

Teachers' Feedback on EFL Writings from Sociocultural Perspective

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Abstract:

Writing skill is one of the difficult skills to acquire in learning a second language. Therefore, the feedback that the students receive from the teachers should be understandable and improve students' writing skills. This study examines the teachers' experiences in giving feedback on students' writing performance through a sociocultural perspective. The participants of this study were 8 English teachers of junior and senior high schools in Padangsidempuan, North Sumatra. The data were collected through online interviews and analyzed in a thematic approach by transcribing, coding, categorizing, and interpreting. The result shows that teachers prefer to use teacher-student conferencing in giving writing feedback since joint participation and transaction occur in the learning process. It is compatible with the principle of the sociocultural approach. In addition, teachers are more concerned about students' grammatical errors rather than structure and content. It is due to students finding it difficult to implement the grammatical rules into their writings. Furthermore, unfocused corrective feedback points out a range of error types. However, the strategy is hard to implement for students with lower proficiency levels.

Keywords: *Covid-19 pandemic, EFL Writings, feedback, sociocultural, zone of proximal development*

1. INTRODUCTION

Writing skill is considered the most difficult skill to acquire in learning a second language (Syarifah & Gunawan, 2015; Trong, 2011). Students find it difficult in getting and organizing the ideas, develop the details using the appropriate choice of vocabulary, structure the ideas into correct sentences, and maintain the unity of the paragraphs (Syarifah & Gunawan, 2015). Moreover, writing skill requires more than one aspect of writing skill, such as grammar implementation, capitalization, punctuation, spelling, and conventions (Ghabool & Kashef, 2012). To overcome these problems, some teachers provide writing feedback for students to revise or correct the errors in their writings. Feedback provides critical information, comments, questions, praises, and corrections to students' writing performance (Mustafa, 2012; Razali & Jupri, 2014). Providing writing feedback not only improves the writing performance of students but also motivates students to write. However, some students feel unmotivated when the feedbacks they receive are difficult to interpret, lacks specific advice, and shows negative impacts on students' confidence (Fithriani, 2019). Students' enthusiasm also decreases when teachers are more interested in criticizing their lexical errors rather than content (Razali & Jupri, 2014). It is different from teachers' perception that emphasized skills development rather than content since it is more usable (Ma, 2018). Therefore, this study intends to examine teachers' perceptions of writing feedback on EFL writings.

There are three kinds of feedback, namely peer feedback, conferences as feedback, and teachers' feedback (Razali & Jupri, 2014). Besides, there are also three types of teacher written feedback in EFL writings, namely form-focused (grammar and lexical), content, and integrated feedback (combination of form and content feedback). In giving form feedback or corrective feedback, there are different kinds of feedback that teachers can give to the students, namely direct and indirect feedback (Bijami, 2016). Direct feedback refers to teachers giving explicit help to correct the students' errors. Meanwhile, indirect feedback begins with implicit moves by giving hints to the students to correct the errors by themselves. The last is teacher-student conferencing in which students can negotiate with the teachers and vice versa about the errors (Bijami, 2016; Rassaei, 2017). From Bijami's (2016) and Rassaei's (2017) studies, indirect feedback improves students' writing performance rather than direct feedback. Indirect feedback touches students' zone of proximal development in which the teachers help students to spot their errors. Then, students correct the errors through hints provided by the teachers.

Zone of Proximal Development is one of the concepts of the sociocultural theory proposed by Vygotsky. The sociocultural theory emphasizes that cognitive development happens through social interactions such as language learning (Fithriani, 2019; Shooshtari & Mir, 2014). The learning process occurs from the interaction of more capable or experienced guides with learners. This assistance enables students to achieve a higher level than they can accomplish by themselves

(Allahyar & Nazari, 2012). It is related to the concept of the zone of proximal development. According to Vygotsky, the zone of proximal development is “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Shoosthari, 2014). Thus, the zone of proximal development indicates the zone of students' level of knowledge from the beginning they solve the problem until they can accomplish the problem through the guidance of adults or capable peers. By helping students to learn new concepts by conducting ZPD, teachers can develop students' potential. On one hand, teachers also can investigate students' comprehension of new topics and find out the solutions in how to boost their potential (Danish, 2016). Therefore, giving feedback through sociocultural theory is related to the application of the zone of proximal development by the teachers to students.

