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TEACHER FEEDBACK TECHNIQUE IN STUDENTS' ENGLISH WRITING: A STUDY OF DESCRIPTIVE TEXTS AMONG X-GRADE STUDENTS AT SMA N 15 SEMARANG

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Abstract

Teacher feedback plays an important role in improving student's writing skill. This study aimed to analysis the feedback technique given by the teacher and the reason for its application. This research was a descriptive study designed to provide a detailed explanation of the implementation of feedback technique given by the teacher at SMA N 15 Semarang. In addition, the data was collected using two instruments; document and interview. There were two finding of the research. Firstly, teacher used the minimal marking technique to provide feedback to students. The feedback provided was intended to help students work on their grammatical errors or writing form using symbol to shorten the correction, such as "P" for punctuation, "Cap" for capitalization, "Spell" for spelling, and etc. Secondly, the teacher employed this technique because it was effective and time-saving. Additionally, it also helps students to understand easily their mistakes. However, as the study used a small sample size, the results require further exploration. Therefore, the minimal marking technique could be applied more broadly in EFL classroom to assess its wider effectiveness.

Keywords: *Teacher's Feedback, Minimal Marking Technique, Student's Writing*

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A. INTRODUCTION

Writing is an EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context poses considerable obstacles for Indonesian senior high school students. One of the most difficult aspects is learning English grammar, which is very different from the structure of Bahasa Indonesia. The students should analyze whether his/her writing is good and understandable or not (Rahmatunisa, 2024). According to Riadil et al., (2023), these are important skills that greatly facilitate language learning process. Nevertheless, writing is considered a difficult skill for most EFL students, especially those who face many difficulties in writing. Ahmadi (2018), argued that when communicating feelings, ideas and emotions in writing, students more spend more time and have to underline their alternatives. This because they have to put the words in the right order and make them understand that writing is different from speaking. (Rahmatunisa, 2024). It can be concluded that writing is one difficult activity.

Students frequently struggle with subject-verb agreement, tenses, and the proper use of prepositions, resulting in grammatical problems in their writing. Furthermore, a limited vocabulary limits their capacity to articulate concepts clearly and efficiently, leading them to use simpler sentence structures, which can result in repeated or confused writing (Loan, 2019; Srour et al., 2021). Another difficulty is a lack of exposure to actual English writing, as many students do not have frequent exposure to English outside of the classroom (Alsehibany, 2021). This inhibits their understanding of different writing styles and genres. Furthermore, students typically struggle to organize their thoughts logically in English since they are accustomed to various rhetorical patterns in their mother language. As a result, many students fail to construct logical arguments, make smooth transitions, and retain overall coherence in their writing. Writing is one of the most difficult language skills to master in Indonesian English as a foreign language (Apridayani et al., 2024; Mamad & Vigh, 2024; Wirantaka, 2022).

Many research is being conducted to investigate EFL students' problems in writing tasks. In Indonesia, there are various cases where English is always considered as foreign language. For this reason, EFL students still works as active aspect and passive English (Ariyanti & Fitriana, 2017). She suggested that the teachers should encourage students to write essays and support different kinds of writing activities, such as peer review and frequent use of dictionaries.

Different from the Ariyanti & Fitriana, (Alisha et al., 2019), has found that the most significant problems were related to a lack of knowledge of the vocabulary and language used. They had limited knowledge of how to construct sentences grammatically, as well as had problem in spelling. For this reason, they hesitate to write English words and feel that their spelling is not good enough. In addition, Aldabbus & Almansouri (2022), has found that they had problems with academic writing, including difficulties choosing appropriate academic words, formulating a thesis statement, organizing ideas, and writing coherent paragraphs. These problems were caused by a lack of resources, followed by poor English



proficiency and a lack of opportunities for writing practice. This means that the writing difficulties are a problem that needs to be addressed by the teacher.

Other studies had been done by Srour et al., (2021). The study was focused on the problems of teachers and students on writing a lesson. Students, as a rule, are passive in the classroom, because they do not feel confident enough to become the editor of the essays for the essay of their friend and are unlikely to be well reviewed by the teacher's reviews. Some students encountered difficulties in grammar, academic style of writing and the difficulties on the organization of writing vocabulary (Faidil, 2023; Tukan, 2024). This is more efficient and effective, because students can send their work at the time that suits them, and the teacher can reconsider them at the time that suited the teacher. Furthermore, another platform of solution also has been researched by (Vejayan & Md. Yunus, 2022) who suggest, based on her research findings, that writing activities are more effective when conducted outside the classroom. Outdoor settings, with their enjoyable activities and relaxed atmosphere, can positively influence students' moods, leading to improved writing outcomes. This highlights the importance for teachers to create a fun and engaging environment to support students in developing their essay-writing skills.

