



"MY FEELINGS": UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS' EMOTIONAL RESPONSES TOWARDS SUPERVISORS' WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN THEIR THESIS WRITING

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ABSTRACT

This case study aims to discover the undergraduate students' emotional response towards supervisors' Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) in their thesis and examine its impacts on their thesis writing process. This research was conducted at one university in Tasikmalaya, West Java, Indonesia by involving three undergraduate students as the participants. Semi-structured interview was used to collect data then it was analyzed using thematic analysis from Braun & Clarke (2006). The results revealed that the emotional responses felt by students included positive emotional responses consisting of acceptance of feedback, satisfaction, and feeling of happiness; and negative emotional responses consisting of rejection of feedback, dissatisfaction, distraction, frustration, disappointment, and sadness. Meanwhile, its impacts on their thesis writing process were improving undergraduate students' consciousness in writing thesis, enthusing to complete the thesis immediately, and discontinuing writing thesis for a certain period of time.

Keywords: Emotional Response, Written Corrective Feedback, Undergraduate Thesis

INTRODUCTION

Written corrective feedback (henceforth WCF) is a crucial topic in second language (L2) writing and L2 acquisition research (Chen, Nassaji, & Liu, 2016). Bitchener and Basturkmen (2010) stressed WCF is the most important input sources on students' thesis writing because a thesis can be characterized as a complex research task in which supervisor's WCF is indispensable (e.g. Heath 2002; McCormack 2005 see Kleijn, Meijer, Pilot, & Brekelmans, 2013). In addition, many studies were conducted on students' emotional responses towards teacher WCF particularly in writing courses such as in New Zealand, Turkey, and Malay (Harris, Brown, & Harnett, 2014; Kahraman & Yalvac, 2015; Mahfoodh, 2017). Furthermore, in my university in Indonesia, I found my friends who were conducting a research proposal react emotionally (e.g. happy, confused, and frustration) after doing the supervision. Their facial expression showed their feelings. One of them ever told me "luckily there are supervisors, so I could find my mistakes". Another one talked alone "ouch God, help me; what should I write?" while looking at the WCF from the supervisor on her draft. She felt confused and spent much time to revise her research proposal.

However, an investigation of how Indonesian EFL undergraduate students' emotional response towards supervisors' WCF in their thesis writing is less investigated. Furthermore, Harris, Brown, & Harnett (2014) have pointed out that "While there is some data around what

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student report wanting from feedback, students' emotional responses to feedback received have been largely ignored" (p. 110). Thus, to fill this gap and based on the case I found, this research intends to discover undergraduate students' emotional responses on supervisors' WCF and its impacts on the process of their thesis writing.

LITERATURE REVIEWS

A. Thesis Writing in Undergraduate Students

Writing a thesis for the first time is often a challenge for undergraduate students. Komba (2015) claimed that writing a thesis is not an easy task. "Learners usually found themselves blank when they write a thesis" (Dwihandini, Marhaeni, & Suarnajaya, 2013, p. 2). In addition, Bitchener & Basturkmen (2010) found that limited understanding of the thesis genre characteristics and its component parts (e.g. introduction and discussion sections) are two of the main difficulties in conducting a thesis. Additionally, Dwihandini, Marhaeni, & Suarnajaya (2013) classified factors affecting undergraduate students' thesis writing difficulties into three factors, psychological, sociocultural, and linguistics factor. Thus, writing a thesis for undergraduate students is challenging.

B. Written Corrective Feedback on Students' Thesis Writing

WCF has been a concern of many researchers (e.g. Ferris, 2014; Hyland, 2013; Kamberi, 2013; Mack, 2009; Robinson, Pope, & Holyoak, 2013). In addition, WCF plays a vital role in teaching and learning process (Kamberi, 2013; Robinson, Pope, & Holyoak 2013; Ferris, 2014); and helps the students to be better writer (Hyland, 2013). Furthermore, the importance of WCF also prevails for students' thesis writing. Bitchener and Basturkmen (2010) reported that the information and critique or advice given by the supervisors on the students' thesis draft during the supervision is important.

However, "for teacher written feedback to be effective, it should be formulated, structured, and delivered in particular way that encourages students active engagement" (Harves, Simth, Dysthe & Ludvigsen, 2012, see Mahfoodh, 2017, p. 54). Additionally, WCF must be done politely to be used as a tool of assessment to increase students' motivation, engagement, and interest (Srichanyachon, 2012). Furthermore, teachers or supervisors should carefully consider a balance between grammar WCF and content-oriented WCF (Chen, Nassaji & Liu, 2016).