A large body of research has been conducted to investigate different aspects of feedback on students' writing performance. Ma (2018) investigates the usability of teacher written feedback through students' and teachers' perceptions. He notes that the teachers point out the strength and the weakness of the students' writings while giving feedback. They also tend to correct linguistic errors rather than content. In giving feedback, the teachers prefer to explain their feedback to the students to get a better understanding. Bijami (2016) also examines the relationship between teachers' feedback and students' writing skills. He asserted that writing feedback gives positive effects and assists students to recognize their weaknesses and strength. However, students prefer direct feedback to indirect feedback. Direct feedback is suitable for low proficiency students while indirect feedback leads students to long-term learning. It is also supported by Irwin (2017) that the students prefer their teachers use direct feedback. In addition, feedback on lexical mistakes is more preferred than structural or content. It is in contrast with Ma's study which most of the students prefer content to grammar.

Regarding the studies mentioned above, most of the studies only focus on benefits and the use of feedback. Although there are few studies related to writing feedback, there has been little discussion about writing feedback from sociocultural. Most of the studies concern with students' opinions about the types of feedback they receive and the improvement of students' writing performance by applying sociocultural theory. It is rare to find examining teachers' feedback practices in their work context (Lee, 2014).

This study attempts to investigate how English teachers give feedback on their students' writings. This study would like to examine the application of sociocultural theory in giving feedback on students' writing performance to EFL teachers. Do they use direct, indirect, or teacher-student conferencing in the feedback? Do teachers consider students' zone of proximal development in giving feedback to

their students? In addition, this study also will examine the important part of students' writings that teachers should pay more attention to and how the teachers give feedback on their students' writings during the Covid-19 pandemic.

This study is expected to help teachers develop their methods in giving writing feedback to the students; therefore the students can improve their English writing skills. In addition, this study is also expected give contribute to pedagogic research, especially in the sociocultural field.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 An Overview of Sociocultural Theory

Sociocultural theory is introduced by Lev Vygotsky who asserts that individual and social processes are connected to learning development. According to Balbay (2018),

“Sociocultural theory highlights the society and interaction within the society as an essential and indispensable contributor to learning, claiming that learning is social rather than individual in nature.”

This theory is largely accepted in the psychology and education field. Vygotsky's fundamental principle about developmental psychology is the transition from lower function to higher psychological function. Lower functions are innate abilities and are determined by biological mechanisms. It includes attention, temperamental traits, spontaneous, and simple reactions to an event. Those lower functions can become higher functions through social experiences and social interactions. Social interactions can mediate conceptual thinking (Rieber, 1998). When young learners have achieved the higher functions, they can focus and solve a problem. They also can filter the information that they see or hear. They have more memory capacity than when they were a child.

There are two principles of sociocultural theory. The first principle is cognitive development that is mediated by culture and social interactions. The second principle of sociocultural theory is the zone of the proximal development model in teaching (Hadi & Zad, 2019). To develop human cognitive ability, Vygotsky emphasizes the importance of language and its use within social contexts. Vygotsky considers human mental function as a mediated process. It is called mediation which refers to cultural artifacts, activities, and concepts. The mediation process will influence and regulate humans' behavioral and biological activities (Hadi & Zad, 2019).

One of the main concepts of sociocultural theory is the children's cognitive development which is divided into two levels. They are children's cognitive development in problem-solving independently and the 'higher level' of cognitive development in problem-solving through collaboration with capable guidance from adults or peers. It is known as the Zone of Proximal Development (Chen, 2019).

According to Vygotsky, ZPD is “the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Sooshttari, 2014). Vygotsky (Uysal & Yafuz, 2015) also states that “within the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), children acquire knowledge through interaction with other people.” ZPD will help children achieve their optimum capacity in solving problems through the help of assistance. Thus, teachers in school take an important role in improving students' cognitive development until the students can solve the problem individually in the future. ZPD is not only applied in a one-on-one setting or a teacher and a student but also applied in groups or classroom settings. Based on sociocultural theory, however, a one-on-one setting or tutoring is an ideal learning environment for developing students' writing skills, especially in second language acquisition (Zhou & Hu, 2017).

2.2 Sociocultural Approach to Writing Feedback

Studies on students' writing skills have always been a popular issue to examine. Many researchers investigate it from different theories or concepts. Behizadeh (2014) argues that writing skills are concerned with sociocultural theory since it considers writing as a contextual process that is comprised of social and cultural components. Writing from a sociocultural perspective is produced by the cognitive process and guided by context-appropriate conventions.

