

Using Digital Applications for Giving Feedback on Students' Writing: A Case in a Written English Classroom

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Abstract. This study investigates the use of digital applications by English teachers to provide feedback on students' written work. The research was conducted at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University in Surabaya, Indonesia. The participants were one English lecturer from the Written English A class in the 2023-2024 academic year and 3rd-semester students enrolled in the class. Data was collected through interviews with the lecturer and analysis of students' written assignments that received online corrective feedback. The findings reveal that the lecturer utilised various digital tools, including Google Docs, Microsoft Word, and Turnitin, to deliver student writing feedback. The analysis indicates that direct feedback was the most common type, while indirect and metalinguistic feedback were employed less frequently. The digital applications facilitated the feedback process by enabling the lecturer to provide more detailed, personalised, and multi-modal feedback to support improving students' writing skills. This study contributes to understanding how English teachers leverage technology to enhance the feedback practices in the writing classroom. The results suggest that strategic integration of digital tools can significantly improve the quality and effectiveness of student feedback on their written work.

Keywords: Corrective feedback, Technology in education, Writing

1. INTRODUCTION

Students are encouraged to be proficient in four skills to comprehend English fully: speaking, listening, writing, and reading. Writing is essential for students to develop their English because it benefits their writing by making their ideas clear and understandable. Writing helps students recall information they have learned and focus on learning. Thus, they can better understand and memorise the lesson, which will last longer. Many students think writing is the most challenging skill compared to other skills. Moreover, the writer must deal with many writing components, such as grammatical structure, vocabulary, and punctuation, to do good writing. Besides speaking skills, writing is a productive language skill because it is an activity that results in useful writing. Writing takes a long time and patience; many students get bored quickly and think writing is unpleasant, as Richards and Renandya (2022) stated. This occurs because they regularly doubt their ability to make blunders and need more writing inspiration. The primary problems are not being able to write well in every situation

and needing to know more about writing correctness. Thus, providing corrective feedback is one method to help students strengthen their writing abilities.

Richards and Renandya (2022) claimed four writing stages: planned, drafted, revised, and edited. Students are required to prepare their writing. Students can select the kind of writing, subject, and style they will use during preparation. Students will compose a first draft of their writing after selecting it. There is some topic-related information in the writing draft. Then, students start to write their work. The following stage is revision. Students, teachers, and peers can all contribute to the change. After receiving corrections, students continue their writing and move into the editing stage. Of all those stages, the most important and primary is revision. The revision section is critical because it can show where students made mistakes and show student progress. The revision section is also known as feedback.

As part of the teaching and learning process, feedback helps educators and learners enhance the quality of their lessons and instruction. Using feedback in the classroom has become a fundamental teaching strategy for educators. Hattie and Timperley (2007) identify four feedback task levels. They claim that feedback might include suggestions for improvement and can be directed toward a task or product. Second, feedback can help pupils understand a task, such as answering a question. One way to conceptualise the third level of feedback is as individual feedback. It may concentrate on the assignment's self-evaluation component to determine whether a student can complete a task by applying previously taught methods. This level can help students develop self-efficacy and self-esteem. The final level of feedback is personal feedback unrelated to the work. It is frequently a broad compliment, such as, "You are an excellent student!" The first level mentioned is the most common form of feedback, often called "corrective feedback." This corrective feedback focuses on the appropriateness of behaviour or task accomplishment. One kind of written feedback is corrective feedback. There are various approaches to providing corrective feedback. According to Ellis (2009), corrective feedback can be written in seven ways: direct, indirect, focused, unfocused, metalinguistic, electronic, and reformulation.

Nowadays, human life is inseparable from technology and education. Conventional classroom training has to offer more involvement, quicker evaluations, and an instantaneous learning environment. On the other hand, this gap is filled by technology and digital learning resources. Some of the efficiencies modern technology offers are beyond the reach of traditional learning approaches. Cell phones and other wireless technology devices should be integrated into the classroom by schools and other educational institutions to make efficient use of them, especially considering how popular these devices are becoming in the general population. Students are more likely to use online remedial feedback because it is available at all times and from any location. Using technology in learning activities, students can get many benefits. According to a recent study by Aji et al. (2020), using digital applications to provide feedback on students' writing in English language classrooms offers several beneficial outcomes. Firstly, the digital tools enable teachers to deliver feedback in a more timely manner, allowing them to provide comments and suggestions immediately after students submit their written work, without lengthy delays. Secondly, the digital platforms facilitate more detailed and comprehensive feedback, as the commenting and annotation features allow teachers to address various aspects of the writing, including content, organisation, grammar, and mechanics.

