



# “I Am Scared of My Teacher”: Students’ Emotional Responses Towards Teacher’s Feedback

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**Abstract.** Students’ emotional responses towards teacher’s feedback may influence the result of the revision of the writing draft composed by the students. Within this concept, this study explores how students’ emotional responses including how they feel towards teacher’s feedback and what factors influence how the students revise their writing. Seven students were involved in this study and in-depth interviews were carried out to obtain students’ emotional responses. The results show that low proficiency level students’ emotional responses towards teacher’s feedback include acceptance of feedback, rejection of feedback, disappointment, frustration, and depression. This study reveals that students’ emotional responses affect the success in the writing process. Besides, some factors that influence the way how the students revise their writing indicated from internal and external factors. Pertinent to the internal factors, most of the students stated some points: 1) they did not understand the feedback from the teacher, 2) they felt embarrassed and afraid to ask to the teacher about the feedback, 3) they were afraid of making errors or repeated errors. External factors were teacher’s mood and limited time allocated for teacher-student conference. The findings suggest that teachers need to take into account students’ feelings and emotions while providing feedback for the students. In addition, teachers need to carefully choose a strategy in giving feedback to enhance students’ emotional engagement so that the students can easily understand the feedback .

**Keywords:** teacher feedback · student engagement · emotion · feeling · writing

## 1 Introduction

For decades, teachers and researchers in second language context have had concerns about the effective way in responding to students’ written draft [1]. Teacher responses or feedback to students’ work have taken an important position in writing course [2]. Feedback demonstrates powerful influences since it helps the development of students’ cognitive skill, makes the students know their weaknesses and strengths, and assists the students to develop their writing quality [3]. The scaffolding that the teacher gives to the students through feedback helps the students write better. In the process of feedback

provision, it is assumed that after receiving teacher feedback, the students understand and recognize their mistakes and in turn, the students can do self-editing [4], can identify their grammatical mistakes that they have made [5] including for example tenses [6, 7], and articles [8]. Besides, teacher feedback may function to encourage the students in learning writing [9].

Teacher feedback is typically given in oral and written form. as regards the oral form, there are six types, namely explicit correction, recast, elicitation, metalinguistic feedback, clarification request, and repetition [10], whereas the written type of feedback may fall into the categories of direct and indirect feedback [11]. Direct feedback can be given directly by showing the correct form of the mistake or error that the students have made. Indirect feedback can be given by giving a clue or a sign to the students' mistake or error without providing any rectification. In giving indirect feedback, the teacher may use underlines, circles, or highlights so that the students realize their mistakes or errors [12]. Although providing teacher's feedback can be arduous and time consuming, the teacher needs to make the students engaged in the class.

Students' engagement in the class is one essential aspect to take into account for successful of teaching learning processes [13]. Students' engagement is their commitment to learning [3], and it captures the students' participation, and investment. Without engagement of the students in their learning processes, the teaching learning processes do not run well [14]. Furthermore, students' engagement has to do with how students participate in the class including how students respond to the feedback given by the teacher, how students feel after getting the feedback, and how the students revise their writing draft based on the feedback. This suggests that students should actively give due responses to the teacher's feedback [15] so that the students' writing performance improves.

The students' engagement falls into three categories: behavioural, cognitive, and affective [16]. Of the three categories, affective engagement has been under-researched [17]. Students' feelings, emotions, and attitudes towards teacher feedback falls into the category of affective engagement [18]. Since emotional responses as well as cognitive skills influence the success of the language learning, emotional aspect cannot be ignored, and cognitive skills broaden emotional engagement [19]. As emotion is innate in human, it is entrenched in their activities of revising their writing drafts after receiving feedback from their teacher. As the literature has shown, the students' emotion while receiving feedback thus influences their success in revising their draft.

There have been few studies around emotional responses toward teacher feedback. Mahfoodh [17] studied students' emotional responses toward teacher feedback pertinent to students' writing. Using qualitative approach with eight students and two teachers as sample, the findings show that acceptance of feedback, rejection of feedback, surprise, happiness, dissatisfaction, disappointment, frustration, and satisfaction are EFL university students' emotional responses toward teacher feedback. Furthermore, Mahfoodh stated that some emotional responses express criticism, negative evaluation, and miscommunication. Besides, the emotional responses influence students' understanding and students' writing revision. However, Mahfoodh's study [17] did not explore the factors influencing the students in revising their writing draft. As such, this factor has

been unclear and thus has not provided us with clear understanding which is useful in teaching writing.