Teachers give feedback on their students' writings to improve their skills. However, does it really improve students' writing skills? Feedback is usually done by marking the errors, correcting the incorrect grammar, and even text organization. Most teachers tend to focus more on grammar and scores and prefer to use direct feedback. When students make the same mistake, teachers correct them directly. Then, students re-correct their answers without thinking about the theory. Such a process is traditionally labeled as giving feedback (Lee, 2014). Writing quality should normally meet these five criteria, namely organization, paragraphing, cohesion, relevance, and adequacy. To achieve this, the interaction and negotiation among teachers, materials, tasks, and sociocultural mediating strategies make students acquire the knowledge (Rahimi & Narooziasiam, 2013).

There are three types of feedback based on the party who delivers it, namely peer feedback, conference feedback, and teacher feedback. While teachers give feedback on their students' writings, there are three kinds of feedback that are commonly used (Razali & Jupri, 2014):

1. Form feedback that focuses on linguistic errors. It can be called corrective feedback (Bitchener, 2005).
2. Content feedback focuses on the organization and the quality of the text.
3. Integrated feedback uses both form and content feedback.

Regarding the error categories, corrective feedback is divided into focused and unfocused feedback. Focused feedback only focuses on a few error categories. This strategy is suggested by some scholars since students can focus on one aspect at a time which helps them avoid the same mistakes in the future. Meanwhile, unfocused feedback points out the range of error types or marks all the grammatical errors. This strategy is not suggested for students who have lower proficiency levels because they have not mastered all the grammatical rules (Ahmadian, 2014; Sermsook, 2017).

Based on the form, corrective feedback has two kinds, namely direct and indirect feedback. Direct feedback is also called non-dynamic feedback which corrects the errors directly without giving hints by crossing the errors, adding the missing words, or writing the correct form (Mao & Peter, 2019; Sermsook, 2017; Bijami 2016). This type of feedback ignores the students' zone of proximal development as the provider does not provide a clue for further learning (Bijami, 2016; Rasseai, 2017). Meanwhile, indirect feedback (dynamic feedback) is the indication made by a teacher without giving the correct form. Students are expected to self-correct the errors (Sermsook, 2017). The feedback can be in form of circling, underlying the errors, or using code. Indirect feedback is divided into two, namely coded and uncoded feedback. Coded feedback shows the location and the type of error. For example, the code "V" means Verb in the errors. Meanwhile, uncoded feedback does not point out the type of errors, only circling or underlying (Ahmadian, 2014; Mao & Peter, 2019). When teachers use indirect code feedback, the code used should be consistent and the students know the meaning of the code.

The last feedback that can be used by teachers is teacher-student conferencing in which the teacher negotiates with students about the errors face to face (Bijami, 2016). This type of feedback is widely used in SLL institutions but can be implemented in schools. Teacher-student conferencing will have dialog interactions that will build students' trust in teachers. It is compatible with the principle of sociocultural theory in which learning is obtained from social interaction (Grant, 2007).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study is qualitative research that attempts to comprehend arrangements of experiences by an individual to provoke intelligibility (Sherman, 2005). Such research, therefore, engaged to find out people's opinions, feelings, behavior, and like about a particular issue (Kothari, 2004). Since this study aims to examine English teachers' experiences in giving feedback on students' writing performance and their opinions about the feedback they have chosen, the qualitative method is appropriate considering this purpose and the data/information to gather and analyze.

The subjects of this study were 8 English teachers (7 English teachers in Junior and 1 Senior High School) in Padangsidempuan, a small town in North Sumatra,

Indonesia. Seminars or workshops about teaching were infrequent events in the city. Moreover, most of the students only started to learn English in junior high school. Therefore, the teacher should provide the students with English basic first before delivering the materials in the curriculum. Some of the teachers have obtained their professional certificates which means they have met professional standards and requirements in teaching and learning activities in schools. Below is the table description of the subjects.

