# INDIRECT TEACHER FEEDBACK TO REDUCE STUDENTS' GRAMMATICAL ERRORS IN WRITING RECOUNT TEXT

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## ABSTRACT

Teacher feedback stipulation is a necessity for students especially in the process of writing. It's become a reflection of their teaching process. The present study, therefore, is aimed at finding out the effectiveness of indirect teacher feedback in reducing students' grammatical errors in writing recount text, and describing lexico-grammatical aspects of students' writing that indicate significant progress in error reduction toward indirect teacher feedback as the treatment. The present study implemented a mixed-method with the type of pre-experimental design for the quantitative design and content analysis for the qualitative design. The sample of the present study involved 17 students as the experimental group. Students' document tests were used to obtain the data. Based on the statistical result, after indirect teacher feedback was implemented on students' writing recount text especially personal recount text, the t-observed value was higher than t-table value; thereby, the null hypothesis ($H_0$) was rejected and the alternative hypotheses ($H_1$) was accepted. Thus, the use of indirect teacher feedback is effective in reducing students' grammatical errors in writing personal recount text. In addition, from the analysis content of students' document tests, verb tense indicated significant progress in error reduction. Based on the findings, it is recommended for English teachers to apply indirect teacher feedback to reduce students' grammatical errors, especially in teaching writing so that the students' writing can be improved.

**Keywords**: Indirect Teacher Feedback, Recount Text, Students' Grammatical Errors, Writing

## INTRODUCTION

Writing is seen as the most complicated of all three skills (listening, speaking, reading) as stated by (Harmer, 2004). Writing is a difficult skill mastered by the students because they have to make stability in several problems, especially in grammar context

starting from punctuation, capitalization, spelling, organization, etc. In addition, (Harmer, 2004). argues that "writing encourages students to focus on accurate language use because they think what they write".

When the students write their feelings and ideas into a word, word into the sentence, sentence into a paragraph, it needs hard thinking to produce good writing at the same time. It means that writing the ideas needs the knowledge and the time to develop our knowledge in writing as said by (Hyland, 2003) "writing is as a complex activity in which the writer draws on a range of knowledge and skills and this complexity makes it unlikely that the same individual will perform equally well on different occasions and tasks".

Errors in the context of writing indicate that students have not mastered the English rules. There are some experts who state about errors such as (Harmer, 2007) who defines that errors are mistakes at which they cannot correct themselves and which, therefore, need explanation. It means that they need correction on whatever they are doing, saying or writing to help them understand whether it is right or wrong. Regarding the grammatical errors made by language learners, (Ferris & Roberts, 2001) propose the top five grammatical errors consisting of sentence structure, word choice, verb tense, noun endings (singular/plural), and also verb form. Therefore, grammar mastery and positive reinforcement in writing are also important since it leads to developing confidence in writing.

In ESL teaching, teacher feedback on students' writing is very important because errors in writing cannot be avoided. (Hyland & Hyland, 2006) state that providing feedback is one of the most important tasks for an ESL teacher. Teacher feedback in the writing process is expected to give a significant improvement in students' writing and reduce grammatical errors which occur in the writing. There are two kinds of teacher feedback, namely direct and indirect teacher feedback. However, in the present study, the researcher uses indirect teacher feedback to reduce students' grammatical errors in writing because it valued more than direct teacher feedback. As stated by (Ferris, 2002), once the learners have noticed their errors, indirect feedback can help them to activate the hypothesis testing process which may promote deeper internal processing and improve the internalization of correct forms and structures.

Based on the explanation above, the present study was conducted to find out the effectiveness of indirect teacher feedback in reducing students' grammatical errors in

writing recount text and to describe lexico-grammatical aspects of students' writing that indicate significant progress in error reduction. Two research questions were formulated as follows:

1. How effective is indirect teacher feedback in reducing the students' grammatical errors in writing recount text?

2. From lexico-grammatical aspects of students' writing, which one of them indicates significant progress in error reduction?

**Writing**

Writing is one of the parts of language skills besides listening, speaking and reading. Writing is more difficult rather than other language skills because it needs well knowledge and hard thinking when they produce words, sentences, and paragraphs with good grammatical. Writing skills is one of the language skills learned by students at school. Writing skills are useful to support the teaching and learning process (Hilman, A., 2019). Through writing skills, students are required to be creative and active in thinking and activities as much as possible to pour their ideas into written language.

writing is an interactive process. It means that in writing there are a lot of activities to do. When someone writes, there is an activity of thinking, designing posts, editing posts, and reviewing them again. Tarigan, as cited in (Suryadi, 2017) states that writing is an activity that is productive and expressive. He adds that writing skill does not come automatically, but it needs a lot of practice in order to be able to use the elements of writing and to know the purpose of writing itself.

