Feedback challenges and strategies in EFL classroom: Insights from non-formal education institution

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ABSTRACT

Feedback has a crucial position in supporting the success of teaching and learning processes in English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom setting. In addition, research in this essential topic should be conducted continuously. Most research on topic have been done at schools or even universities. Only few studies concentrate in non- formal education institution such as English courses. Therefore, it is reasonable to conduct this study. Employing qualitative research, this study invited eight English teachers at non-formal education institution. The study used interview as the instrument to collect data and thematic content analysis to analyze the data. The findings displayed that the participants faced challenges and having strategies in providing feedback for students. The result revealed that teachers find challenges like inappropriate response from the students and insufficient time to make it happen fully. Then, the strategies implemented to fulfill these challenges are sharing appreciation towards students' work at the beginning, making a clear follow-up session as well as having a clear information to students, and creating a direct comment to students' work and also adding some notes. This study will contribute more not only for non-formal education institution but also for formal education in general. Furthermore, other aspects, such as teaching approach as well as the method used may be considered as important to adjust with these findings.

Keywords: Challenges; EFL Students; Feedback Strategies.

INTRODUCTION

English is the most spoken as well as understood across countries compared to all the major languages. The use of English as an interaction tool can easily be seen through various industries, workplaces, or even social networking profiles. Furthermore, it is argued that English is spoken worldwide in almost all the fields such as science, medicine, engineering, education, tourism, etc (Rao, 2019; Goodrich, 2020; Belhiah, 2020) . Also, the skill of English is essential fully in order to have a better sense of communication internationally. It can be harder to compete in global market if people do not have sufficient competence in English (Widiastuti, 2021; Sari& Aminatun, 2021). Therefore, for those who can speak English well will be easy to create international communication. English is the key to transfer information which can assist people to create a better life opportunity. Both native and non-native speakers of English use the language as their mode of communication on a daily basis. Otherwise, Rahayu (2020) mentioned that having a limited knowledge of English by the students of English may lead to errors when they product the language itself. They are potentially producing the errors often without being aware of it if they do not receive any feedback from their teachers or tutors.

In the classroom setting of English Language Teaching (ELT), the role of feedback is significantly essential in order to support the teaching and learning processes. Most students will find their best of academic performances by having appropriate feedback from their teachers. On the other hand, the teachers are always trying their best to have a better performance as well as services to assist students to improve their academic competence. In addition, providing feedback to students is also a valuable contribution especially in the context of English as Foreign Language (EFL) classroom. Studies also found that feedbacks in learning are beneficial, ultimately in four aspects such as improving students' intellectual capacity, skills improvement, professional improvement, and strengthening self-reflection-oriented (Kourgiantakis et al., 2019; Hidayat & Nurul, 2022). Then, one study found that students have positive perceptions on oral corrective feedback at their EFL classroom. This study also indicated that there is not particular difference in the perception of students on oral corrective feedback (Faraz, et al., 2022). What is more, the context of the classroom may also have a direct impact on the way students perceive their teachers' feedback. When students receive feedback consistently, they may react differently with one another. This is because of their reaction towards teachers' feedback are also influenced by the instructional context in which feedback/correction is delivered. Similarly, the way how students respond to feedback may also be influenced by the person (teacher) who give the feedback. Students may use the information given by their teachers to make a kind of self-reflection fully. Branch & Paranjape (2012) in Dekker-Groen (2015) stated that the way teachers pose questions and give feedback to students to support the student's reflections. Feedback between teachers and students is essential pedagogical tool in educational setting. In one research study, Wojtas (1998), as cited in Ferguson (2011) mentioned that some student threw away the feedback if they disliked the grade given, while others seemed focused only with the final result and did not collect their marked work. This finding has identified the cases, therefore, feedback processes in teaching and learning should be highlighted as a crucial and valued aspect in all level of education.