Different to Mahfoodh that focus on emotion engagement, Wagener [20] examined the importance of affects, self-regulation, and relationships in the writing of a master's thesis. Using questionnaire in gathering the data, the results demonstrate that the students' emotional involvement influenced their thesis writing and impacted their level of self-regulation as well as cognitive engagement. Further, he suggested that good supervisor-student relationship, good communication and meaningful discussion contributed to the students' engagement in teacher feedback. Further investigation was done by Bastola and Hu [21]. They focused on students' perceptions of supervisory feedback. They explored using mixed method at a Nepalese University with four different disciplines (434 students) and using a written questionnaire. The results show that the group of students that did not receive sufficient supervisory feedback found the feedback from the supervisors dissatisfactory. Besides, the students agreed that research aspect, content, language use, and academic language conventions are the aspects of the given feedback by the supervisors.

Mahfoodh's research [17] was concerned with students' emotional responses on teacher feedback, but there was no detailed information about the students' proficiency level in his research. In this regard, logically, it is likely that students with high proficiency tend to experience seamless learning processes thus without charging experience of receiving and feeling severe comments from their teacher and the vice versa. As such, this somewhat unclear situation has probably led us to less productive teaching activities. Therefore, research in this is with students of a particular level of proficiency is warranted, as implicated in Wagener's [20] research.

Moreover, Han and Hyland [3] explored students' engagement with corrective feedback. Although they covered three engagement dimensions, the affective dimension was not their main concern since in interview guide only one general question about emotional aspect was asked to the students. In addition, they focused on average level students; low level of students' writing was assumed to be too short, off-task, or showing plagiarism so they were not concerned with this level of students. This situation lends itself to speculations that low level students can be obedient individuals with or without necessarily experiencing unproductive feelings. As such, this situation is still unclear.

Similarly, Zheng and Yu [15] examined three engagement dimensions which focused on low level students. They found that most of the respondents praised teacher feedback. Despite their informative findings, they suggested that further studies to yield more empirical data about each dimension be carried out. In addition, although Bastola and Hu's [21] study focused on students' responses including emotional involvement in the students' thesis writing, the emotional aspects were not presented clearly since there was no clear information about the students' emotion forms. The questionnaire as their instrument did not explicitly address the students' feelings in receiving the feedback from their supervisors. Moreover, the findings did not provide detailed evidence about students' emotions since they did not do interviews as follow-up activities for further data collection.

On the basis of the lacking empirical data about the feelings of students of low level of proficiency as indicated in the abovementioned previous studies, this study aims to

explore the students' emotions towards teacher feedback on writing course. In addition, this study also seeks to find out the aspects that influence how students revise their writing drafts.

## 2 Method

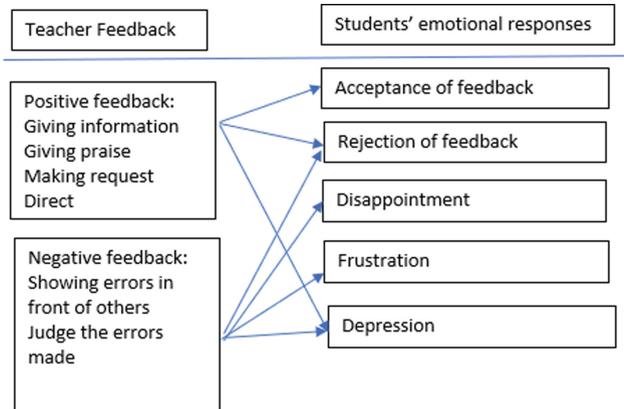
Qualitative approach was applied in this study since this study aimed to explore students' emotional responses including how they feel about teacher feedback and what factors influence how students revise their writing. The participants of this study were students who joined essay writing class in a private university in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. The selection of the participants was made by asking the targeted teacher to give names of the students who belong to those of the low-level of proficiency. The teacher gave ten names, but in reality, only seven students agreed to keep engaged in this study. To ensure the confidentiality of the participants, pseudo-names were used in presenting the data from the participants. Low proficiency level is needed to analyze in order to know whether they have special emotional responses towards teacher's feedback.