**Recount Text**

Recount text is a type of text that should be mastered by students. There are several theories about recount text from several language experts. (Anderson & Anderson, 1997) state that recount text is a piece of text that retells past events, usually in the order in which they occurred. It means to give a description to other people that occurred in the past. From the theory, Maharani (2007, p.69) cited in (Suryadi, 2017) also supports that recount text is functions to tell the story of the past writing incident as the incident took place at a time ago. Thus, recount text tells past events that occurred in a sequence. Recount text does not include conflicts but only retells a sequence of events that occurred in the past. It means, recount text just re-tell about events that occurred in the past.

There are classifications of recount text. The first is personal recount retelling an experience in which the writer was personally involved. Its purposes are to inform, entertain the audience (listeners or readers), or both. The second is factual recount listing or recording of a certain event, such as a news story, an eye witness, news report, historical events. The third is procedural recount recording events such as science experiments or cooking experience. It presents the events chronologically (in the other in which they happened). The purpose of procedural recounts is to inform listeners or readers.

Furthermore, Derewianka & Jones (2016) add that there are six kinds of recount text consisting of 1) personal recount which the purpose is to give details of an incident involving personal experience, 2) factual recount which the function is to report on events or incidents not experienced personally by the reporter, 3) autobiographical recount which the function is to recount episodes in someone's life as told by that person, 4) biographical recount which the function is to recount episodes from another person's life, 5) historical recounts and accounts which the function is to record, explain, and interpret important or interesting events in a society's past, and; 6) literary recount which the function is to record, explain, and interpret important or interesting events in a society's past.

Like the text in general, recount text has its own generic structure. There are some ways to write about recount text. Suryadi (2017) states that there are three parts in generic structure. Recount text use past tense, using a common pattern as follows: Orientation – Events – Re-Orientation. Orientation contains figures, time and place in the story. Events which composed of the events are arranged in a sequence. Re-orientation contains a personal comment or expression of assessment, which is optional (not mandatory). The last generic structure of recount is the communicative purpose that entertains or recount past events.

Besides generic structure, recount text has its own characteristics called language features. Language features of text play important roles in order to distinguish one type of text from the other text. The language features in recount texts are nouns and pronouns instead of a person, animals, or things involved, such as *David, the monkey, we,* etc. Action verbs such as *go, sleep, run, etc*. Past tense such as *We went to the zoo*; *She was happy, etc*. Conjunction and time connectives which order events, happenings, or actions, such as *and, but, then after, that, etc.* Adverbs and adverb phrases to show location, time, and manner, such as *right here, in my house, yesterday afternoon, slowly, often, etc*. Adjectives to

modify nouns such as *beautiful, funny, childish, tiny, etc*. Therefore, the students have to pay attention to all of the aspects of writing recount text to make their writing better.

**Writing Recount Text**

Writing recount text is an activity to write a record of events in the past time. The events are reported chronologically according to the setting of time and place with the use of a number of conjunction and sequence marker. (Cavanagh, 1998) defines "recounts are a retelling of past events". They are usually written as a series of events in the order in which they happen. The purpose of recount text is to retell past events. It tells information about what happened when it happened, where it happened, and who was involved.

In order to write a good recount text, the students must pay attention to the whole elements such as the characters and the generic structure of recount text to distinguish it from other types of text. It is in line with the statement by (Anderson & Anderson, 1997) who claim that the students have to know how to construct and what language features in a recount text. In addition, they propose that the language features of recount text consist of 1) the use of proper nouns to identify those who are involved in the text, 2) descriptive word to give details about who, what, when, where, and how, 3) the use of the past tense to retell the events, and; 4) words that show the order of events (for example: first, next, then). He adds that there are generic structures of recount text should be followed by the students in writing recount text such as orientation, a series of events, and concluding paragraph.