There are many types of feedback given by the teachers to their students. All of feedback processes are believed to help students to have better performance academically. Instead of the types of feedback given to students, the way how feedback is delivered is essential as well. According to Boud & Molloy (2012), at higher and professional education setting, this issue has been focus discussed in many literatures. Providing feedback for students is an academic way to improve students' performance where teachers should consider it as essential fully. Furthermore, other aspects which related to feedback itself is the specificity of the information provided, the complexity and length, and also the timing (Yuan & Kim, 2015). There are many studies that explore different approach which have been implemented. The result is sometimes uniformly inconsistent in terms of how learners' response it. As an illustration, research conducted by Small & Attree (2016) claimed that undergraduate students' expectation of feedback informed that they hope feedback will inform their upcoming assessment and share explanations that will help them. In the process of providing feedback for students, teachers have different perceptions as well. For instance, the fact related to the lack of teacher's feedback literacy, especially as to the purposes of feedback itself (Chan & Luo, 2022).

Many researches as to the topic of feedback have been conducted in the context of formal education. Both in higher education and also secondary education. The studies not only highlighted the teachers' perception about feedback but also the perception of the students which exist in teaching and learning atmosphere. For example, peer-feedback implementation where learners gain more positive insights or learning experiences from the other learners while some learners felt not confident enough to correct his/her classmates' work (Saglamel & Cetinkaya, 2022). Moreover, positive result in terms of students' perception of feedback was confirm by Misiejuk, et al., (2021) that the learners accept feedback as a useful experience because they know their errors, willingness to revise them, etc.

In indonesia, non-formal education institutions play a stellar role in accommodating

people towards education. Different type of non-formal education institutions has their own characteristic as well. For instance, Learning Activity Center (SKB), Community Learning Activity Center (PKBM), Center for Religious Studies (*Majelis Taklim*), Vocational Training Center (BLK), Courses, etc. Not only the types of them are different but also the quality which will be influenced by teaching method as well as geographically location. In Addition, develop countries in Europe such as Denmark, Germany, and Finland put a high concern on non-formal education by proving sufficient budgets to support operational necessity, human resource development, and educational infrastructure (Bartin, 2020).

Current research of feedback in EFL classrooms found a controversial issue including the act of the teacher who did error correction rarely. Also, they did not know when and how long it took for providing feedback (Liu, Liu, & Zhang, 2021). In addition, the study of implementation of written feedback in EFL teaching and learning also found that most EFL teachers used form-focused feedback rather than electronic feedback and rubrics (Hakimi, 2020). Today, the use of technology in providing feedback is also a worldwide issue. In terms of applying online automated feedback, Salavatizadeh and Tahriri (2020) found that EFL students have a positive perception as to the effectiveness of the instrument used. They believe that this can contribute best for students' understanding. In addition, this can also be related to the psychology condition of the students respectively. In the study of oral corrective feedback, foreign language anxiety and second language development, Rassaei (2015) mentioned that low-anxiety students got more beneficial by having metalinguistic feedback compare to recasts. In contrast, students with high-anxiety accepted more beneficial from recasts activity than metalinguistic.

In conclusion, the study of English Language Teaching (ELT) in English as Foreign Language (EFL) context still has some challenges that need to be overcome. It sometimes deals with curriculum, teaching and learning methods, etc. Those problems tend to significantly affect learning outcomes (Devkota, et al, 2017). Most of the studies related to this topic were conducted in formal education institutions. Also, the previous study conducted by Hidayat and Mursyid (2023) only focus on the teacher's perception of feedback in EFL Classroom. Therefore, this research will expand the elaboration by exploring the challenges and strategies. Equally important, non-formal education institution will always help to provide best public service in terms of education. Public services in non-formal education institutions are more concern of focus on the needs of individuals of the service compared to formal education institution which is more complex (Ishak, et al., 2020).

This study is essential because the aim is to identity any best practices in non-formal education institutions. In other words, the objectives of this research are finding the challenges faced by the teachers in providing feedback for EFL Students. In addition, it also uncovers the strategies implemented by the teachers to deal with any single challenges.

METHODS

This qualitative study aims to explore the teachers' challenges and strategies in providing feedback at EFL classroom setting in non-formal education institutions. This can be searched by interviewing teachers based on their personal experiences. Implementing a convenient sampling technique, the study involved eight teachers (namely p1-p8) who teach English for EFL students at least two years period of time at non-formal education institution (see table 1). This technique is used to collect information from participants who are ready and easily accessible to the researchers (Etikan, et al, 2016). The thematic content analysis was used to analyze the data. It is focus in identifying, organizing, and interpreting theme in textual data (King & Brooks, 2021). The report of the findings illustrates several essential findings as a basis to draw conclusions.