Table: 1 Description of Subjects

Name	Age	School Type	Teaching Duration	Educational Background
Teacher 01	26	State Junior High School	4 years	Bachelor Degree of English Education
Teacher 02	27	Private Junior High School	5 years	Bachelor Degree of English Education
Teacher 03	26	Private Junior High School	5 years	Bachelor Degree of English Education
Teacher 04	26	State Junior High School	4 years	Bachelor Degree of English Education
Teacher 05	28	Private Junior High School	4 years	Master of English Education
Teacher 06	46	State Senior High School	22 years	Bachelor Degree of English Education
Teacher 07	55	State Junior High School	21 years	Bachelor Degree of English Education
Teacher 08	57	Private Junior High School	21 years	Bachelor Degree of English Education

The data were collected through semi-structured open-ended interviews with the teachers. All interviewees were asked the same basic questions and probes in the same order. Since the participants answered the same questions, it increased the comparability of responses (Cohen, 2007). They answered the questions based on their perspectives, experiences, and opinions.

All interviews were conducted online for two weeks and digitally audio-taped. The participating teachers were given ten questions involving the importance of giving feedback in improving students' writing performance and the types of feedback that they use in the learning process. All the interviews were conducted in Indonesian to ensure the subjects would fully express themselves in answering the questions. The answers were then transcribed and translated into English for data display and wider readership.

The collected data were analyzed thematically to provide an in-depth examination and understanding of individual learners, their experiences, and behaviors (Nassaji, 2015). The data were described and interpreted to explore and identify how the participating EFL teachers give feedback on their students' writing performance and what type of feedback they use in the learning process. The ways teachers give feedback to their students' writings during the pandemic were also observed and related documents were checked for corroboration. In addition, the data were analyzed using tables to show the teachers' concern in giving writing feedback to their students' writings including their reasons. The example of the table:

Table: 2 An Example of Table Analysis

No.	Teachers	What to pay attention in giving writing feedback?	Reasons
1.	Teacher 01	Grammar and content	If the grammar and content are incorrect, the writings will be disorganized.
2.	Teacher 02	Grammar and content	Because grammar and content are important to make the writings understandable.

Percentages were also provided in showing the types of feedback that teachers mostly use in improving their students' writing performance.

4. FINDINGS

4.1. Focus on giving feedback on students' writings

At first, the teachers were asked if they give feedback on their students' writings and all the teachers responded positively. Then, the teachers were asked about what they were concerned more about giving feedback on students' writings.

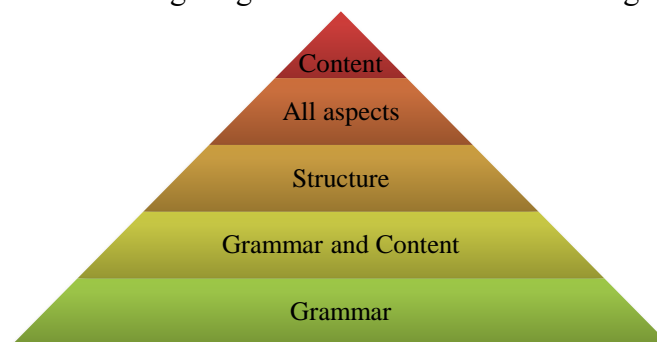


Figure 1. The concern of teachers in giving feedback on students' writings

The figure above shows that most of the teachers concern more on students' grammar in giving writing feedback. Teachers 03, 04, and 06 choose to focus on grammar because it is not fully discussed in the English curriculum and many

students frequently complain about the application of grammar in writing and they think grammar is difficult to master. The second concern is grammar and content. Teachers 01 and 02 choose to focus on both grammar and content because grammar and content are important to make the writings understandable. If the grammar and content are incorrect, the writing will be disorganized. The third concern is structure. Teacher 07 chooses to focus on the writing structure because writing in English should be structural to be understood. The next concern is all aspects (grammar, content, and structure). Teacher 05 chooses to focus on all aspects because in the curriculum students are expected to master the social function, linguistic features, and structure of text genre. The last concern is content. Teacher 08 chooses to focus on the content because students in the beginning stage should understand what they write related to the text type. For example, students should know the content characters of descriptive text to be able to write it.

From the data above can be inferred that most of the teachers use corrective feedback since they focus more on linguistic errors. Teachers 01, 02, 03, 04, and 06 chose to correct all grammatical errors in the writing. It means that they choose unfocused feedback. Meanwhile, teacher 05 chooses to focus more on the specific grammatical errors regarding the text type discussed in the class. For example, if the text is descriptive, the teacher 05 then focuses on the linguistic features found in the text. It means that teacher 05 chooses focused feedback.

4.2. Types of Feedback

The literature review has mentioned kinds and forms of feedback, namely direct, indirect feedback, and teacher-student conferencing. Direct feedback refers to the correction made by teachers explicitly. Meanwhile, indirect feedback occurs when the teachers identify the errors without providing correction; thus students diagnose and correct the errors by themselves (Bitchener, 2005). Teacher-student conferencing occurs when the teachers and students discuss the errors face to face.