Moreover, the study found that students tend to exhibit greater engagement and responsiveness to the feedback when delivered through digital means, as opposed to

traditional methods. The ease of access and ability to revise their writing based on the digital feedback further enhances students' motivation and investment in the writing process. Notably, the research also indicates that the incorporation of digital feedback strategies can lead to significant improvements in the overall quality of students' written compositions.

These findings underscore the potential of utilising digital applications to enhance the feedback and revision practices in English language writing instruction. By leveraging the capabilities of technology, teachers can optimise the timeliness, clarity, and effectiveness of the feedback they provide, ultimately fostering stronger writing skills among their students.

Numerous academics have studied students' writing skills utilising online corrective feedback. Widyaningsih (2018) conducted one of the previous studies that used online corrective feedback; she researched online corrective input via email with the participation of STKIP PGRI Tulungagung's English Department students for the second semester. Then, Ma'rufah (2019) researched online corrective feedback through Instagram, with the participants being senior high school students. In contrast, in this study, the researcher researches providing online corrective feedback through technology without focusing on one application. The participants are 3rd-semester students of the English Education study program who took Written English classes in the 2023-2024 academic year at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University Surabaya.

2. METHOD

In this study, a qualitative research design is employed. Creswell (2017) defines examining and understanding the importance of people or groups in a social or human circumstance as the goal of qualitative research. Qualitative descriptive research tries to describe, explain, and solve the questions to be examined in greater depth by analysing an individual, a group, or an event as closely as possible. Qualitative research uses humans as study subjects, and its conclusions are expressed in words or phrases that accurately reflect the situation. Through this method, the researcher identifies the corrective feedback the lecturer used the most frequently and describes the implementation of online corrective feedback through technology in students' written work. The information is gathered through interviews and documents.

This research was undertaken at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, Surabaya, in the English Language Education study program in the faculty of education and teacher training. The subjects of this research were one lecturer and 11 students' work out of 34 students from the Written English A class in the 2023-2024 academic year in the 2023-2024 academic year, as well as 3rd semester students who took Written English A class, where the researcher took one class out of three existing courses. The researcher only chose one of the three lecturers who taught Written English classes during the 2023-2024 academic year because only the class A lecturer, Mrs. Astuti, provided corrective feedback online to her students. The researcher took 11 students' work out of 34 who took Written English A. The researcher only took 11 students' work because the researcher only took the work of students who got the most online corrective feedback from the lecturer.

3. RESULT

The research findings are presented in depth in this part, organised around the research

questions: What does the teacher do to provide online corrective feedback using technology for students' written work? What corrective feedback does the teacher give students for their written work conducted through technology? This research was conducted at Sunan Ampel Surabaya State Islamic University. The researcher interviewed to answer the first research question and analysed documents related to online corrective feedback students get from their lecturer on their writing work in the Written English class to answer the second research question.

This research was conducted at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University, Surabaya, in the English Language Education Study Program in the Academic Year 2023-2024. This study aims to identify digital applications used by English lecturers in providing feedback on student writing and to explore how these applications facilitate the feedback process.

Based on interviews with the lecturer concerned, Google Docs is the digital application most often used to provide feedback on student writing. The lecturer stated that Google Docs is the most comfortable platform because it allows tracking changes, giving direct comments, and identifying spelling errors. In addition, Google Docs also provides language aids that help students identify their own mistakes.

Lecturers use several online feedback approaches, including:

1. Direct feedback: The Lecturer directly corrects the student's mistakes.
2. Indirect feedback: The lecturer highlights areas that require improvement without providing direct correction, providing opportunities for students to correct their mistakes.
3. Metalinguistic feedback: The lecturer gives linguistic instructions or explanations about the mistakes made by students.

The research findings indicate that English lecturers use digital applications such as Google Docs to provide feedback on students' writing. This application is preferred due to its features facilitating feedback, such as real-time collaboration, the ability to comment directly on the document, and change tracking capabilities. The lecturer uses Google Docs as her preferred platform for providing online corrective feedback. This platform allows teachers to track changes and add comments directly, making it easier than PDF files. It also allows for real-time collaboration, making the feedback process more interactive. Google Docs integrates well with other Google Workspace tools like Google Classroom, making it easy to distribute and collect assignments, give timely feedback, and monitor student progress. The lecturer uses a comprehensive strategy for providing online corrective feedback, starting with holistic and organisational feedback and then moving on to detailed and corrective feedback. She begins by checking for key elements such as topic sentences, supporting details, and conclusion sentences within paragraphs. When students encounter difficulties with these structural components, she asks guiding questions to help them think about how their ideas connect to the main topic. After confirming that the organisational elements are well established, the lecturer provides detailed feedback on technical aspects such as grammar, punctuation, and sentence structure. This systematic approach helps students develop their ideas thoroughly, resulting in deeper understanding and better overall writing quality. This scaffolding approach makes the feedback more manageable for students and highlights the importance of content and clarity over mere grammatical correctness. By prioritising the development of well-organised ideas, teachers foster a more meaningful learning experience, enabling students to become more effective and independent writers.