Table 1 . Demographic information of the participants

Participant	Gender	Age	Time of Period in Teaching
p1	M	22	1 year
p2	F	26	4 years
p3	F	27	3 years
p4	F	28	3 years
p5	F	30	4 years
p6	F	31	2 years
p7	M	36	4 years
p8	M	36	2 years

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study identified two main challenges and three main strategies used by the teachers to provide feedback for ESL students. From the data analyzed, the authors highlighted those findings as mentioned below (See figure 1, 2, 3, 4).
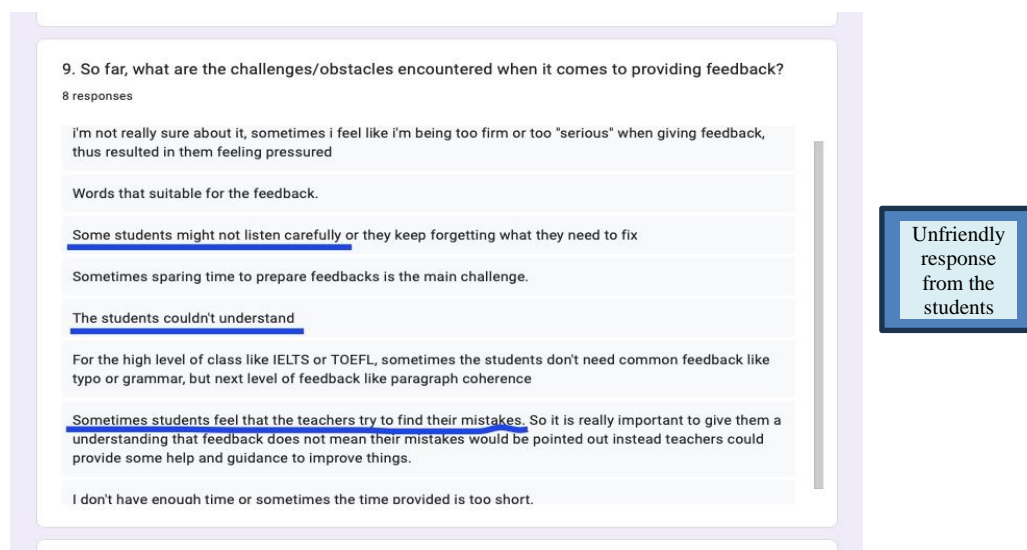
Challenges

Figure 1. Responses on the challenges of giving feedback

Sometimes students feel that the teachers try to find their mistakes . So it is really important to give them a understanding that feedback does not mean their mistakes would be pointed out instead teachers could provide some help and guidance to improve things .....(P7)

