HIGHLY PROFICIENCY LEARNERS ON NOTICING STRATEGY TOWARDS CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

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ABSTRACT

This study primarily aims at capturing the nature of how highly proficiency learners (HPLs) employ noticing strategies in processing the indirect corrective feedback. The results of this study can be adapted by others learners to apply the strategy used by HPLs in noticing corrective feedback so that they can improve their writing ability. To meet the goal, a study on the way highly proficiency learners notice indirect corrective feedback that focused on three language aspects, i.e., lexis, grammar, and content was conducted. Observation and in depth- interview were used as the instruments to collect the data. The subjects chosen were six students who have a good performance on their writing. This study revealed that the HPLs are able to employ various noticing strategies when they are processing the indirect corrective feedback. They seem more cognizant of the problems they encounter and more capable of taking an action to respond the feedback given. Some noticing strategies are identified to apply in processing the feedback that are suited on the nature of the problems, such as by making any comparison, connection, correlation, identification of error, recalling the past experience/ knowledge and self-inquiry. However, three aspects that often applied by HPLs are identification of error well, recalling the past knowledge and self-inquiry.

Key words: noticing, corrective feedback, Highly Proficiency Learners

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bagaimana Highly Proficiency Learners (HPLs) memperhatikan strategi dalam mengolah umpan balik korektif secara tidak langsung. Hasil penelitian ini dapat diadaptasi oleh peserta didik lain untuk menerapkan strategi yang digunakan oleh HPLs pada umpan balik korektif sehingga mereka dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis mereka. Untuk memenuhi tujuan tersebut, studi tentang kemampuan melihat umpan balik korektif secara tidak langsung difokuskan pada tiga aspek bahasa, yaitu, lexis, tata bahasa, dan isi. Observasi dan wawancara digunakan sebagai instrumen. Subyek penelitian adalah enam siswa yang memiliki kemampuan yang baik pada tulisan mereka. Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa HPLs dapat menggunakan berbagai strategi ketika mereka melakukan proses umpan balik korektif tidak langsung. Mereka tampak lebih memahami masalah yang mereka hadapi dan lebih mampu mengambil tindakan untuk menanggapi umpan balik yang diberikan. Beberapa strategi diidentifikasi untuk diterapkan dalam pengolahan umpan balik yang cocok sesuai sifat dari masalah, seperti dengan membuat setiap perbandingan, koneksi, korelasi, identifikasi kesalahan, mengingat pengalaman belajar yang telah diperoleh dan self-inquiry. Namun, tiga aspek yang sering diterapkan oleh HPLs adalah identifikasi kesalahan, mengingat pengetahuan yang telah diperoleh dan *self-inquiry*.

Kata kunci : memperhatikan, umpan balik korektif , siswa yang sangat menguasai

INTRODUCTION

Learning is fundamentally a process that involves making mistakes, but it forms an important aspect of learning virtually any skill or acquiring information (Brown, 2007:257). In L2 writing classroom, for instance, it is quite often that students make occasional errors on

some language aspects, particularly on grammar and lexis. In response to this matter, teachers occasionally provide corrective feedback prior to the students' errors in writing. The underlying assumption for giving corrective feedback is that it supposes to help students notice their errors and, subsequently, produce the correct forms.

Corrective feedback in the writing classroom context is widely known as the strategy used by a teacher to correct errors made by students in writing. Teacher's corrective feedback can be in the form of direct and indirect feedback strategy. Direct feedback deals with the way how teacher identifies an error and supplies the correct form, while indirect feedback refers to the way how the teacher indicates that an error has been made but does not provide a correction, thereby leaving the student to diagnose and correct it. In this study, the investigation has been focused on teacher's indirect corrective feedback in which teacher just gave symbol on the aspects of lexis, grammar and content for the purpose to let students think the correct version. A study conducted by Eslami (2014: 451) that compare the efficacy of the two types of WCF namely direct red pen and indirect feedback in which the results show, the indirect feedback group proved to be significantly better than the red pen feedback group on the delayed post-test. This suggests the lasting effectiveness of the indirect WCF over direct red pen feedback, giving direct corrective feedback cannot help to improve their English. The fact also showed that students tend to receive direct corrective feedback than indirect corrective feedback because they do not need to think the correct version, however, they are unrealized that direct corrective feedback make them lazy to think. In other word, direct corrective feedback gives more negative effects than positive effect. Thus, giving indirect corrective feedback will give more beneficial for students to improve their English.