The question about the types of feedback that teachers usually use was asked. The figure below shows the teachers' responses.

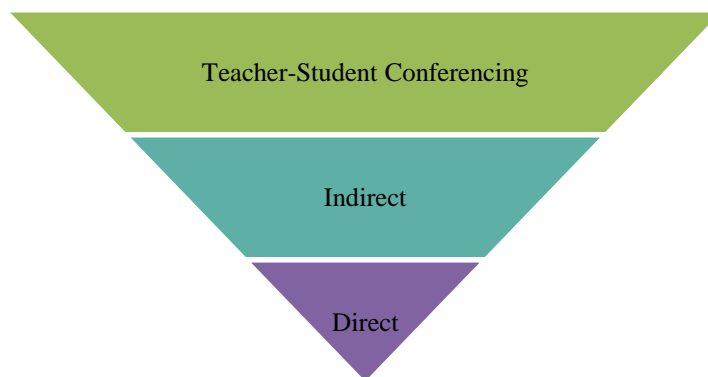


Figure 2. Types of Feedback

The figure above shows that teachers prefer to use teacher-student conferencing. Through teacher-student conferencing, teachers observe and discuss the errors face to face with students, thus, it will make the students comprehend the errors more. Students are also more comfortable asking what they do not understand about the errors. Teachers 03, 06, and 07 choose indirect feedback because it makes students know their mistakes and how they should correct the mistakes. Therefore, students can solve the same problems by themselves in the future. Teacher 04 chooses direct feedback because students often do not catch the hints they received to correct the errors. It is more effective and saves time.

4.3. Considering Students' ZPD in Giving Feedback

The zone of proximal development of students takes an important role in giving feedback. Some teachers may ignore the students' potential in solving the same problem alone in the future. Some teachers may pay more attention to students' capability in correcting the errors and override the scores. Here are the teachers' responses about considering students' ZPD in giving feedback.

Table: 3 Teachers' Concerns on Students' Zone of Proximal Development

Teachers	Considering ZPD	Reasons
Teacher 01	Yes	To know the students' potential in solving the problems and to know why students are so slow in understanding the lesson.
Teacher 02	Sometimes	Teachers cannot assist all students in school because every student has different skills. Teachers will assist students who have writing skills.
Teacher 03	Yes	By considering ZPD, the teacher knows her students' skills in solving the problems.
Teacher 04	Yes	To make the students able to correct the same problems.
Teacher 05	Yes	By knowing the actual development level, the teacher can make strategies to boost the students' potential development. Therefore, students can understand the topic and maximally correct the same errors in the future.
Teacher 06	Yes	To make students understand the topic and the errors.
Teacher 07	Yes	To make students able to master the topic and to increase their vocabulary and knowledge. Therefore, they will be encouraged to learn more.
Teacher 08	Sometimes	The teacher will be considering the students' potential development based on the students' capability. Every student has a different capability in writing. The students who have the capability in writing will be guided, and otherwise.

The table above shows that most of the teachers concern with students' zone of proximal development while giving feedback. The reasons are teachers want to boost their students' potential in solving the problems; therefore, the students can solve the same problems in the next writing and also avoid the same or repetition

mistakes. In addition, by knowing the students' potential development, the teachers can make strategies to increase the cognitive development of the students towards writing skills. Teachers 02 and 08 choose "sometimes" in considering students' zone of proximal development because they consider students' capability and interest. If students are interested and capable of writing, the teacher assists the students and otherwise.

4.4. How Teachers Give Feedback during the Covid-19 Pandemic

Online teaching has been an issue for years, even before the pandemic, because students and teachers need to adapt to the new systems. Complaints from students and parents about the learning cannot be avoided therefore teachers must look for alternatives to make the students follow and understand the materials. It has been more difficult in giving feedback on students' writing performance. The figure below shows how the teachers give feedback on their students' writings during the pandemic.