Some students might not listen carefully or they keep forgetting what they need to fix...(P3)
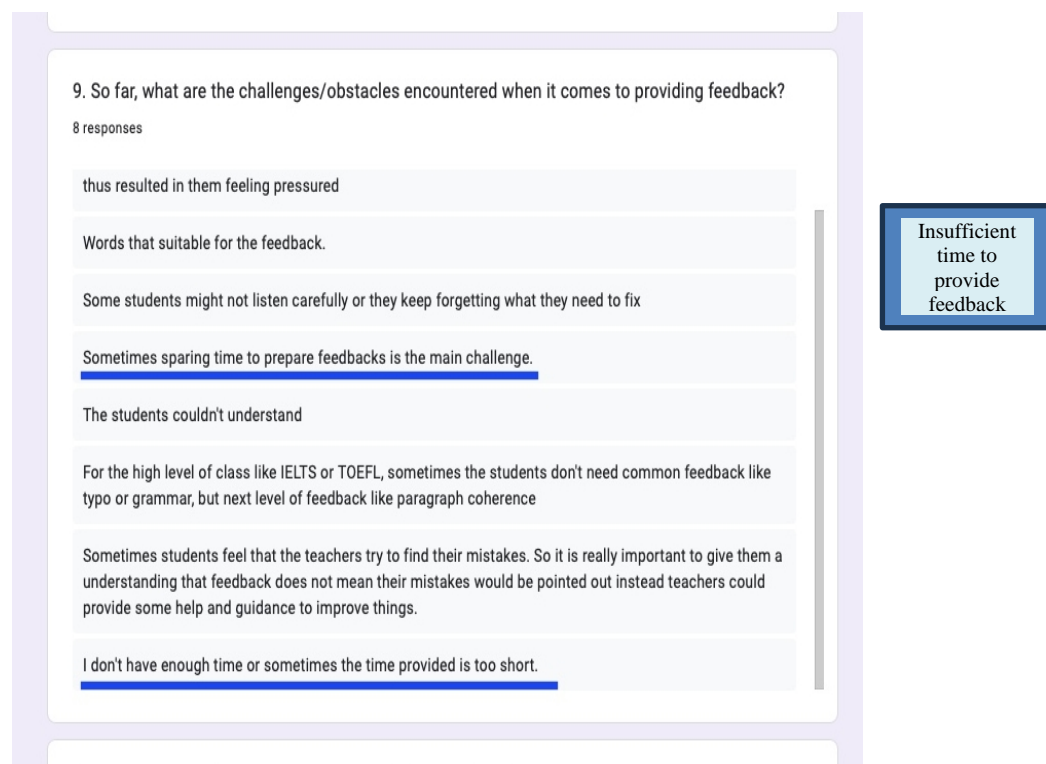
The students couldn't understand (P5)

Figure 2. Other responses on giving feedback

I don't have enough time of sometimes the time is too short (P8)

Sometimes sparing time is prepare feedback is the main challenge (P4)

Unfriendly response from the students

From teacher's view, students sometimes react to the process of feedback negatively. They think that teachers are intimidating them fully in order to find out their weaknesses. This is confirmed previous research by Weaver (2006) which was stated that students eagerly mentioned their need to have a balance comments, both negative as well as positive, to motivate them. Here, feedback can motivate them instead of discourage. Another confirmation was a finding by Zacharias (2007) which stated that students were also complain when teachers' feedback focus on the content. For the students, this can be too general and sometimes did not match with the students' ideas. Furthermore, some students will used the feedback to control their academic performance. Otherwise, they might even reject and resisted the feedback from their teachers altogether (Kang & Dykema, 2017). This is also mentioned by Rahayu (2020) that some feedback can elicit positive responses from the learners and internalized it during the learning activities. It leads them to immediate repairs.

Other students do not have willingness to pay attention to what their teachers suggest while the other do not understand as well. Furthermore, Hattie and Timperley (2007) in Carless and Boud (2018) mentioned that one of the weaknesses of feedback is that the difficulty for the students to generalize messages to other tasks and taking subsequent

action. Furthermore, only students who had little self-confidence towards their learning that receive feedback negatively (Ziman, et al., 2007). Those points are mentioned above by p3, p5 and p7.