C. Emotional Responses

Emotion was firstly brought by Darwin in 1872, and then derived by Ekman in 1972. They pointed out "emotions are considered to be relatively short-duration of intentional states that entrain changes in behaviour, physiological, and cognitions" (Hess & Thibault, 2009, p. 120). Recently, Mahfoodh (2017) discovered that students' emotional responses towards teacher written feedback included acceptance of written feedback, rejection of written feedback, surprise, happiness, dissatisfaction, disappointment, frustration, and satisfaction.

In EFL context, studies examined on emotional responses have received little attention from researchers (Lee, 2008), so it is necessary to give definition for the term emotional responses in this study. Krosnick and Petty (1995) pointed out "an emotional response refers to the feelings to which an individual responds when an object is evaluated" (as cited in Mahfoodh, 2017, p. 54). Similarly, Plotnik and Kouyoumdjian (2013) have recently reported, "An emotional response refers to feeling some positive or negative emotion, such as happiness, fear, or anxiety, when experiencing a stimulus" (p. 201). Thus, in this study emotional response refers to the undergraduate students' feelings when getting supervisor's written feedback including positive emotion such as acceptance of feedback, happiness, etc. and negative emotion such as rejection of feedback, frustration, etc.

METHOD

The research design used in this research was case study. Case study method permits the researcher to maintain the whole and important features of realistic events (Yin, 2003). The participants of this study were three undergraduate students English Education Department at Siliwangi University in Indonesia. They are females with the average age around 22-24 years old. In addition, the data were collected using semi-structured interview and analyzed thematically (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Undergraduate Students' Emotional Responses on Supervisors' WCF

1. Positive Emotional Responses

The first emotional response revealed by the undergraduate students is acceptance of feedback. In this situation, the undergraduate students were asked about their feelings towards supervisors' WCF on their thesis and their agreement on it. Excerpt 1 showed they accepted a great deal of supervisors' WCF. In addition, they paid great attention to supervisors' WCF because they relied on it for revising their thesis drafts. They highly believed on the supervisors. They agreed to almost all WCF given by the supervisors because they trusted the authority of supervisors as the main source of feedback (Mahfoodh, 2017). This finding is similar to Chen, Nassaji, and Liu (2016) who reported that the university students in Mainland China had a positive perception on WCF. They expressed the acceptance of feedback in their EFL writing classes.

Excerpt 1

Although my thesis was full of comments, it was useful and I felt that I must revise it. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

I agreed because it was my mistake. I did not write my thesis well. So, I followed the supervisor's feedback. (P2, February 24th 2019, Author's Translation)

I do agree. After I got the feedback and explanation, so it came one understanding. (P3, February 22nd 2019, Author's Translation)

The second undergraduate students' emotional response is satisfaction. They revealed that they satisfied during the process of supervision. Additionally, they highlighted that they liked WCF which is readable and understandable because it made them know their mistakes and encouraged them to revise their thesis to be better. Furthermore, P1 showed her dependence and satisfaction towards the second supervisor's service because her first supervisor was too busy and had very limited time to supervise her. They stated:

Excerpt 2

I satisfied when my supervisor gave me the written feedback which is understandable for me. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

Alhamdulillah I satisfied. So, I could know my mistakes and it became a lesson for me. (P2, February 24th 2019, Author's Translation)

Yes. (Yes refers to agreement of satisfaction on an understandable WCF) (P3, February 22nd 2019, Author's Translation)

Excerpt 3

I was happy to get many feedbacks for my first findings chapter because I realized that I needed it. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

I was happy when the correction was little and my supervisor suggested me to continue to the next part. (P2, February 24th 2019, Author's Translation)

Yes, I was happy because I got praise. (P3, February 22nd 2019, Author's Translation)

Feeling of happiness is the third emotional response. These findings reveal that feeling of satisfaction and feeling of happiness brought them to be easier to understand their mistakes, revise their thesis, and improve their writing. In line with Sadecki and Swales (1988), positive feelings towards supervisor's WCF were felt by the L2 students "because they believed that it helped them to develop and learn more" (as portrayed in Mahfoodh, 2017, p. 69). However, Brookhart (2010) explained that "WCF gives students information they need so they can understand where they are in their learning and what to do next" (see Srichanyachon, 2012, p. 13). To sum up, the findings showed that the undergraduate students viewed WCF is effective in helping them improve their thesis writing.

2. Negative Emotional Responses

The findings revealed not only positive emotional responses, but also negative emotional responses. The first is rejection of feedback. It was expressed due to the case of different opinion with the supervisors.