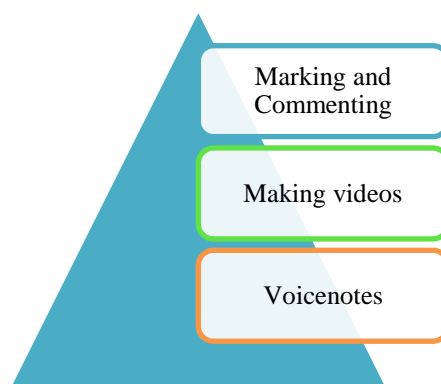


Figure: 3 How Teachers Give Feedback during the Covid-19 Pandemic

From the figure above, teachers suggest marking the errors and to comment the students' writings. Students are asked to take a photo of their writings and then upload them in Classroom or Whatsapp group. The teachers can mark the errors and give comments below their writings. After that, students are expected to revise their writings based on the comments. It means that the teachers use coded indirect feedback. Teachers 03 and 04 suggest making videos or sending the videos regarding the topics and marking the errors. After that, students are expected to revise their writings based on what they watch. It means that the teachers use uncoded indirect feedback. Teacher 02 prefers to use voice notes to avoid misunderstanding. Some students revise the errors directly and send them again to the teacher. In this way, the teacher is likely to employ negotiated focused feedback.

5. DISCUSSION

From the findings, all participating teachers concern more on students' general aspects of grammar while giving writing feedback. It means that the teachers tend to use unfocused corrective feedback in which the teachers correct a range of error types. They argue that grammar takes an important role to make the sentences meaningful and it is not fully discussed in the curriculum. In addition, the students also often have difficulties in applying grammar to their writings. Therefore, they need to give more attention on it. It is in line with Irwin's study (2017) that argues students prefer corrections and comments on their lexical and linguistics errors to other aspects of their writing. Ahmadian (2014) also argues that linguistic aspects of the target language deserve considerable attention in improving and developing the quality of producing a text. The findings also show that the teachers are concerned about both grammar and content of the writings or use integrated feedback. The teachers highlight that the writings will not be understandable and disorganized if the grammars are incorrect. Since a text should be understandable, the content (topic/idea) written in the text takes an important role to make it. This finding supports Bijami's study (2016) about the teachers focusing more on the grammar and contents in giving feedback to students' writings. Students think that feedback about grammar is actually substantive and should focus on content as well. Our data show that only one teacher focuses on the content which is in accordance with Bijami's study who argues that teachers pay less attention to the content in giving feedback. However, students with low proficiency have difficulties understanding the corrective feedback and correcting the errors. The teachers in the current study, therefore, provide individual oral feedback since the students are often frustrated with how to correct the errors (Zheng & Yu, 2018). Therefore, scaffolding is needed to improve their writing performance.

In giving feedback, the participating teachers prefer to use teacher-student conferencing. They argue that the students comprehend the errors more by discussing them face to face. The teachers can confirm students' comprehension at the moment. In addition, students are more comfortable asking about the errors. Teachers need to explain the written feedback because students may not be able to understand the written feedback effectively (Ma, 2018). Communication between teachers and students is important in the learning process. Rahimi & Narooziasiam (2013) claims that not only correction, but supportive talks can produce useful input which increases students' understanding. Besides, these also can build students' trust in teachers. Teacher-student conferencing also plays a vital role in improving students' writing since the students engage more in the writing process and the teachers can practice diverse instructions to scaffold students through writing (Bijami, 2016). According to Shooshtari & Mir (2014), scaffolding can possibly facilitate remarkable progress in improving writing quality. It may lead students to make self-correction towards their writings and it is also compatible with the principle of sociocultural theory in which learning is obtained from social interaction

including joint participation and transaction between teachers and learners and even among learners (Grant, 2007; Ahmadian, 2014).

From the findings, more than a third of the teachers choose indirect feedback because they want the students to do self-correction in the future. It is in accordance with Bijami's study (2016), namely indirect feedback is useful to allow students' long-term learning. However, Ahmadian (2014) claims that indirect feedback results in confusion among the students because most low-achievers fail to comprehend the error codes. Therefore, direct feedback seems to be suitable for the low proficiency students because they acquire more insight into the errors than indirect feedback (Bijami, 2016; Zheng & Yu, 2018). The appropriate corrective feedback depends on the purpose of the feedback given. To help students revise and edit their writings, explicit feedback is likely more beneficial but when the purpose is to improve students' writing skills, implicit feedback is helpful (Pooerbrahim, 2017).