The problem comes when the low-learners cannot notice the corrective feedback in the form of indirect. As a study conducted by Mufanti (2014) revealed that low-proficiency students were weak in noticing errors, failed to recall their knowledge, tended to ignore or make unintended changes in processing the feedback and guess the problem, reordered the sentence, rephrased the sentence structure by using simpler words and avoided the use of the complicated words or removed the idea when they got difficulties in revising the sentence. To help low-learners overcome their problem in noticing indirect corrective feedback, researchers and teachers need to conduct a study on how highly proficiency learners using strategy in noticing indirect corrective feedback. Based on the reason, a study to explore in greater depth on how highly proficiency learners notice the gap between their incorrect forms and the target language forms from the corrective feedback given in writing an argumentative essay was crucial to conduct in which their strategy can be adapted by low learners.

The concept of noticing strategy in this research was defined as the way how students notice a mismatch or gap between some aspects of language (i.e. lexis, grammar, and content) they produce in an essay and the errors correction they receive in the form of indirect corrective feedback. Schmidt (1990) defines noticing as subjective experience and one's ability to report

such experience. In this point of view, noticing entails a certain level of awareness, and such awareness is necessary for language learning to take place. Noticing is identified as being nearly meaning with attention in that both noticing and attention involve awareness. As it is claimed by Swain (1995) that learners need to notice a form before they can acquire it Furthermore, Gass (2001:298) view that noticing is considered as the heart of the interaction hypothesis and is one of the crucial mechanisms in the negotiation process. Batstone (1996:273) defines noticing as the intake of grammar as a result of learners paying attention to the input where intake refers to input which becomes part of the learning process. In this notion, noticing is equated with intake that is derived from the source of input. It as a mean whereby learners take control over the information (input) received. In particular, it was indicated by the ability/inability of the students to react and make correction to teacher's indirect corrective feedback. For example, the teacher gave corrective feedback by circling the word "criteria" towards student's sentence of "The main criteria to be a professional English teacher is good at explaining the materials". In this case, the students supposed to notice that their sentence encountered error, and they probably reacted by changing the circled word with 'criterion', 'criterias' or even with no change. In this notion, the phenomenon of noticing could be traced by analyzing the teacher's feedback, students' correction towards the feedback given, and their comment on interview.

METHOD

A qualitative approach formed the methodological basis of this study. The procedures of research methodology and the theme of the essay was adapted from Mufanti (2014) who also conducted this kind of research but for low learners. Six university student-teachers majoring in English were involved as subjects that were recruited voluntarily from one of private universities in Indonesia. The six students chosen have good proficiency in writing. Two methods of data collection were used to get the data of noticing: observation on the students' composition (i.e., reading extensively the teacher's feedback and students' correction) and an in-depth interview with the subjects. Two observers were involved in the study.

In collecting the data, each of the subjects was first required to write about a 750-words argumentative essay on Day 1 under the topic of 'A Professional English Teacher'. Afterwards, the lecturer provided indirect corrective feedback focused on the three aspects of language: lexis, grammar, and content. Then, the subjects were assigned to diagnose and correct the errors on Day 7.

An interview, in the form of a semi-structured face-to-face technique which was carried out after the subjects corrected their essays, was then conducted. The interview was intended to map out each subject's thoughts and needs, for instance, regarding strong and weak areas, desire for feedback and support, as well as motivational factors. Specifically, it was meant to find out what noticing strategies they actually used upon receiving the corrective feedback, to assess and discuss improvement, and to identify whether the amount of feedback has been

sufficient or not and what areas have been attended next and so forth.

To trace for evidence of the subjects' noticing of corrective feedback, the main source of data from the subjects' correction and teacher's feedback were compared and analyzed qualitatively. Beside that, the subjects' corrections were analyzed to see whether they were correct or incorrect, whether they were made in response to the feedback given or unsolicited, and whether the changes were made at the language aspects of lexis, grammar, or content.