Students' difficulties in learning a language may be related to the number of words, structure, characteristics of the language, and the students' level of readiness for the language. When students learn a new word, they must associate it with an action. Students may forget words, but they never forget actions (Ali Mansoor et al., 2023).

Teacher feedback is critical for student writing development since it directly influences students' ability to compose cohesive and well-structured texts. Teachers use feedback to help students find areas for growth in concepts, sentence construction, and vocabulary diversity. Teachers commonly provide feedback at various stages of the writing process, such as after the first draft, to allow students to revise and polish their work. They may emphasize incorrect sentences, offer suggestions for improvement, or pose questions that force students to think carefully about their writing decisions. This technique is necessary since it helps students enhance their long-term writing skills while also assisting them with their current employment. Good teacher feedback guides students as they write, ensuring that they eventually evolve into more self-sufficient and confident writers.

Referring to those phenomena discussed above, it comes to a conclusion that the feedback plays important rules in teaching learning process. Dealing with the issue, this study aimed to answer the feedback techniques provided by the teacher at SMA Negeri 15 Semarang and the reasons of applying that technique in responding to the students' writing. Thus, by understanding the feedback given by the teacher, the students can truly understand what mistake they make. Not only giving the understanding but also the students are able to correct their writing so that they can make a paragraph in a good way.

Feedback



Academic writing is a formal style of writing that has certain characteristics and formats, uses more academic words and complex sentences, and has a logical progression of arguments that take into account the intended audience. (Aldabbus & Almansouri, 2022). In writing, Students are expected to be more proactive in the teaching and learning process. The students should be active in arousing interest and curiosity, questioning, reflections, problem solving, explanations of concepts, are carried off with students for their active learning (Waka et al., 2022). Feedback is an important think provided by teachers to enhance students' activity. It gives understanding on how students deal with the writing context in a correct way.

Feedback as a part of the formative assessment process (Brookhart, 2008). Providing good feedback is one of the skills teachers need to master in assessment, and if all goes well, you will get some strong feedback. The power of formative feedback lies in its dual normative approach, taking into account both cognitive and non-cognitive feedback. Good feedback provides students with the information they need to understand where they are in their learning and what to do next. Feedback is important in formative assessment because it provides teachers and students with information about how students are performing against the learning goals in the classroom. (Nusrat et al., 2019).

Providing feedback to students aims to improve students' learning strategies and even language skills based on the type of feedback the teacher provides (Sun et al., 2024). Providing feedback is important because it allows students to see which language features constitute errors (Steiss et al., 2024). In order to monitor student learning, teachers provide students from comments that can be used by instructors that can be used to improve education strategies, on the other hand, Fadli et al. (2022), indicated that feedback should address and identify student errors. Teacher feedback can help students more easily find their errors in their learning activities. Furthermore, feedback has a significant impact on learning and performance, but this impact can be both positive and negative.

Teacher Feedback

Teacher's feedback in writing is essential for students because it can make easier to analyze their mistake or error in their writing (Yuniko & Azhari, 2024). In writing classes, writing is the most difficult skill to learn and master because it requires specific skills, such as the ability to find ideas and express them in writing (Ferris & Roberts, 2001) Aligned with Hyland (2003), stated that feedback needs to be considered alongside other aspects of the situation, such as the reinforcement provided during students' independent work in class and individual student motivation. Besides, the teacher feedback showed that criticism type of feedback results in more successful revision as it is more specific (Razali & Jupri, 2014).

Moreover, Ali Mansoor et al., (2023); Cen & Zheng, (2024); Le et al., (2024) Feedback is considered to be more conscious of your achievements and to be aware of your work shortcomings. In addition, researchers believe that feedback improves student reading and writing skills and has more expressive power. (Lundstrom & Baker, 2009), added that feedback is useful both for those who provide it and receive it. Another research found that the high preferences for teacher feedback was mainly the result of their respondent's positive



attitude towards teacher feedback (Zacharias, 2007). We also found that, in general, teachers and students significantly prefer feedback from teachers. Students tend to prefer feedback from teachers because they believe teachers have the authority to determine their grades.