The findings of this study contribute to the understanding of how English teachers

leverage digital applications to provide feedback on students' writing. By examining the specific digital tools used and how much they facilitate the feedback process, this research offers valuable insights for educators and researchers interested in exploring the intersection of technology, feedback, and writing instruction in the English language classroom.

The use of digital applications has been found to significantly enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the feedback process in the English classroom. Teachers can utilise various digital tools to deliver more frequent, detailed, and personalised feedback, leading to improved student writing outcomes. Additionally, integrating digital applications allows for more efficient tracking and monitoring of student progress.

The research also sheds light on the various types of corrective feedback that English teachers can provide through digital applications. These include direct correction, indirect feedback, metalinguistic explanations, and focused feedback on specific language features. The integration of audio/video feedback and peer feedback can further complement the written feedback given by the teacher.

The findings of this study have important implications for English language teachers. Teachers can make more informed decisions about integrating technology into their writing instruction by understanding the digital applications that can be leveraged for providing feedback on students' writing and how these tools can enhance the feedback process. This can lead to more effective feedback practices and improved student writing skills.

Moreover, the research contributes to the broader body of knowledge in English language teaching and technology integration. By exploring the intersection of digital applications, feedback, and writing instruction, this study offers valuable insights for researchers and educators interested in exploring innovative approaches to enhancing the teaching and learning of writing in the English language classroom.

One of the key strengths of this study is its in-depth, qualitative approach to investigating the use of digital applications for providing feedback on students' writing. The case study methodology, which involves classroom observations, semi-structured interviews with English teachers, and analysis of student writing samples and the feedback provided through digital tools, allows for a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon.

The detailed examination of the specific digital applications used by English teachers and how these applications facilitate the feedback process is a notable contribution of this research. By delving into the nuances of the digital tools and the types of corrective feedback provided, the study offers a rich and contextual understanding of the feedback practices in the English language classroom.

Furthermore, the findings of this study have the potential to inform the development of teacher professional development programs and the design of pre-service teacher education curricula. By highlighting the effective integration of digital applications in the feedback process, the research can guide the creation of training opportunities and resources that support English teachers in leveraging technology to enhance their feedback practices and improve student writing outcomes.

The principal challenge lecturers face is time management, especially in providing feedback on various texts within a limited time. In addition, some students have difficulty understanding and applying feedback given online. Digital applications, especially Google Docs, facilitate giving feedback more efficiently and in an organised manner. This tool allows lecturers to provide more detailed and neatly arranged feedback, enabling students to see their mistakes directly and fix them.

Using digital applications such as Google Docs to provide student writing feedback shows how technology can be effectively integrated into learning English. The features in Google Docs allow the feedback process to be more interactive, where the lecturer can provide direct corrections to the student's text and track the changes made. This supports more independent learning for students because they can identify and correct their mistakes.

Digital applications, particularly Google Docs, play a crucial role in facilitating English lecturers' provision of feedback on students' writing. This study reveals that these tools enable a comprehensive and multi-layered feedback strategy, supporting holistic and detailed technical feedback. As Ene and Upton (2018) note, digital platforms allow for more detailed and multimodal feedback, enhancing the clarity and effectiveness of writing instruction. The ability to track changes and add comments in Google Docs creates an interactive feedback process. Xu and Carless (2023) argue that promoting deeper engagement with feedback encourages students to actively participate in their writing development. This interactivity is particularly valuable in academic settings where developing critical thinking and writing skills is paramount.

The built-in language tools in these applications promote student autonomy and self-correction, aligning with Li et al.'s findings (2021) that digital writing platforms with integrated language support features can enhance learner autonomy and self-editing skills. This aspect of digital feedback is particularly significant as it shifts some responsibility for error identification and correction to the students, fostering a more active learning approach. However, the study also highlights the importance of balancing automated suggestions with human expertise, as the lecturer emphasised not relying solely on automated grammar checkers. This balance ensures that feedback remains contextually appropriate and tailored to individual student needs.