Excerpt 4

Precisely, it was a closing statement for me, but why should it be deleted? (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

The supervisor asked me to little explain about tour guide in my background, but I didn't agree. (P3, February 22nd 2019, Author's Translation)

In a situation, the supervisor suggested to delete a part of her paragraph, but P1 felt that it was the appropriate sentences for concluding her findings. P3 also had her own reason to disagree on the suggestion. She thought it did not need to explain about tour guide in her background because there were no journals she read talking about it in the background. Despite their rejection of feedback, finally they followed the supervisors' feedback or suggestion. Moreover, "for WCF to be useful, students must need it, receive it in a timely manner, and be able and willing to use it" (Shute, 2008, as cited in Harris, Brown, & Harnett, 2014, p. 108).

The second, the undergraduate students felt dissatisfied. They did not like supervisors' WCF which they could not understand and written comments in which their supervisors used codes and correction symbols (e.g. SS, underline, big circle, etc.) without any notes. This made them confused because they did not know what to do. Similarly, Peterson and Irving (2008) claimed that sometimes supervisor's WCF told the students the areas they need to improve, but it was not explicitly told how to correct it. On the other hand, P3 dissatisfied because she expected her supervisor to give comments on her background, but it did not happen.

Excerpt 5

By only giving an underline or a square without any notes or further explanation made me confused. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

I didn't like it because it was not clear and too many. (P2, February 24th 2019, Author's Translation)

For example, I wanted my supervisor to give feedback in my background because I felt it was still not good enough. I didn't know what to add, but she didn't give any feedback on it and thought it was enough. (P3, February 22nd 2019, Author's Translation)

The next negative emotional responses revealed are distracted and frustration. The main problem they faced was the supervisors' inconsistency in giving feedback. Once the supervisor corrected and suggested P1 to change the theme "The development on Teacher's Teaching Style" into "Classroom Management Development" because it was considered to be appropriate for the data, but in the next

supervision, the supervisor suggested to change it back to the first theme. Commonly, this situation also happened to P2 during writing her findings chapter. In accordance to this case, Butler and Winne (1995) noted inconsistent and vague are the possible problems raised from external feedback, supervisor's WCF (as cited in Harris, Brown, & Harnett, 2014). In contrast, P3 was not distracted and frustrated. She received the supervisors' WCF gracefully because she focused on her target to finish her thesis on time.

Excerpts 6

I was shocked when the theme has deal and my supervisor tell me that it was appropriate, but in the next supervision she asked me to change it again. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation).

I was surprised. Firstly, my supervisor ordered me to add it, but suddenly when she read it in the next supervision, it must move out to the third chapter. (It refers to a part in operational definition which is crossed) (Participant 3, February 22nd 2019, Author's Translation)

Excerpt 7

I was so frustrated. Because many times I consulted it, there still was not any solution for it. (It refers to the second paragraph of introduction chapter) (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

It happens to me now and I feel confused. (P2, February 24th 2019, Author's Translation)

The last, the undergraduate students were also expressed disappointment and sadness. In this situation, they were asked about their feelings when they found their thesis draft was full of supervisors' WCF. P1 felt disappointed because what she wrote hardly was streaked suddenly. Then, P3 was sad. She thought that her writing was useless because there were lots of mistakes she did in her writing. Meanwhile, P2 felt both, disappointment and sadness.

Excerpt 8

Sometimes, I disappointed because I must print the newest. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

I was sad and disappointed because many parts that I must revise. (P2, February 24th 2019, Author's Translation)

Excerpt 9

I was sad and disappointed because many parts that I must revise. (P2, February 24th 2019, Author's Translation)

My feeling in that moment was sad because in fact my writing was useless. (P3, February 22nd 2019, Author's Translation)

Too many WCF on their thesis made them sad and disappointed because they had to revise it over and over. These findings are contrast to Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) who reported that students in their research "thought it most useful for teachers to provide WCF on as many errors as possible" (p. 114). Although the undergraduate students felt disappointed and sad, they considered that WCF is important on all aspects including grammatical errors, content error, and organizational error (Chen, Nassaji, & Liu, 2016), so they received it gracefully and kept their head up finishing the thesis.