While most previous studies have generally indicated that teacher feedback leads to positive changes in students' writing and motivation, feedback alone is insufficient to significantly enhance their skills. This could be attributed to students' limited metacognitive knowledge, which prevents them from effectively addressing errors based on the feedback. Thus, it becomes the teacher's responsibility to guide students in understanding the feedback and identifying the areas of their work that require improvement (Razali & Jupri, 2014).

Direct and Indirect Feedback

Teachers often use direct and indirect feedback: through direct feedback, teachers provide the correct expression, but students are expected to internalize the correct form and incorporate it into their subsequent writing. In contrast, indirect feedback requires students to correct errors identified by their teachers who do not provide the correct form (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). As students are engaged in cognitive problem solving, indirect feedback is recommended, where students are encouraged to correct errors themselves by highlighting them or classifying them using a code. At the same time, direct feedback, when provided in the correct format, can be effective for lower-level learners or those who have made certain categories of errors. (Ahmadi, 2018; Alisha et al., 2019; Steiss et al., 2024).

Previous studies (e.g. (Waka et al., 2022; Jamalinesari et al., 2015; Hosseiny, 2014;)) compared direct and indirect feedback, examining the impact of varying time spent and the types of errors addressed. The findings revealed a positive effect of teacher-student conferencing in enhancing learning outcomes. the feedbacks given. Nusrat et al., (2019), tried to find out the effect of direct and indirect teacher feedback on accuracy of English as second language students by investigating the tense, use of articles and prepositions. The results showed that the feedback given affect the developing accuracy of targeted forms and improve the English language of students.

Another research was done by Mido (2021). The result can be state that employing indirect feedback in the teaching learning process is beneficial. There is a substantial difference in effect between students who are taught indirect feedback and students who are not, and students' writing performance improves following indirect feedback treatment. Another research also investigated the students' beliefs and attitudes towards both direct and indirect feedback. Like the previous research, feedback influences how they perceive and respond to feedback. However, for students who received indirect feedback, teacher support and support through collaboration with other students, as well as their own initiative, influence how students respond to feedback when subsequently revising their work (Luan & Ishak, 2018).



B. RESEARCH METHOD

Qualitative research design was used in this research. According to (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), research is process of steps to collect dan analyze information to increase our understanding of a topic or issue. Specifically, qualitative research design is an approach and understanding the meaning individual or groups ascribe to a social or human problem. It emphasizes is characteristics by the collection of data in a natural setting, open-ended and flexible methodologies that prioritize understanding participants' perspectives and experiences. To collect data, the writer uses documents and interview as the instruments of this research. The populations of this research were English Teachers of SMA Negeri 15 Semarang. Hossein (2012), described that sample is the smaller group which is a portion of a population. Sample of this research was a class of 10 grade which consist of 36 students; 16 female students and 30 male students. the class was chosen because students' result in writing was categorized low than the other class. The research used case study since it was real-life context to provide a rich understanding of a specific phenomenon or issue (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

C. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This research was conducted in one class which consists of 36 students. pre-test and post-test were conducted to gather the data. The research was done collaboratively between the researcher and the teacher. The research had done in three meetings. In the first meeting, students asked to do the pre-test by making a short descriptive text about a person. Second meeting was an explanation to the students after giving feedback. And the third meeting, students are asked to make a new text based on the feedback given by the teacher.

To identify the focusses of the given written feedback through minimal marking technique, the researcher collected students' writing which had been responded by the teacher and grouped the. The table below shows the written feedback items provided by the teachers.

Table 2.1 distributions of teacher's written feedback toward students' English writing

N0.	Symbol	Meaning
1.	P	Punctuation
2.	Cap.	Capitalization
3.	Prep.	Preposition
4.	UW.	Unnecessary Word
5.	Spell.	Spelling
6.	WW.	Wrong Word
7.	WVO.	Wrong Word Order



8.	WWF	Wrong Word From
9.	Pron.	Pronoun
10.	Art.	Article
11.	SVA.	Subject-verb-Agreement

The table above highlights the various categories of written feedback provided by teachers to students on their English writing assignments. The feedback encompasses eleven distinct categories: punctuation (P), capitalization (Cap.), preposition (Prep.), unnecessary word (UW.), spelling (Spell.), wrong word (WW.), wrong word order (WWO.), wrong word form (WWF), pronoun (Pron.), article (Art.), and subject-verb agreement (SVA.). Each of these categories addresses specific language aspects that commonly challenge learners, emphasizing accuracy in grammar, word usage, and mechanics. The feedback is conveyed using symbols that serve as shorthand for efficient communication between teachers and students.

