Seven out of eleven students preferred direct CF, and they said: 'It's more specific, so you don't know where your mistake is'; 'It helped me to know what went wrong and gives correct forms'; 'It's easy to revise, so I can avoid the same mistakes'; 'It's specific about correction and I can know what kind of errors I am keep making'.

These findings were not only similar to Liu's (2008, where students favoured direct feedback because it identifies both errors and correction, but also strengthened Chandler's (2003) conclusion that students preferred a type of feedback that is easy to incorporate. One student gave an interesting reason for preferring direct CF which was that it was the type of feedback he used to receive in his home country. This was a significant result because it accorded with the findings of Ishii (2011). However, one student indicated that direct CF was their least favourable type by saying 'students will not work hard and will not going to find out how they get it better'. In addition, one student said that she preferred direct CFonly for simple mistakes. They acknowledge that direct CF does not require learning process and cognitive involvement (Alduais, 2012).

On the other hand, three out of eleven students were more interested in indirect CF. These are the quotations from students who preferred indirect feedback: 'I know myself I need to work and look at the feedback and research myself for where I got wrong'; 'I like it just underline, because I can go back and spend time, think twice and three times and get to know my mistakes'; 'I believe students should show work on themselves, that way they will be able to remember'. Since indirect CF told them where the errors were and gave them a chance to find out the correct form, which engaged students in problem solving and reflection (Lee, 2013), they believed this type of CF enabled them to remember the errors. However, two students did not like indirect CF because they needed to guess why the error was pointed out which could cause them frustration. Consequently, they might just simply ignore the CF. This is an important finding because the results are similar to those of Lee's study (2008).

Five others appreciated metalinguistic CF, and they showed their preference and reasons by stating: 'It pushes me to think more about errors, and makes me pay attention about my own errors'; 'I can revise it by myself instead of teacher just writing the correct answer'; 'I can read my own sentence again and see if there is something I can revise'. Most of them said they favoured metalinguistic CF because it made them to pay more attention to the errors, think how to correct them on their own and, at the end, to remember the errors. This finding added evidence to the results of Chen, Nassaji and Liu (2016). However, four participants did not choose metalinguistic CF because they were not familiar with error codes and found it was complicated to search for the meaning of each code. This result was similar to the data from the TAP which showed that all five students found metalinguistic CF confusing. Here are some quotations from the TAP: 'WW... what's ww, I don't even know what that means,' 'Hmm, what did I do wrong here.. sp.. I forgot what sp means.. Oh, I think sp means spelling'. These data were also significant results because the same findings emerged from Rosdiana's study (2016).

Only one student out of eleven preferred focused CF, whereas the rest of the participants preferred unfocused CF and having all their errors corrected. The student indicated that he preferred the focused type whilst recording the TAP, and he explained that it would be better for him to just look carefully at the focused corrections and ensure he did not make those few major errors next time, rather than every error. On the contrary, ten students felt unfocused CF could help them to spot every error and improve their writing. This is an important result, and both Hamouda (2011) and Lee (2008) found the same conclusion.

Three people preferred electronic CF because such feedback seemed clear to them.

One student quoted: 'I can go look for what I want to learn about mistakes,' and another person said: 'Technology is always useful, and I think electronic feedback can be used portable'. These opinions and reasons were similar to the findings of McVey (2008) and Tuzi (2004) that the procedure of electronic feedback was clear and focused which made students use the given CF to improve their performance in future writing assignments.

Four out of eleven participants favoured reformulation CF, and stated: 'I want to understand and speak the way teacher says'; 'I can improve and learn about English with reformulation'; 'If I can choose only one, I will pick reformulation, because it's also clear'. They favoured it mainly because it provided specific feedback and they could learn how target language speakers express themselves. This is accord with Lazaro Ibarrola (2013), which is significant.

Research question 3: 'How do students make use of the feedback they receive on their written work?'

According to Ellis (2009), students' use of preferred CF for revision purposes was categorised into revision or no revision. Interview statements showed that the students would just look at the comments: 'I will spend time read my comment but not always'; 'I will use the feedback to some extent. I will read the feedback and look at my errors'; 'I do look at my feedback carefully, and take time understand all errors. And then I test myself to rewrite the same essay without any errors'; 'I only look at them in front of my teacher'.

From the data in this study, three out of eleven participants stated firmly that they would make the revision. 'I will try my best to some extent that I will read feedbacks

and look at errors. After reviewing, I will rewrite the same thing to see no mistake'. One of the three students said that he would review his previous CF before starting a new piece of writing in terms of thinking about what errors he had made and the feedback that was given by the teacher.