Afterwards, the revisions made by students were interpreted and analyzed to explain the merit of the subjects' noticing. For the sake of analysis, noticing was indicated as any error correction identified and self-revised by the subjects in their revised text and it was validated by the result of the note-taking derived from the interviews. The data elicited from the interviews were categorized into different sorts of classification and were intended to find out particularly the noticing strategy used by subjects to process the feedback. Furthermore, the data relating to the same categories in different interviews were compared to see if any pattern existed.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Results of the data analysis are presented below. The findings cover highly-proficient learners' noticing towards teacher's feedback on grammar, highly-proficient learners' noticing towards teacher's feedback on lexis, and highly-proficient learners' noticing towards teacher's feedback on contents.

1. Highly-Proficient Learners' Noticing Strategy towards Corrective Feedback on Grammar

The data on the excerpts (1), (2), (3), (4) are used to analyze how highly-proficient students notice the indirect corrective feedback given by the teacher in the aspect of grammar.

> (1)   HPLs' noticing towards corrective feedback on grammar
>
> Teacher's Feedback   :As a basic element will comprehending
>
> much knowledge} g?
>
> Comment: 1). revise your grammar; put noun, 2). the modal "will" is not correct, change!,3). modal is not
>
> followed by Ving, change!
>
> Student's Correction   : The first basic element, you must
>
> comprehend much knowledge.

Excerpt (1) gives a clear picture that highly proficiency learners (HPLs) made errors both in the area of grammar or content. In terms of grammar, HPLs made incorrect sentence structure in which the sentence HPLs made had no *noun* in the position of subject due to "As a basic element" functioned as the adverb and the use of modal "will" and the verb "comprehending" in the sentence "will comprehending much knowledge". In response to the feedback given, it seemed that HPLs realized the error quite well. Therefore, HPLs revised the sentence into "The

first basic element, you must comprehend much knowledge" by adding "you" as the subject, change the modal "will" into "must" and correct the verb "comprehending" into "comprehend". This fact was admitted by them on the interview conducted after revising the essay. HPLs confirmed that the problem of sentence structure was relatively noticed and HPLs knew how to handle with this matter. The five other learners who are also the subjects of this research were interviewed, how to notice the feedback given by the students. They confirmed that they try to understand the comments given, recall their knowledge and correct the sentence, as Swain (1995) claims that learners need to notice a form before they can acquire it. Moreover, they told if, the teacher does not give next comments, it means their corrections are correct. They also read the grammar book if they forget the grammatical.

(2)   HPLs' Noticing towards Corrective feedback on Grammar:

Teacher's Feedback   : So that   student   (g) can learn
                          enjoyfully

Comment: need article

Student's Correction   : So that, the students can learn
                           happily

The excerpt (2) indicates that HPLs could recognize the error in article more easily. In some cases of writing, they used the article correctly. But, in another case like this sentence, they did not use it. Realizing this matter, they used their little analysis and concluded the case well. It indicated that the students of highly level were successful to notice the error and made a correct revision.

(3)   HPLs' Noticing towards Teacher's Feedback on Grammar

Teacher's Feedback   : In my humble opinion there
                           are five ways that $^{g\surd}$ English
                           teacher must achieve in order
                           to be a professional English
                           teacher.

Comment: need article!

Student's Correction   : In my humble opinion there
                           are five ways that the English
                           teacher must achieve in order
                           to be professional

Excerpt (3) indicates that HPLs made error in term of article in which the sentence used "*zero*" article. In their writing, HPLs made subsequent error in this aspect. Seeing this condition, HPLs then tried to make any comparison among the similar pattern on the problems throughout the writing. Then, they made a generalization that the error was on article. Fortunately, HPLs were able to resolve this problem successfully.

(4) HPSs' Noticing towards Corrective Feedback towards Grammar

Teacher's Feedback   : A professional English teacher must have $^{g\surd}$ good-organized lesson plan

Comment: need article!

