Chapter I

Introduction

1.1.   Background of the study

In language learning, writing, one of the four basic English skills, is believed by many experts to be the most complex skill. Writing not only requires the ability to generate ideas, organize them functionally, as well as express them in a coherent and cohesive manner, but it also requires the ability to construct accurate and meaningful sentences (Silva, 1990). Correspondingly, what makes it challenging for learners, especially English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, to write is that they have to consider various elements, such as content, organization, purpose, audience, vocabulary, punctuation, spelling, capitalization, and grammar (Al-Tamimi, 2018). In brief, writing is considered as the most difficult skill, especially for EFL learners, because it demands an understanding of a great number of aspects and elements.

One way teachers can help students improve their writing skills is by giving feedback. On the contrary, learners' engagement with feedback has been under-studied (Koltovskaia, 2020; Zhang, 2020). Fortunately, interest in how students engage with feedback has expanded significantly in higher education in the past few years (Han & Hyland, 2015; Handley et al, 2011; Winstone et al, 2017). This is because what is actually essential to learning is the student uptake and engagement with feedback rather than the feedback itself. In other words, learning only happens when the feedback is given attention and acted upon (Chandler, 2003). However, despite research revealing that feedback engagement plays a pivotal role in improving student learning (Zhang & Hyland, 2018), student engagement is more complex than it sounds. Price et al. (2011) state that it is because students may disengage at any point. In addition to that, there is limited knowledge regarding the factors that promote it since there are limited studies which have explored what approaches can facilitate student uptake and engagement with feedback, particularly written corrective feedback.

Written corrective feedback has been studied for a long period of time by numerous researchers and experts. Nonetheless, it is still a question mark in the education field because they have different opinions regarding this topic. Many researchers believe that WCF can result in self-regulation. For example, Ferris et al (2013) found that after students received WCF, some of them became more self-regulated in revising their linguistic errors. This implies that the students took action on the feedback and that their engagement was high. In contrary, numerous experts found that WCF may bring little to no improvements and even bring more negative impacts than positive ones (Truscott, 1996; Truscott, 1999; Hattie & Timperley, 2007). In fact, Krashen believed that written corrective feedback was "a serious mistake" (Krashen, 1982, p. 74). He stated so because WCF may put students "on the defensive" (p. 75) which is able to result in avoidance of complex structures not to make any mistakes in the first place. This suggests that students' feedback uptake is low and that they do not engage with it.

The issues which have been discussed above piqued the researcher's interest, and two main concerns are addressed in this study. First, there is a need for more data as student uptake and engagement with written corrective feedback are yet to be clarified. With that being said, the researcher of this study intended to see whether students incorporate the WCF given to them and how they engage with it, to see how WCF can optimally be implemented as a teaching method in actual classrooms. Besides investigating the results, the second concern is that there is a gap in examining both students' feedback uptake and the multi-dimensional perspective of integrating the cognitive, behavioral, and affective aspects of student engagement with written corrective feedback. Therefore, this study explores both feedback uptake and student engagement with written corrective feedback as the controversy of WCF remains unresolved.

This research was done at Widya Mandala Surabaya Catholic University, specifically in the English Language Education Study Program. Second-semester students taking the course "Recount and Narrative Writing" were the subjects. The data were collected from the students' writing samples, which later were given written corrective feedback by their lecturers. Later, they were required to submit the

revised sample. Finally, the researcher analyzed the two dependent variables: (1) the students' feedback uptake indicated by the number of their feedback incorporation and (2) how the students engaged with written corrective feedback indicated by their answers from the questionnaire. Lastly, the researcher conducted interviews with several students to see the relationship between the feedback uptake and feedback engagement.

1.2.   Research Questions

According to the background of this study, the issues are identified as the research questions below:

1.   To what extent do EFL students incorporate written corrective feedback into their writing?

2.   To what extent do EFL students engage with written corrective feedback in behavioral, affective, and cognitive aspects?

3.   To what extent does feedback engagement relate to feedback uptake?

1.3.   Research Objectives

Extracted from the research questions, the research objectives are emphasized below:

1.   To examine the extent to which EFL students incorporate written corrective feedback into their writing.

2.   To investigate the extent to which students engage with written corrective feedback in behavioral, affective, and cognitive aspects.