Insufficient time to provide feedback
This is one of the challenges faces by the teachers in providing feedback. This finding clearly stated that the issue of timing should be considered as crucial. The teachers do not have enough time to interact with students, but it is needed by the students to support their performances academically. A study on effective feedback by Swart, et al., (2019) confirmed that feedback could be best shared during learning activity (reading) based on the idea that it supports learners to evaluate as well as adjust their insights during reading, so teachers can detect the students' understanding as soon as possible. Otherwise, teachers have to maximize the time given to fulfil the lesson. This finding is similar to the preview finding by Berggren (2015) which stated the limited time was also one of the challenges in feedback practice at classroom setting. As p8 and p4 mentioned.
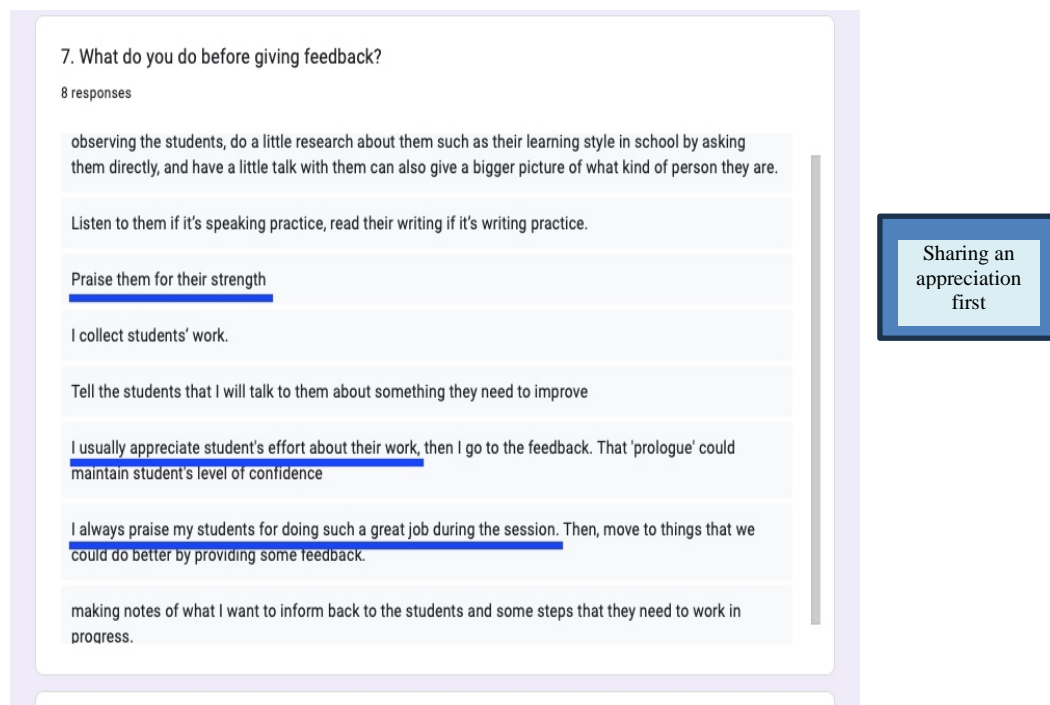
Strategies

Figure 3. Responses on strategies prior to giving feedback

I always praise my students for doing such   a great job during the session. Then, move to things that we could do better by providing some feedback…..(P7)

I usually appreciate student's effort about their work, then I go to the feedback. That "prologue' could maintain student's level of confidence ….. (P6)

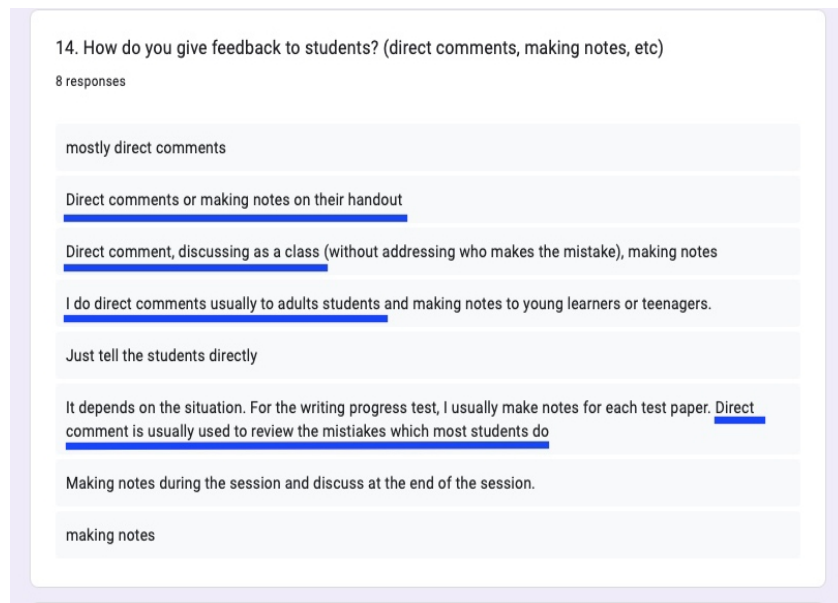*Praise them for their strength (P3)*

Figure 4. Responses on strategies after giving feedback

Observe again…..(P1)
Preparing for some intervention way to support the students' performances. (P2)
I usually keep monitoring my students' progress in class. (P4)
Take notes about my students' progress. (P8)