Effective teacher feedback, as noted by Hyland (2003), plays a crucial role in second language acquisition by pinpointing errors and fostering revision. Punctuation and capitalization errors (P and Cap.) often relate to students' struggles with mechanics, while issues like prepositions, pronouns, and articles (Prep., Pron., Art.) reflect challenges in functional grammar. Lexical inaccuracies, such as unnecessary words (UW.), wrong words (WW.), wrong word order (WWO.), and wrong word forms (WWF), highlight the complexities of vocabulary usage and sentence structure. Errors in subject-verb agreement (SVA.) further reveal difficulties in syntactic alignment, particularly when students attempt complex sentences.

The categorization of feedback aligns with Ferris & Roberts (2001) observation that specific, targeted corrections significantly impact learners' ability to self-correct and internalize linguistic rules. By providing explicit feedback on areas such as word form and grammar, teachers guide students toward recognizing patterns of errors, leading to better performance in writing tasks. The use of symbols makes feedback more concise and actionable, promoting clarity and efficiency in the revision process. This structured approach demonstrates how systematic feedback fosters incremental improvement in students' English writing skills.

To see deeply about the provided written feedback items, he is one of the samples of the students writing.

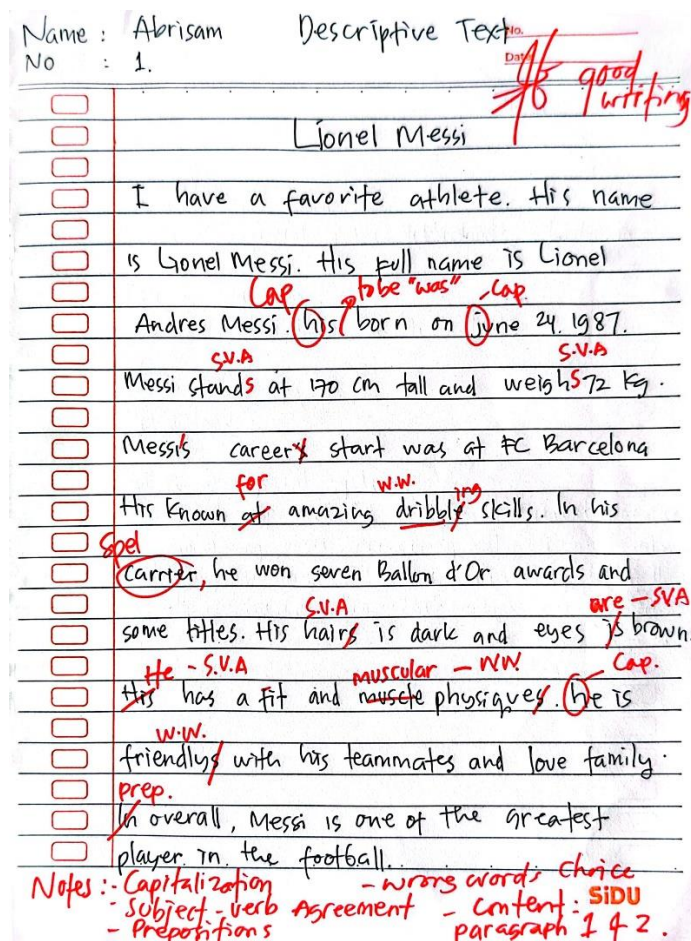


Figure 2.1. The Sample of Student's Writing.

The provided student work demonstrates common challenges faced by learners in English writing. The feedback prominently highlights errors in punctuation (P), capitalization (Cap.), and grammar aspects such as subject-verb agreement (S.V.A.), Prepositions (Prep.), and wrong word usage (WW.). For instance, missing or misused punctuation marks like periods and commas are noted, while improper capitalization and subject-verb agreement are flagged in several instances, such as "his born on...." instead of "He was born on...." These corrections underscore the need for attention to writing mechanics, a fundamental skill for clear communication.