In-depth interviews were done to gather the data. The interviews consisted of 8 questions related to the emotional engagement of the students in writing class. The questions were about how they feel before, during and after receiving feedback. Besides, the questions were also about how they revise their writing draft based on the feedback given. Questions about the factors that influenced how they revise their draft were also included in the interview session. To ensure the validity, the interviews were carried out three times. Each question was asked in a different way so that the students did not realize that the questions given to them had the same intention as they answered in the different ways but with the same meaning.

The data gathered was then classified using Mahfoodh's [17] grounded theory of emotional responses comprising eight components: acceptance of feedback, rejection of feedback, surprise, happiness, dissatisfaction, disappointment, frustration, and satisfaction. In addition, Mahfoodh states that acceptance of feedback, rejection of feedback, and surprise do not belong to cognitive aspect because they are not related to the action regarding the students' revision. In addition, based on the first interviews, the teacher feedback was classified into two general aspects, positive and negative. It was positive when the teacher gave good comments like giving information, giving praise, making request to revise with the right words, and giving direct correction. It is considered negative when the teacher showed the mistakes or errors in front of others and made judgement of the errors made by the students.

## 3 Findings and Discussion

In reporting the research results, we present the student emotional responses towards teacher feedback in percentages. Excerpts of the dialogs between the interviewer and the participants are also presented for further clarification. Detailed information about the results of this study is presented as follows.



**Fig. 1.** Students' responses toward teacher's feedback.

### 3.1 Students' Emotional Responses Towards Teacher's Feedback

Based on the results of the first interviews, the teacher feedback can be classified into two: positive and negative. It was positive when the teacher gave good comments like giving information, giving praise, making request to revise with the right words, and giving direct correction. It is considered as negative feedback when the teacher showing the errors in front of others and judge the errors made by the students. The results can be seen in Fig. 1. Positive feedback may reveal the acceptance of the feedback. However, for students who belong to those of low-level proficiency, the feedback given in a positive was taken as negative feedback and thus they feel depressed (Fig. 1).

Although the feedback was given in a positive way, several students still stated that they felt nervous and stressed of it. Excerpt 1 and 2 are epitomize the students' feeling after receiving feedback from the teacher.

#### *Excerpt 1*

Farah: The feedback given is written, and I ever stress on it. Actually, am not confident with my ability in writing, although my teacher writes in a good word, but I still do not like it.

#### *Excerpt 2*

Yuni: You know, I am disappointed with the feedback. So many comments, I am tired on it. Why my teacher always give comment and ask me to reformulate, rephrasing, re-write of my writing draft. I am stress.

From the examples of the results of the interview, it can be construed that not every student feels happy with the feedback given by the teacher. For several students who have low ability in writing, whatever the teacher's feedback is, it makes them stressed. This finding is in line with that of Mahfoodh [17] that the students feel frustrated when their draft is full with comments. As the effect, the students get some difficulties in

**Table 1.** Students’ responses towards feedback and revision

No	Statement	Responses	
		Yes	No
1.	I pay attention to the feedback given by my lecturer	6 (86%)	1 (0.14%)
2	I revise based on the feedback given	7 (100%)	0 (0%)
3	Overall, I feel happy and motivated when my lecturer give feedback on my writing	5 (72%)	2 (38%)
4	I ignore my lecturer feedback. I do not need it	6 (86%)	1 (0.14%)
5	I do not care about the feedback because I do not like writing	0 (0%)	7 (100%)

understanding the feedback [3]. Moreover, the students who have negative emotion are less likely to regulate their emotional engagement [19]. One student stated that he felt frustrated when the teacher made his mistakes or errors as an example in front of the class. Excerpt 3 exemplifies that not all students are willing to be examples for the others.

*Excerpt 3*

Interviewer: why do you feel frustrated?

Azam: I do not like my teacher, why my draft should be the example in front of class.

Interviewer: don’t you think that your friends can learn from your errors?