Student's Correction   : A professional English teacher must have a well-organized lesson plan

Excerpt (4) shows that HPLs processed the feedback successfully. In the sentence "A professional English teacher must have $\surd$well-organized lesson plan" there was an error on the area of grammar. In this case, HPLs did not use an article on the compound noun "well-organized lesson plan". This problem seemed to be noticed well and revised correctly by HPLs. HPLs undoubtedly added the article "a". On the interview section, HPLs confirmed that they got some similar feedback in this aspect. HPLs tried to make any comparison among these feedbacks and succeeded to recall HPLs' knowledge about the use of article. Fortunately, the feedback was comprehensible enough to remind HPLs with the subject matter and help HPLs to make a correct change. In this regard, it could be stated that HPLs noticed the error well and made correct change basing on the feedback given.

2. Highly-Proficient Students' Noticing Strategy towards Corrective Feedback on Lexis

The data on the excerpts (5), (6), and (7) are used to analyze how highly-proficient learners notice the indirect corrective feedback given by the teacher in the aspect of lexis.

(5) HPLs' Noticing towards corrective feedback on lexis

Teacher's Feedback   : So that, the students can learn enjoyfully $^{(1)}$

comment: the word "enjoyfully" is wrong, change!

Student's Correction   : So that, the students can learn happily

As illustrated in excerpt (5), HPLs used incorrect word "enjoyfully" instead of using "enjoyably". This notion indicated that HPLs encountered problem with forming adverb. The text produced on day 7 showed evidence of noticing. In this case, HPLs realized the error and made a change of this word by substituting the other word which was similar in meaning. After having clarification check, it was known that HPLs tried to analyze carefully the error and had recalled the word "enjoyably". However, HPLs hesitated to use that word because HPLs were afraid to redo the error. Therefore, HPLs decided to use an alternative word that similarly represented their mind.

(6) HPLs' Noticing towards Teacher's Feedback on Lexis:

Teacher's Feedback : It is very important to the students to increase student willing [l] in learning process

Comment: the word willing is wrong, change

Student's Correction : It is very important to increase the students' willingness in learning process

As it is seen in example (6), HPLs got a problem dealing with the word choice. Here, they wrote incorrect noun *willing* instead of *willingness*. They tried to connect the word *willing* with the sentence they had ever made for long time ago *I'm willing to make you happy mom*. After a couple of minutes they observed the feedback with their previous experience, they then realized that they used incorrect noun. Fortunately, they could resolve this problem successfully.

(7) HPLs' Noticing towards Teacher's Feedback on Lexis:

Teacher's feedback : <u>In short</u>, there are five ways to be professional English teacher; *Revise your concluding paragraph* analyzing the students, motivating the students, having the <u>materials in good</u>, having good order lesson plan, and <u>bringing class to communicative class situation</u>

Revised version : There are five ways to be professional English teacher; analyzing the students, motivating the students, having good materials, having good order lesson plan, and making class into communicative

Furthermore, excerpt (7) shows how HPLs processed the feedback by analyzing the underlined feedback provided by the teacher. As was discussed previously that most of errors could be revealed successfully by HPLs. This happened in this case as well. Due to his high ability in writing, HPLs seemed to notice the error he made very well. With adequate analysis, HPLs attempted to formulate the errors. Fortunately, he could resolve almost the error in lexis unless the third error.

3. Highly-Proficient Learners' Noticing Strategy towards Corrective Feedback on Contents

The data on the excerpts (8), (9), and (10) are used to analyze how moderately-proficient students notice the indirect corrective feedback given by the teacher in the aspect of contents.

(8)   HPLs' Noticing towards corrective feedback on content

Teacher's Feedback   : <u>I will tell the first element</u>, as a basic element is comprehending much knowledge.

Delete the underline words, make your TS clearly, I don't get the point

Student's Correction   : The first basic element, you must comprehend much knowledge.

Unfortunately, HPLs did not notice if they had problem with the content, particularly in terms of writing a topic sentence. The topic sentence HPLs made provided no clear controlling idea and wrote an intention word *I will tell the first element*. This fact was admitted by them on the retrospective interview conducted after revising the essay. HPLs confirmed that they knew how to handle with this matter. However, HPLs did not aware that they had problem with the topic sentence and the feedback given intended to indicate this matter as well. HPLs argued that the kind of feedback was sufficient to help them notice the error in this aspect but HPLs could not revise it well. They just deleted the intention word since the feedback is so clear to delete the underline word, however they did not understand why the words must be deleted. On the other hand, they knew that the topic sentence was not clear, but they could not revise it. As HPLs did not concern with the case, HPLs could only leave this matter away without resolving this problem.