Additionally, the teacher identifies lexical and grammatical inaccuracies. Errors in spelling such as "carrier" instead of "career" and another subject-verb agreement such as "His hairs is dark and eyes is brown" corrected to "His hair is dark and eyes are brown". reflect difficulties in achieving syntactic accuracy. Wrong word usage (WW.) is also apparent, as seen in phrases like "amazing dribble skills" where the word "dribble" is contextually incorrect. Another example is ".....fit and muscle physiques." corrected to ".....fit and



muscular physiques". These corrections demonstrate how targeted feedback helps clarify language conventions and improve linguistic accuracy.

The feedback also emphasizes sentence structure and coherence by asking student to pay attention in the paragraph like to make it clear of paragraph 1 defines as identification and paragraph 2 as description. Furthermore, the teacher's feedback includes praise for the student's effort "*good writing*" while suggesting improvements, such as better organization through identification and description. This combination of positive reinforcement and corrective guidance aligns with effective teaching practices, fostering confidence and skill development in writing.

In conclusion, the teacher's feedback reflects a comprehensive approach to addressing both surface-level errors and deeper structural issues. By providing explicit corrections and encouraging the student to refine their ideas, the teacher supports the learner in developing stronger English writing skills. This approach highlights the importance of systematic feedback in helping students internalize linguistic rules and enhance their written communication.

The student's writing demonstrates a range of errors that align with the feedback categories outlined in Table 2.1, including punctuation (P), capitalization (Cap.), spelling (Spell.), subject-verb agreement (SVA.), wrong word form (WWF), and more. These issues reflect typical challenges faced by English language learners and highlight areas for improvement in both grammar and mechanics.

It indicates that the teacher's feedback plays a crucial role in identifying and addressing these errors. By focusing on specific issues such as subject-verb agreement, spelling, and punctuation, the teacher helps the student improve both the mechanics and substance of their writing. Encouraging regular practice and revision will enable the student to internalize these corrections and produce higher-quality work in the future.

In addition, the data gained through documentation needed to be clarified by interviewing the teacher. The interview also questioned about the teacher feedback. There were five questions and here is one of the interview scripts and discussions.

Table 2.1 Interview Transcript

No	Question	Answer
1	Do you always provide written response/feedback towards your students' writing?	Yes, I always provide written feedback on my students' writing because I believe it is a crucial part of the learning process. Written feedback gives students a tangible record of their strengths and areas for improvement, which they can refer to when revising their work or working on future assignments. It also



		ensures that the feedback is specific and targeted, addressing individual needs rather than giving generalized comments. It also quite easy for both teacher and students to understand. One of the effective method I've ever used.
2	Which aspect do you give more importance to? a. Grammar b. Content c. Vocabulary d. Organization of ideas	I place the greatest emphasis on the organization of ideas because a well-organized piece of writing is crucial for effective communication. When students learn how to structure their ideas logically and cohesively, it not only makes their writing clearer but also makes it more persuasive and engaging. The way ideas are sequenced can significantly impact how the reader understands and processes the information.
3	When you correct the students' works, do you correct every kind of mistake or only concentrate on one kind of mistake each time?	I believe it is important to correct every kind of mistake when providing feedback on final drafts or formal assignments, as it ensures that students receive comprehensive guidance on all aspects of their writing. Addressing every mistake—whether it is related to grammar, punctuation, spelling, word choice, or structure—helps students understand the full scope of their errors and provides a clear path for improvement.
4	Instead of giving response to the mistakes only, do you also give positive feedback towards your students' writing?	Yes, I make it a point to give positive feedback alongside addressing mistakes because it helps motivate students and encourages continued progress. Positive feedback is crucial for building students' confidence and reinforcing their strengths, which boosts their engagement and willingness to improve. By acknowledging their good work—whether it's a well-constructed argument, creative ideas, or strong vocabulary



		usage—I create an environment where students feel recognized and appreciated for their efforts. This positive reinforcement not only helps balance the critique of mistakes but also fosters a growth mindset, where students see challenges as opportunities for improvement rather than as setbacks.
5	In your opinion, is written feedback in the form of minimal marking/symbol necessary? Please explain why!	Yes, I believe that written feedback in the form of minimal marking is absolutely necessary because it provides a personalized, interactive space for students to fully understand and engage with the feedback they receive. While written comments are helpful, a conference allows for real-time clarification of any confusion, as well as an opportunity for students to ask questions and discuss their writing in-depth. This direct interaction helps students better grasp the reasoning behind certain corrections or suggestions, fostering deeper learning and critical thinking. Furthermore, written feedback can be tailored to the individual needs of each student, addressing specific challenges they may be facing and offering targeted strategies for improvement. The personal nature of the feedback makes it more meaningful, and it can also enhance the teacher-student relationship, building trust and creating a more supportive learning environment. Overall, I believe that face-to-face feedback in the form of written feedback significantly enriches the learning process and helps students grow.