In the learning process, students are expected to get higher than their current knowledge. It means that students' social interaction through written feedback could facilitate students to develop higher psychological functions within the zone of proximal development since they form knowledge from their teachers (Fithriani, 2019). Most teachers choose teacher-student conferencing in giving feedback in which dialogue interactions, joint constructions, and scaffolding are included in the process of improving students' writing skills. It means that teachers are concerned with the student's zone of proximal development. They argue that students should be able to correct the same errors in the future by themselves. Also, the teachers report that they want to know students' potential development; therefore, they can prepare strategies to improve and increase students' cognitive development. Joint construction leads students to achieve their zone of proximal development, thus they can identify and correct the errors with less help (Ahmadian, 2014).

Teachers sometimes consider students' current knowledge and expected new learning (zone of proximal development) while giving writing feedback. They also add that students' interests in writing should be considered as well. However, the teachers choose to use direct feedback and teacher-student conferencing while they also sometimes take a note of students' progress. It shows that teachers are still confused about the concept of ZPD. From the teachers' responses, it can be simply the way students' solve the problems at the moment can be called ZPD. Also, teachers have been satisfied by students' achievement in understanding the concept at the moment.

Teachers admitted that some students need time to gradually understand and realize their mistakes. It matched the definition and the concept of direct and indirect feedback. Direct feedback gives little concern for students' potential development and indirect feedback makes the students understand the concept clearly and stick to it for a long time since it links with students' zone of proximal development (Bijami, 2016; Rasseai, 2017). In giving writing feedback, there was not a linear and upward

pattern of improvement. Some students may succeed in performing their language accuracy on their writings at one time, but fail to do so on similar occasions (Bitchener, 2005). It may also be related to the differences in nature and individual performance. Students' circumstances and individual experiences and motivation can probably influence their writing performance which sociocultural's principle, namely "every student can perform differently on the same occasion as a result of the complex interaction of individual, situational, and task factors" (Bitchener, 2005).

During the Covid-19 pandemic, it was difficult for teachers to give feedback on students' writing performance. Most of the teachers, therefore, suggested making a note or giving symbols to the errors and asking them to revise their writings. It can be inferred that the teachers choose coded indirect feedback. However, it depends on the errors. If the error is not complicated, the teachers mark the error and give hints to the students to correct them. Otherwise, if the errors are too complicated, the teachers give comments and the correct answer. Bitchener (2005) argued that there is no significant difference in coded and uncoded indirect feedback in text revision. Moreover, he also argued that direct corrections lead to more correct revisions than indirect corrections. However, indirect feedback reduces error correction in a new piece of writing.

Providing feedback on students' writing is necessary for them because the teachers can eventually recognize their students' strengths and weaknesses in learning a second language (Bijami, 2016). Also, teachers can appreciate the students' effort and improve their writing performance and language accuracy. Embracing a sociocultural approach in giving feedback, teacher-student interaction, and negotiation provide abundant opportunities for learning (Ahmadian, 2014). Teachers should concern with the student's needs, interests, background, and abilities, consider their zone of proximal development, use collaborative learning to improve their skills, and assist students to achieve their independent level.

6. CONCLUSION

This study examines the teachers' experiences in giving feedback on students' writing performance. While giving feedback, most of the teachers choose corrective feedback which focuses more on the grammar. The reasons are some curricular issues and students' current understanding. However, all the aspects of the writings should be considered consecutively because students are expected to master the structure, grammatical, and content of the writings.

Most participating teachers tend to employ teacher-student conferencing because they can discuss the errors comfortably and directly confirm students' comprehension. Teacher-student conferencing also provides dialog interactions, negotiation, and joint constructions of new knowledge which are strongly connected to the sociocultural approach. It believes that learning is obtained from social

interactions and that low achieving students may need different types of feedback from their high achieving classmates to allow long-term learning.

From a sociocultural perspective, teachers should be aware of students' interests, needs, and abilities, and consider their zone of proximal development. Most of the teachers in the current study have considered students' zone of proximal development in giving feedback. They argue that students should be able to independently correct their own errors in the future. However, there is no guarantee that students will not make the same errors on a similar occasion. It occurs because every student has different nature and experiences which can influence their writing performance. In sociocultural, individual circumstances, experiences, and social interactions may affect their cognitive development and decision, especially in writing performance.

This study only focuses on the teachers' experiences in giving feedback to their students' writings. Further research regarding the observation of dialog interactions in teacher-student conferencing can be conducted since most teachers argue that it has been the most effective way in giving writing feedback. Moreover, research comparing direct and indirect feedback to junior high school students can be considered since most studies only focus on tertiary or college students.

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