3.   To investigate the extent to which feedback engagement relates to feedback uptake.

1.4. Theoretical Framework

Feedback uptake is defined as learners' attempt or effort to work on the received feedback (Bargiela, 2003). Furthermore, Lyster and Ranta (1997) categorized feedback uptake into two types: repair and needs-repair. Repair refers to high uptake, and it includes several sub-categories, namely (1) repetition, (2) incorporation, (3) self-repair, and (4) peer repair. As for the needs-repair, it is referred to as low uptake which consists of numerous sub-categories: (1) acknowledgement, (2) same error, (3) different error, (4) off target, (5) hesitation, and (6) partial repair.

Student engagement is a key element in students' feedback uptake, which is necessary for further improvements and benefits. The term "engagement", according to Ellis (2010), is how students respond/react to corrective feedback. In a review and analysis of 44 past studies using the term "engagement", Fredricks et al. (2004) classified three kinds of engagement: behavioral, affective/emotional, and cognitive. Similarly, Ellis' (2010) study on Second Language Acquisition (SLA) explicitly clarified the original tripartite conceptualization of engagement.

Moreover, based on previous studies, Zhang and Hyland (2018) presented a model to observe student engagement with feedback in L2 writing. They elaborated the three types of engagement as follows:

- **Behavioral engagement** deals with students' physical reactions/responses to feedback, which includes actions on revising and the time spent on revision.

- **Affective engagement** is concerned with students' emotional reactions/responses to feedback, including how they feel toward it.

- **Cognitive engagement** refers to students' ways of responding to feedback, such as rewriting and reorganizing (revision operations) as well as monitoring and evaluating (cognitive strategies).

1.5.   The Significance of the Study

As previously mentioned, the significance of this study is to contribute to English Language Teaching (ELT) by providing the knowledge of EFL students' feedback uptake and their engagement with written corrective feedback. Thus, it is hoped that this study is able to give considerations for teachers regarding the use of WCF. In addition, this study can potentially be a reference for further research.

1.6.   Definition of Key-terms

Before delving deeper, it is highly necessary to understand a few key terms used in this study:

1. Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is a term which refers to the range of information given by teachers, peers, or even computers to inform students or writers about aspects of linguistic parts which require revisions (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2013). Moreover, Bitchener (2016) stated in his study that WCF is a response to linguistic errors which have been made in texts by English learners. Therefore, according to the aforementioned experts, it can be concluded that Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is a form of response/information to correct linguistic errors which can be given by teachers, peers, or even computers.

2. Feedback Uptake

Heift (2004) referred to feedback uptake as students' responses to corrective feedback in which they put efforts to correct their errors. Moreover, uptake deals with learners' adjustment of their original utterances after being given feedback by the native speaker (Mackey et al, 2000). Nonetheless, feedback does not only come from native speakers of a language; it can also be given by non-native speakers. In general, feedback uptake is the process of receiving, internalizing/processing, and incorporating the feedback given by teachers, peers, or computers.

3. Student Engagement

Student engagement is a kind of participation in educational practices, which can happen both inside and outside the classroom context, that leads to a range of measurable learning outcomes (Kuh, 2007). Similarly, Krause and Coates (2008) defined student engagement as the extent to which learners are participating or engaging in activities that higher education studies have shown to be related with high-quality learning outputs or outcomes. From the two definitions, student engagement is the extent to which students engage and participate in educational practices which can lead to noteworthy outcomes.

1.7. Scope and Limitation of the Study

To make it relevant to the researcher's setting, the study was conducted at his home university, with English Language Education students as the participants. Due to the time limitation and the researcher's capability, the study was not a longitudinal analysis, which may restrict the investigation of potential changes in feedback uptake and student engagement over time. Moreover, generalization of findings to a bigger population may not be possible because of the limited sample size.

1.8. Organization of the Thesis

This thesis contains five main chapters, namely introduction, review of related literature, research methodology, findings, as well as the discussion. The first chapter introduces the study and discusses the essential information that needs to be understood primarily. The introduction includes background of the study, research questions, research objectives, theoretical framework, significance of the study, definition of key terms, scope and limitations of the study, and organization of the proposal. The second chapter deeply examines related literature, dissecting theories and previous studies. Lastly, the third chapter presents the research design, site and contexts, participants, data and data sources, instruments, data collection procedure, data analysis procedure, as well as research schedule. The fourth chapter briefly shows the findings or results of the analyses in the form of explanations, tables, and charts. Additionally, chapter four also presents a thorough discussion of the findings,

related to previous studies, in attempt to answer the research questions. Lastly, the fifth chapter provides a brief conclusion and suggestions for further research.