

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Feedback plays an important role in helping students develop their writing skills. Shvidko (2020) notes that feedback on student writing not only addresses writing, language, or content but also expresses and negotiates the relationship between humans. Through feedback, students are guided to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their writing and are directed to make more meaningful improvements. This provides a means of communication between students and teachers, helping to build a relationship between them.

Written feedback is an essential tool for improving writing skills. Teachers' comments and notes help students review their writing and understand how to improve it. Among the various types of feedback, there are direct and indirect feedback. This variation offers teachers a choice that can be adapted to suit the abilities of the students they are teaching. According to Bitchener and Storch (2016), indirect feedback is suitable for more advanced learners, as they are already able to correct their own mistakes. Direct feedback is more suitable for learners with beginner-level language skills. This is in line with the view of Ferris and Hedgcock (2023) they state that students' mistakes can be clearly corrected through direct feedback, which makes it more suitable for writers who require clear guidance, such as beginner writers. Indirect feedback, on the other hand, requires students to engage in problem-solving, as feedback is provided solely by circling or underlining errors without offering the correct explanation; therefore, this feedback is more suitable for learners with enough linguistic knowledge to correct their own work.

The direct written feedback method was implemented by an English teacher at a public junior high school in Tasikmalaya for seventh-grade students in their second semester of 2025. During that semester, the teacher corrected and gave feedback on students' worksheets by writing notes at the bottom. These notes included corrections of students' mistakes, explanations of reasons for the errors,

and ways to correct them, for example, “*dalam kalimat interogatif, ‘Can’ diletakan sebelum I dan You, ya! Contoh: ‘Can you help me?’*” (In interrogative sentences, “Can” is placed before ‘I’ and “You.”, oke! Example: ‘Can you help me?’). In addition, the teacher also gave appreciation and motivation to students through these notes, for example: “Good job, girl! *Terus pertahankan dan tingkatkan, ya!*” (Good job, girl! Keep it up and improve!), “*Terima kasih sudah berani mencoba. Kamu melakukannya dengan baik! Semangat! Perbaiki dan tingkatkan, oke?!*” (Thanks for giving it a shot, you did great! Cheers! Keep improving, okay?!). The teacher marked the location of errors in students’ answers by underlining or circling them in red ink so that they could be easily identified. Feedback was given using casual language to minimize pressure that could intimidate students. Recent research by Carless and Winstone (2020) emphasises that feedback is most effective when students perceive it as a form of support rather than judgment. The results of the observation showed that students’ scores improved from the first meeting to the last meeting before the final exam.

Based on contextual issues and building on existing research, I am interested in conducting research similar to that undertaken by Wisz (2018), which explored students’ perceptions of written instructor feedback on student writing in a university setting. I want to explore how younger learners experience teacher comments. My research turns attention to Indonesian junior high schoolers who are in the transition from childhood to early adolescence. At the age of 12-18, they are right in what Erikson (1968) calls the ‘Identity vs. Role Confusion’ phase. In this study, Erikson’s theory (1968) is used as an emotional perspective to understand how students perceive and respond to teacher-written feedback as they transition from childhood to adolescence. During this transitional phase, students begin forming their sense of identity and tend to be more sensitive to external evaluation, particularly from authority figures such as teachers. Therefore, a teacher’s words can strongly influence students’ perception and interpretation of the feedback they receive, shaping their cognitive understanding, emotional responses, and their actions in learning.

However, most research has focused on university students, leaving a gap in our understanding of how younger students who are in the process of forming their identities respond to feedback from their teacher. According to Ruiz-Primo and Brookhart (2017), students' perceptions of feedback significantly influence their willingness to act on it. This is particularly important for junior high school students, who may be more sensitive to evaluative comments. Although previous research has extensively explored students' perceptions of written feedback in higher education contexts (López Casoli, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2021) and in secondary school settings in English-speaking countries (Pankow et al., 2024), little is known about how junior high school students in Indonesia perceive written feedback from teachers, particularly feedback delivered in a relaxed and appreciative tone. This study addresses this gap.

B. Formulation of the Problem

This study seeks to answer the following research question: What are the perceived benefits of written feedback provided by their teacher for the students' learning?

C. Operational Definitions

To avoid misunderstanding in this study, the researcher provides an operational definition of each keyword:

1. Students' Perception

In this study, student perception refers to seventh-grade students' assessment of written feedback from their teacher on their English worksheets, focusing on the perceived benefits of feedback as parameters. These perceptions were identified through students' cognitive (understanding and interpretation), affective (feelings and emotional responses), and conative (intentions or behavioural actions) reactions to the feedback.

2. Teacher's Written Feedback

In this study, the teacher's written feedback refers to written comments given on students' English worksheets to clarify errors, provide corrective explanations, and offer guidance or encouragement, delivered in a casual, friendly tone, including markings such as circling or underlining mistakes, along with additional notes

explaining the reasons for errors and how to correct them. The written feedback is written in red ink to make it easier for students to identify the error location and the explanation of the students' error as feedback from the teacher.

3. Junior High School Students

Junior high school students are students ranging in age from 12 to 15 years old, who are in a transitional period from childhood to adolescence. During this phase, students are looking for their identity and are easily influenced by their environment. They are beginning to think abstractly but still need concrete examples. They are sensitive to criticism, so teacher feedback must be given carefully to maintain their motivation. In this context, the students concerned are three 7th graders at a junior high school in Tasikmalaya, who received feedback on their writing from their English teacher. These three students received the lowest marks among the students at the first session, but subsequently showed continuous improvement in subsequent sessions.

D. Aim of the Study

This research aims to describe young students' perceptions of written feedback from the teacher in English language learning.

E. Significances of the Study

The significance of this research includes the theoretical, practical, and empirical contributions of the research results that have been conducted.

1. Theoretical Significance

This study enriches theory by demonstrating how to combine and apply the theories of Hattie and Clarke (2018), Walgito (2010), and Ryan and Deci (2017) in a new context, as well as linking these theories to the context of education in Indonesia. These three theories were integrated based on their different but interconnected roles in this study. Firstly, Hattie and Clarke's (2018) theory of feedback levels (task, process, and self-regulation) served as an operational framework for categorising the type of written feedback provided by the teacher. Secondly, Walgito's (2010) theory of perception (cognitive, affective, and conative) serves as the primary analytical lens for describing students' perceptions, which directly addresses the research questions. Thirdly, Ryan and Deci's (2017)

Self-Determination Theory (competence, autonomy, and relatedness) serves as an explanatory framework for interpreting the psychological significance behind these perceptions. Thus these theories form a coherently connected line from the type of feedback provided (Hattie and Clarke, 2018), through the description of students' perceptions (Walgito, 2010), to the interpretation of its psychological impact (Ryan and Deci, 2017).

2. Practical Significance

Practically, this research generated practical and strategic recommendations for English teachers to design more effective written feedback. The research findings can serve as a basis for professional development training for teachers in terms of techniques for providing constructive evaluation and feedback.

3. Empirical Significance

This research filled data gaps by collecting direct evidence from the voices of Indonesian junior high school students, which has not been widely researched.