Azam: yes, but, it made me embarrassed. All of my friends know that I am not good in writing.

In contrast, when the students were asked about how they revise their draft, most of them still depend on the teacher’s feedback. Detailed findings can be seen in Table 1.

Based on Table 1, although some students feel stressed, frustrated, and depressed, most of them pay attention to the teacher’s feedback. It indicated by the fact that 86% of the student, they pay attention to the feedback given by teacher and 100% of the students revise their writing draft based on the feedback given. The most unpredictable point is when they were asked about their feelings regarding the overall writing course, 5 students stated that they were happy because they could improve their writing performance since they came to know the mistakes or errors that they had made. This finding corroborates that documented by Muth’im and Latief [12] showing that students learn from the errors they have made and revise them by using the clue from the teacher.

In a nutshell, students with low proficiency level tend to have more negative emotions when they receive feedback from the teacher. No matter whether the feedback is given in a positive or negative way, the students tend to feel stressed and sometimes depressed. In contrast, when they were asked about the overall writing course with the teacher’s

feedback, most of them stated that they felt happy. They realized that all of the feedback given by the teacher was to make them have better writing performance.

### 3.2 Factors Influence Students in Revising their Writing

Based on the interview results, the factors that influenced students in doing revision can be classified into two: internal and external. Pertinent to the internal factors, most of the students stated some points: 1) they did not understand the feedback from the teacher, 2) they felt embarrassed and afraid to ask to the teacher about the feedback, 3) they were afraid of making errors or repeated errors. Excerpt 4 exemplifies issues around internal factors that influence the students in doing revision.

*Excerpt 4*

Interviewer: how did you revise your draft?

Bagas : I revised based on my understanding, sometimes it was wrong, wrong... again and again. I did not understand of my teacher feedback.

Interviewer: Didn't you ask your teacher?

Bagas: no, I was shy and afraid of her.

As regards external factor, some students stated that their mood depended on the teacher's mood. If the teacher came to the class in a good mood, they could revise their draft well. On the other hand, when the teacher came to class in a bad mood (angry), they could not revise their draft well. In addition, there was no time allocated by the teacher for writing conference. Excerpt 5 epitomizes the external factor.

*Excerpt 5*

Interviewer: how did you revise your draft?

Alea : Actually, it is because of my teacher, my teacher is very influence me. Very influence me

Interviewer: Influenced?

Alea : I think my writing teacher has two sided. One side she is good...detail in giving feedback, but she often angry. Although she is angry to others, I am afraid of her.

Interviewer: So, what did you do after that?

Alea : If I saw her angry, I am not in the mood doing revision, I am afraid my revision is wrong. And because in the last course I did not learn well, did not submit my assignment on time, my teacher though me as a lazy student.

From Excerpt 4, we can infer that student's' emotion affect how they revise their writing draft, and the emotion of the students are not only affected by their friends but also their teachers [22]. The fact that there was no time set for writing conference after the teacher gave feedback is also as factor that contributes to the student's' revision. This finding is in line with that of Bastola and Hu [21] claimed that supervisors' support and care contributed to their students' positive affective engagement with their feedback on the latter's research and thesis.

## 4 Conclusion

This study has revealed that students' emotional responses affected the success in their writing process. Besides, some factors that influence the way how the students revise their writing are misunderstanding of the feedback given by the teacher, being afraid of making mistakes or errors or making repeated mistakes or errors, and being scared of the teacher's way of giving feedback.

The findings of this study can be as a reminder for teachers especially writing teachers when they give feedback; they need to consider the students' affective situation. Different students need different treatment. Moreover, low proficiency level students seem to have less motivation because they know their low ability in writing and their emotion while receiving feedback tend to be a serious aspect in revising their draft. Therefore, the findings suggest that the teachers understand their students' background including proficiency level so that teachers can maximize the students' potential. The teachers need to understand the students' feelings and emotions while receiving their feedback. In addition, the teacher needs to realize that even teacher's positive feedback may be perceived in a negative way by the students; therefore, the teacher needs to carefully choose a strategy in giving feedback so as to ensure the enhancement of the students' emotional engagement so that the students can easily understand the feedback given and act accordingly in the revision processes.

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