It depends on the situation. For the writing progress test, I usually make notes for each test paper. Direct comment is usually used to review the mistakes which most students do. (P6)

I do direct comments usually to adult's students and making notes to young learners or teenagers. (P4)

Direct comment, discussing as a class (without addressing who makes the mistake), making notes. (P3)

Direct comments or making notes on their handout. (P2, P6, P7, P8)

Sharing an appreciation first

Appreciation is one of the most essential ways to engage teachers and students in the classroom setting. Most teachers believe that appreciation toward students' work should come first. This is confirmed findings by Yingwen and Jian (2016) that the implementation of appreciation aspects contributes to teachers' feedback to the students. This is also contributed to maintain a positive contribution between students and teachers. A study conducted by Burnett (2002) in teacher praise and feedback and students' perceptions of the classroom environment was also claim that students accepted more general praise even though it was not significant related to classroom environment. In contrast, a very current study in term of praise in providing feedback was conducted by Eckstein, et al., (2023) and found that students showed preference to performance compared to someone's praise. They suggested to teachers to consider how word statement of praise, particularly in response students' work. Another finding was also stated by Austen & Malone (2018) that appreciation in the form of praise should be clear specific. Most students concerned on the quality of appreciation (praise), the specificity, or whether it contain a forward orientation. Moreover, Zhang (in Yingwen & Jian, 2016) mentioned that teacher talk for middle school at English class took large percentage. As p3, p6, and p7 mentioned.

Making a clear follow-up session or clear information

The second finding related to teachers' strategies is that the process of follow-up information. Feedback without follow-up can be said is not enough in supporting the learner's academic performance. This is consistent to the result of Rosario, et al (2015) that follow-up practice may help teachers to explore the constraints daily faced in the classroom. The finding about this follow-up session is in line with Jacome, et al (2016) that in EFL classes, teachers should utilize a kind of follow-up session to promote genuine linguistic interaction and engage students in meaningful communication. As p1, p2, p4 and p8 mentioned above. In the study of teachers' perception, Lejonberg, et al., (2018) found that clear communication is identified as a variable linked to teachers' perceptions of the usefulness of teaching evaluation and is related to recognition of the person who conducts the follow-up session.

Making direct comments to students and add some notes

Another strategy used by teacher in providing feedback is creating a direct comment to students' work. This finding is confirmed previous finding by Elashri (2013) that direct teacher's feedback was able to enhance the learner's performance in writing. The finding

is also in line with Roothooft and Breeze (2016) that EFL learners were expected to experience immediate corrective feedback orally from their teachers. In addition, the results of the current study are also in line with a study conducted by Mujtaba, et al., (2020) that additional of teachers' comment will affect the students' writing performances positively. Those points are also mentioned by p2, p3, p4, p6, p7 and p8. In addition, other facts related to direct comment on L2 learners' performance was stated by Hyland & Hyland (2019) that it sometimes depends on where the students are. Direct comment of making notes were problems with ESL students themselves. For those whose cultures where teachers are highly directive, students generally welcome and expect teachers to comment on their errors and they potentially feel resentful if teachers do not share this and vice versa.

CONCLUSION

Feedback practice in EFL classroom setting, especially in non-formal education institution has its own challenges and strategies as well. This study is trying to highlight what are the challenges and what are the strategies implemented by the teachers. The results showed that there are two main challenges. They are inappropriate respond from the students and insufficient time to provide feedback for students. As for the alternative strategies, some teachers believe in three main ideas. First, sharing appreciation towards students' work at first. Secondly, making a clear follow-up session and clear information to students. At last, making a direct comment to students' work and add some notes. The positive effects of providing feedback for EFL students have been revealed by many publications. Therefore, it is essential for teachers to apply this aspect seriously, including apply the findings of this research. It can be in schools or even universities. The next research in this topic at non-formal education institutions might be the use of technology.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Hidayat, M. & Umalihayati: Conceptualization (lead), methodology (lead), writing – original draft (lead), review (supporting). Hilman & Rachman, A.: writing – original draft (supporting), review, (lead) editing (lead)

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