B. Impacts of the Emotional Responses on the Thesis Writing Process

1. Improving Undergraduate Students' Consciousness in Writing Thesis

In this study, I found that the undergraduate students had the same views about the WCF they got in their thesis writing. They revealed that each feedback brought them the same feelings and effects on the process of their thesis writing. Here, their acceptance of feedback towards supervisors' WCF made them more careful in writing their thesis. In addition, they learned a lot from the detail WCF given such as considering punctuation, consistency a term used, grammar accuracy, and content organization. They did not want to repeat the same mistakes on their next writing. They conveyed:

Excerpt 10

I knew and I realized on my mistakes, so for the next, I was more careful in organizing and making sentences because I was afraid that there will be corrections again. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

So, I was being more careful in writing my thesis. (P2, March 25th 2019, Author's Translation)

From there, I must more careful and recheck my writing before I give it to my supervisor. (P3, March 15th 2019, Author's Translation)

The data showed the role of supervisors' WCF for the undergraduate students' thesis writing consciousness. When they were asked about how their feeling affected their thesis writing process, they agreed that they received well the supervisors' correction (e.g. on grammatical errors, organizational errors, vocabulary errors, spelling errors, and punctuation errors) and further, it made them write their thesis carefully. This finding clearly shows that the supervisors' WCF is helpful for their thesis writing. It is relevant to Mahfoodh and Pandian (2011), student participants of their study argued that besides helping to identify and correct the errors, supervisors' WCF made them realize more on avoiding the mistakes on their drafts. Furthermore, looking at to the undergraduate students' needs, supervisors should consider the balance between grammatical feedback and content-organization feedback (Mahfoodh & Pandian, 2011).

2. Enthusing to Complete the Thesis Immediately

Being enthusiastic in writing thesis was another impact of the undergraduate students' emotional responses. Here, there were two situations. The first, the undergraduate students were being enthusiastic because of their feeling of happiness towards the supervisor's WCF. Meanwhile, the second, another was being enthusiastic during writing her thesis although she felt sad because there were too many WCF on her thesis draft.

Excerpt 11

Yes, I was so excited to finish quickly. I didn't want any more delays because a little correction made me happy which means that one more step of my thesis will be accepted. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

I was going more enthusiastic in writing. So, further I was being more confident to write. (P3, March 15th 2019, Author's Translation)

P1 kept her head up during writing her thesis because she was happy getting very little correction on her conclusion chapter. She hoped her thesis was going to finish as early as possible. In doing so, P3's spirit rose highly because she felt happy getting praise from her supervisor. Then, she continued her writing confidently. This is in line with Kormos (2012) that motivation "affects learners' attention paid to feedback

and their further development in creating text revision" (p. 399). Similarly, attitudes and motivation are factors that affect on how the impacts of WCF for student writers (Ferris, Liu, Senha, & Senna, 2013). On the other hand, P3 was also enthusiastic even when she was sad. She controlled her emotions so that it would not affect her writing negatively. Similarly, P2 kept fighting to finish her thesis immediately. In spite of her disappointment, she kept her head up to revise her thesis. They believed writing thesis in L2 is more challenging and demanding task so that they need guidance from their supervisors (Kahraman & Yalvac, 2015). Furthermore, the undergraduate students who receive WCF seem to be more encouraged to compose good and effective written works. (Kahraman, 2013 see Kahraman & Yalvac, 2015).

3. Discontinuing Writing Thesis for a Certain Period of Time

In this case, I found that besides improving undergraduate students' consciousness and enthusing to complete their thesis, there were negative impacts felt by the undergraduate students. Here, P1 was disappointed because there were too many corrections on her thesis drafts. Later, these feeling affected negatively on the process of her thesis writing. She was being stuck in writing her thesis for almost a month. On the other hand, P2 felt frustrated in the process of analyzing data. In this case, she analyzed and consulted it to the supervisor until eight times. She felt so upset of how to do the right one. Later, this feeling affected her to stop writing.

Excerpt 15

For about 2 weeks or even a month, I ever did not consult to my supervisor because I was stuck and disappointed. (P1, February 16th 2019, Author's Translation)

Seriously, I had ever dropped. I did not want to continue my thesis because I was so stressed. (P3, March 25th 2019, Author's Translation)

These findings demonstrated that disappointment and frustration gave negative impacts to their thesis writing process. This feeling could lead the undergraduate students to do not revise their thesis well (Mahfoodh, 2017). While it has well known that feedback is generally portrayed as positive, it could also affect negatively on the learners and their motivation (Harris, Brown, & Harnett, 2014).

CONCLUSION

Written corrective feedback is important for the undergraduate students' thesis writing development. The undergraduate students expect the supervisor to give indirect WCF because it is easy for them to understand and use it to correct their mistakes. They also claim that supervisors' WCF is very useful and helpful for them. Although it brought them different feelings and impacts on their thesis writing process, they agree that supervisors help them to revise and improve their thesis writing by providing WCF on their thesis writing. Thus, supervisors' WCF is crucial for the undergraduate students' successful thesis writing.

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