IR: Interviewer; IE: Interviewee

the responses gathered from this interview underscore the critical role that written feedback, particularly in the form of minimal marking, plays in enhancing students' writing skills. Teachers recognize that providing personalized, constructive feedback is key to



helping students understand their mistakes and improve. While written comments alone can guide students, the added value of a conference provides an opportunity for deeper engagement, clarification, and real-time discussion, fostering a stronger understanding of the reasoning behind corrections. This dynamic feedback process not only encourages student involvement but also strengthens the teacher-student relationship by building trust and ensuring students feel supported throughout their learning journey.

Ultimately, the combination of written feedback and face-to-face interaction creates a holistic approach to learning that addresses individual student needs. It offers tailored strategies for improvement and creates an environment that encourages students to actively participate in their learning process. By providing personalized feedback and opportunities for direct interaction, teachers foster a more meaningful and impactful learning experience. This method not only helps students enhance their writing skills but also boosts their confidence in effective communication, paving the way for continued growth and academic success.

Discussions

In conclusion, the insights gathered from this interview highlight the significant role that written feedback plays in improving students' writing skills. Teachers consistently acknowledge the importance of providing feedback that not only addresses errors but also celebrates students' strengths. This balanced approach ensures that students feel motivated and supported as they work through their challenges. Whether focusing on grammar, organization of ideas, or vocabulary, the specific areas of emphasis can vary depending on the individual needs of the students, but the overall goal remains the same: to help students become more effective and confident writers.

Furthermore, the responses emphasize the value of providing comprehensive feedback, especially when correcting every mistake. Teachers who adopt this method believe it offers students a thorough understanding of their weaknesses and helps them develop stronger writing habits. Additionally, the importance of positive reinforcement cannot be overstated. By acknowledging students' progress and strengths, teachers foster a learning environment where students are encouraged to continue improving. This is also in line with Yuniko & Azhari (2024), who states that the feedback given also helps the students to be a critical writer because this technique lets students working on the mistakes they have made.

The minimal marking technique is also used by the teacher. This method is implemented because it saves time and allow students to identify and fix their typical mistakes. It can be concluded that minimal marking aids students in recognizing, diagnosing, and correcting errors, making it more efficient and impactful feedback approach. Hyland (2003) also highlighted that minimal marking provides form-based feedback by pinpointing the error's location, and at time, its type, effectively encouraging students to respond and improve.



D. CONCCCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

The findings lead to several conclusions. Firstly, the written feedback provided by English teachers at SMA Negeri 15 Semarang primarily focuses on the form of students' writing. Technique that the teacher used in minimal marking. While various aspects of form are addressed, the most frequently highlighted errors Punctuation (P), Capitalization (Cap.), Preposition (Prep.), Unnecessary (UW.), Spelling (Spell), Wrong-Word (WW), Wrong Word Order (WVO), Wrong Word From (WWF), Pronoun (Pron.) Article (Art.) and Subject Verb Agreement (SVA). Secondly, the teacher predominantly utilizes the minimal marking technique because this method preferred because it is both time-efficient for teachers and encourages students to analyze and correct their own errors. Moreover, this method also helps students become critical writers as they can address the mistakes they have made.

Suggestion

Future researchers are encouraged to consider the following points to enhance the depth and reliability of similar studies. Firstly, since the current research involved a limited sample size, future studies should expand the sample to include a more diverse and representative population. This will improve the generalizability of the findings and provide more comprehensive insights.

Secondly, incorporating specific treatments or interventions could strengthen the study. For instance, experimental designs involving writing workshops, peer-review activities, or technology-based writing tools can offer quantifiable results and more detailed insights into the effectiveness of these approaches in enhancing writing skills.

Lastly, researchers should focus on strategies to motivate students to continuously improve their writing skills. Encouraging self-reflection, offering consistent feedback, and promoting writing as a process rather than a product could help foster long-term improvement. These approaches will contribute significantly to the field of academic writing research and pedagogy.

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