(9)   HPSs' Noticing towards corrective feedback on content:

Teacher's Feedback   : The first way is analyzing students} *?mention the point you will discuss*

Student's Correction   : The first way that should be paid attention by the teacher   is the ability to analyze the students

The excerpt (9) showed that HPLs seemed to notice this matter well. They tried to reread the supporting ideas attentively. In this regard, HPLs found that there was one missing in this sentence: that was to discuss the teacher's ability. Therefore, HPLs tried to rewrite the topic sentence by giving clearer subject and the controlling idea. Their writing experience and critical thinking skill might help them able to notice the subject matter well by comparing the problem in the topic sentence they had with the thesis statement they made.

(10)   HPLs' Noticing towards corrective feedback on content:

Teacher's Feedback   : The other way is you must have
                            <u>good attitude</u>? in your daily life
                            because you are the model for
                            students inside and outside the
                            classroom so they have also
                            good attitude. }? à make it
                            simple, unclear and too broad!

Student's Correction   : The other way is teacher must
                            have good attitude inside and
                            outside the classroom as the
                            model for us.

In Example (10), it was seen that the sentence made by highly proficient students was not considered as good topic sentence. This sentence provided no clear idea and the key word have good attitude is not suitable to support the main idea. Furthermore, HPLs made too much explanation for supporting sentence so it seemed not simple. HPLs seemed to realize this matter and make a change by deleting the clause "because you are the model for students" as they admitted that this clause was the supporting idea, deleting the words "in your daily life", and deleting the clause "so they have also good attitude". Besides, they also used the word teacher instead of you. However, the sentence seems not perfect because HPLs did not lay *s* to indicate plurality in the word of *attitude*. In the aspect of content, HPLs is able to change the sentence sounded as the supporting idea and make the sentence into simple. Although, they failed to explain the key word "*good attitude*" clearly. When, it was crosschecked with face to face interview, they claimed that they understood with the feedback given but they did not understand why the teacher put underline in the phrase *good attitude*. They thought hard to think with this problem, but they could not get the answer. Hence, they decided to let the words and later they will ask their teacher about this case.

CONCLUSION

In a broader sense, this study has taken into account some evidence of the crucial role of noticing in processing indirect corrective feedback in L2 writing, as Schmidt (1990) points out. Noticing is a device that facilitates the students to analyze the errors on their own based on the feedback they receive. It encourages them to be aware of the gaps or mismatches that exist on their writing and to reinforce themselves to use their own strategies, i.e., using comparison, connection, analysis, assumption, inquiry and so forth to process and resolve the problem they encounter.

The findings, however, reveal that it seemed that the highly proficiency learners were more cognizant of the problems they encountered and they were capable of taking an action what they should do in response to the feedback given. As result, they were able to apply different noticing strategies in processing the feedback that were fitted with the nature of the problems, such as by making any comparison, connection, correlation, identification of error, recalling the past experience/ knowledge, self-inquiry and so forth to resolve the subject matter. In short, the highly-proficiency learners acted to be able to self-evaluate their language problems and relatively take an appropriate strategy to resolve the problems they encountered well.

The highly proficient students are able to employ various noticing strategies when they are processing the indirect corrective feedback. They seem more cognizant of the problems they encounter and more capable of taking an action to respond the feedback given. Some noticing strategies are identified to apply in processing the feedback that are suited on the nature of the problems, such as by making any comparison, connection, correlation, identification of error, recalling the past experience/ knowledge and self-inquiry.

It is suggested for low-learners to adapt this noticing strategy to help them able to self-evaluate the indirect corrective feedback given. Even though, the English competences of HPLs are good to support them to revise the feedback, they do not get those competences instantly. They said, in the beginning their English competence was also poor, but the process in noticing indirect corrective feedback was able to improve their English competence. Teacher should motivate learners that learning second language needs a process, and noticing indirect corrective feedback is one of learning process. Moreover, poor learners should be realized that they need to recall their knowledge to revise the error and how to find to discover their own way in noticing indirect corrective feedback. Generally speaking, self-inquiry.

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