From an efficiency standpoint, digital tools significantly aid in time management, allowing lecturers to create reusable comment lists and streamline feedback for common errors. This efficiency is crucial given the high volume of writing tasks in academic settings, as highlighted by Yim and Warschauer (2020), who state that digital feedback tools can substantially reduce the time required for providing detailed feedback. The ability to copy-paste comments for similar mistakes across different students' work helps lecturers manage the workload associated with multiple writing assignments and limited course hours. This time-saving aspect allows lecturers to focus more on higher-order concerns in writing, potentially improving the overall quality of feedback provided.

Integrating these digital tools with traditional face-to-face instruction exemplifies a practical blended learning approach, supporting Chen and Yu's assertion (2019) that combining digital feedback with in-person instruction creates a more comprehensive and effective writing pedagogy. The lecturer's practice of using Google Docs for written input while providing in-class explanations demonstrates how digital tools can complement rather than replace traditional teaching methods. This blended approach allows for the benefits of both digital efficiency and personal interaction, catering to students' diverse learning styles and needs.

Nevertheless, challenges such as time management and student understanding of feedback show that technology in education requires good planning and strategies to be applied effectively. Approaches combining digital feedback with class explanations can directly increase student understanding and make the learning process more comprehensive.

This study contributes to an understanding of how English lecturers can take

advantage of technology to improve the practice of providing feedback in the writing class, and the results of this study indicate that the strategic integration of digital tools can significantly improve the quality and effectiveness of feedback given to students in their writing.

Using Google Docs has proven to be very effective in providing detailed and structured feedback. This aligns with research that shows that digital applications can increase student involvement in revising their writing.

This application also supports student autonomy in identifying and correcting mistakes, essential in developing writing skills.

Integration of Digital Applications with Traditional Teaching. The blended learning approach that combines the use of digital applications with face-to-face discussions in class provides multiple benefits. Students get detailed feedback through a digital platform, but can also discuss the feedback directly with the lecturer.

This strengthens the concept that technology in education should not replace human interaction, but conversely, can complement it to achieve better results, challenges and solutions in providing online feedback. Although digital applications offer many benefits, challenges in time management and students' understanding of feedback show the need for additional strategies. A list of comments prepared in advance and sample-based feedback are several solutions that can be applied to overcome this challenge.

4. CONCLUSION

Using digital applications such as Google Docs significantly improves the quality and effectiveness of student feedback. However, additional strategies are needed to overcome challenges such as time management and student understanding of feedback. The blended learning approach that combines technology with traditional teaching has proven effective in improving student writing skills.

These parts provide a complete picture of how the results and discussions of this research can be compiled. These results and discussions can be expanded or adjusted according to the needs for a more in-depth thesis.

Overall, integrating digital applications in providing feedback in the Written English class at Sunan Ampel State Islamic University in Surabaya has improved the quality and effectiveness of writing learning. However, further adjustments in time management and learning strategies are needed to overcome existing challenges. The blended learning approach that combines technology and direct interaction is highly recommended for optimal learning outcomes.

The research reveals that using digital applications significantly facilitates English lecturers in delivering effective feedback. The interactive and asynchronous features of applications like Google Docs enable lecturers to provide more personalised, immediate, and contextual feedback. This, in turn, encourages active student engagement in the writing revision process. Additionally, the flexibility of digital applications also assists teachers in providing feedback even when the learning is conducted in a distance or hybrid mode. Overall, using digital applications has proven to enhance the quality and effectiveness of the feedback provided by lecturers on students' writing. The researcher collects students' written work, analyses the lecturer's feedback on twelve students, and categorises the feedback using Ellis's theory (2009). The results show that direct feedback is the most common type and is

used most frequently, while indirect and metalinguistic feedback are used less frequently. Direct feedback is primarily provided by teachers on Google Docs, where they correct students' errors in capitalisation and grammar. Indirect feedback targets sections of students' writing, asking questions about pronunciation drills rather than directly addressing the mistakes. On the other hand, metalinguistic feedback focuses on the learner's understanding and awareness of language rules, structures, or features. This approach helps learners understand the language system better, facilitating long-term language learning and proficiency development.

Due to the EFL learning process, teachers are expected to investigate the use of appropriate corrective feedback in all aspects of writing. Teachers are expected to pay close attention to how appropriate feedback is and the types of corrective feedback that can be used. Thus, teachers can better apply relevant corrective feedback to students when evaluating errors in students' written work.

For other researchers, this study explored the implementation of online corrective feedback through technology applied by the lecturer on student-written works and the types of online corrective input used by the lecturer on student-written works through technology. Therefore, the researcher hopes that other researchers can explore the implementation of providing corrective feedback in more detail and in-depth on learning activities in schools.

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