On the other hand, four out of eleven students stated that they would take time to look through the CF carefully to check each error. On the whole, written revision would be applied. Since they already spend much of their time thinking and figuring out each error, they tended not to rewrite but rather just to review. One student from these four participants said he would check each CF one by one and would use the correction in order to make less errors and get higher marks the next time. Another person stated the she would look carefully into each CF by paying total attention to the errors. In addition, she would use her independent time to master all her errors in order to avoid them the next time. All four student indicated that they wanted to use CF as a reflection in their next writing, because they could refer to the feedback and make sure they were not making the same mistake in the new writing.

Another four students out of the eleven revealed that they would just simply look through their feedback in class time when their teacher asked them to do so, otherwise they would not look deeply into reviewing or making the revision. They also said indicated some reasons that hindered them from making a revision by saying: 'I am lazy and it takes time'; 'Some of them (CF) are not clear, I don't know how to correct.' Time-consuming and unclear CF were the main reasons students pointed out, and therefore, they tended to memorise the errors and correct form just by reading through. This was a significant finding because it is similar to the findings of Mungungu-Shipale & Kangira (2017). Also, several participants stated that they

were discouraged when they saw too many error corrections, which made them not want to revise their marked essay. One student specifically stated that she would ignore even looking at her feedback when there was too much of it on her paper, whereas, if there was less CF, she would carefully read the comments again and again. She said she considered the feedback when she embarked on her next writing, because it could minimise her errors and she checked to make sure she did not lose marks for recurring mistakes. Another interviewee made a similar comment, ie that he would simply not revise or even review his feedback if there was too much CF on the paper. He was rather disappointed when he looked at each small aspect of the errors, because he did not think he could correct everything. He stated: 'I will look deeply into those major mistakes and to revise, and to make sure I don't make the same mistakes again'. He said he would take his feedback into consideration for the next piece of writing. This finding was similar to the findings of Hamouda (2011) that students were discouraged from revising when there were too many errors which led them to ignore the feedback. Although these students said they would not revise, they all stated that they would consider teachers' CF in their next writing. It was surpriseing to find that all participants would consider the CF in their next writing regardless of whether or not they would revise their errors. This contradicted the findings of Hamouda's (2011) and Lee's (2004), that students perceived the usefulness of CF but would not take any follow up action to revise. It is an important finding of the research and it might indicate that either students have a strong positive perception of CF or believe that it is useful.

Another interesting result was that students' use of CF for revision purposes depended on the type of CF. One student said he would only review and probably make a revision if the direct type was given as it is the easiest way to make

revisions. On the contrary, another student stated that she would be most likely to ignore the direct CF since it did not stick in her mind, but would prefer to revise using the metalinguistic CF as it would make her process a thinking activity. Therefore, it is suggested there is a need for further research into this particular area.

Conclusion

This research managed to achieve research aims and to answer three research questions. Firstly, results for the students' perceptions of CF on writing were positive. It was found that the motivation level and the proficiency level of the students was linked to their perception. However, no significant relationship was found between expectation and perception. This indicates that students who are more motivated and have higher proficiency level are more likely to view CF positively. Secondly, although the preferred types of CF were varied, the most preferred type was direct and unfocused CF, showing that students are more responsive to certain feedbacks. Thirdly, data found students did not always make revisions, even when the feedback was their favoured type. Finally, some possible suggestions about making CF were provided.

This study targeted adult language learners, and recommends that teachers who teach these learners consider each student's motivation and English proficiency level before providing CF. By doing so, students may get the most out of corrective feedback. Also, teachers could undertake surveys on students' preferred type of CF, and apply the most preferred one to the class. According to this study, most of the students demanded more specific feedback so it is advisable that the teachers give CF that is more specific and clear. In this way, students might be able to have a clear understanding of the correct form. Therefore, it is essential that students' needs and

targets for the course be taken into consideration when teachers decide to give them direct or indirect correction (Ferris, 2014). It is suggested that teachers should not only indicate where the error is but also give a clue about how to correct it.

It is recognised that many of students' feedback sheets or assignments which had CF on were returned back to teachers or the institution. It would be better if students could keep all their feedback in order to review it whenever they want. Otherwise, students would not be able to remember either the CF or the errors they had made, which hindered their revision. Therefore, it is recommended that all feedback and assignments should be given to students so that they can spend time looking at the CF and revise their work.

This study followed appropriate academic guidelines regarding research, but there were some limitations. There were eleven participants who took part in the interviews, but only five students participated in TAP because most of their feedback was returned to their teachers. Also, my participants found it difficult to do TAP, because they were not used to verbalising their reactions. If I could do the research again, I would not only use a larger sample in the TAP, in order to increase the credibility of the research, but also give clearer instructions about TAP. If the language is an issue for participants whilst doing TAP, they could instead speak in their first language and ask for a translation later.

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