**Evaluating Students' Writing**

Many factors can be evaluated in writing among them content, purpose, and audience, rhetorical (organization, cohesion, unity), and mechanics (sentence structure, grammar, vocabulary, and so forth). In order to evaluate students' writing, there are two basic types of grading can be used namely analytic and holistic. Both can be useful tools for evaluating students' writing, but each has different purposes (Jacobs, 1981). He adds that "analytic scoring separates various factors writing strengths and weaknesses". For example:

a. Begin with 100 points and subtract points for each deficiency:

Appropriate register (formality or informality)

(-10 points)

Language conventions

(-10 points)

Accuracy and range vocabulary

(-5 points)

TOTAL -25 points from 100

(= 75 points)

b. Give a percentage of the overall grade for each component:

| | |
|---|---|
| Introduction | 10% |
| Topic sentence | 20% |
| Sentence structure | 20% |
| Use of transition | 10% |
| Grammar | 20% |
| Vocabulary | 10% |
| Conclusion | 10% |

c. Assign split grades for each component:

| | |
|---|---|
| Organization | A |
| Content | C |
| Mechanics | B |

Meanwhile, "holistic scoring assesses the overall competence of a piece of writing, but it neither diagnoses problems nor prescribes remedies for the writing".

**Errors**

Errors are the flawed side of learner speech or writing. Those are the parts of conversation or composition that deviate from some selected norm of mature language performance. Errors are the result of one's systematic competence (Brown, 2000). Studying learners' errors serves two major purposes: 1) it provides data from which inferences about the nature of the language learning process can be made; and 2) it indicates to teachers and curriculum developers which part of the target language students have most difficulty producing correctly and which error types detract most from a learner's ability to communicate effectively.

Error in learning and performing target language cannot be avoided. Errors occur because of some causes. According to (Brown, 2000), there are four causes of errors, namely interlingual transfer, intralingual transfer, the context of learning, and communication strategies.

The first is an interlingual transfer which means the negative interference of the first language. Sometimes, the learners use the linguistic system of their first language in making target language sentences. The second is an intralingual transfer caused by the influence of target language rules (Brown, 2000). The third is the context of learning. (Brown, 2000) says that the context of learning is the source of errors caused by the learners' misinterpretation of the teacher's explanation and textbook or an inappropriate pattern contextualization. The fourth is communication strategies related to learning style. Learners usually try an effort to cross their message, but sometimes it can be an error.

**Teacher Feedback**

Feedback is helpful in encouraging students not to consider what they write as a final product and in helping them to write multiple drafts and to revise their writing several times in order to produce a much-improved piece of writing. In providing feedback, the teachers should encourage students to continue writing, in order students feel good with their writing and carry the activity through completion (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996).

There are two kinds of teacher feedback discussed in the present study; direct and indirect teacher feedback. Ellis, as cited in (Balanga, 2016) states that direct teacher feedback is explained as when the teachers provide the student with the correct form of the word. In addition, Ferris, as cited in (Almasi & Tabrizi, 2016), states that direct teacher feedback is a strategy of providing feedback to students to help them correct their errors by providing the correct linguistic form or linguistic structure of the target language.

Direct teacher feedback is usually given by teachers, upon noticing a grammatical mistake, by providing the correct answer or the expected response above or near the linguistic or grammatical error (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010); Thus, it can be said that direct teacher feedback occurs when the teachers simply give the correct form for the students' writing or a suggested correction if more than one is possible.

Meantime, indirect teacher feedback is a technique of correcting students' errors by using general comments and giving students the opportunity to fix errors themselves (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). For example, if a student writes *Yesterday I goed to the store,* the teachers can circle the word goed and write **VT** under it. He adds that there are two types of indirect teacher feedback among them are coded indirect feedback and encoded indirect feedback. The first type "coded indirect feedback" which the teachers underline the errors for the students and then write the symbol above the targeted error and then the teachers

give the composition to the student to think what the error is as this symbol helps the students to think. The second type "encoded indirect feedback" which the teachers underline or circle the error or the mistake and the teachers do not write the correct answer or any symbols and the students think what the error is.

Indirect teacher feedback takes place when teachers only provide indications which in some way makes students aware that an error exists but they do not provide the students with the correction. As supposed by (Ferris & Roberts, 2001), indirect feedback is a strategy of providing feedback commonly used by teachers to help students correct their errors by indicating an error without providing the correct form. In doing so, teachers can provide general clues regarding the location and nature or type of an error by providing an underline, a circle, a code, a mark, or a highlight on the error, and ask the students to correct the error themselves (Lee, 2008; O'Sullivan & Chambers, 2006) cited in (Almasi & Tabrizi, 2016). Through indirect feedback, students are cognitively challenged to reflect upon the clues given by the teachers, who acts as a 'reflective agent' (Pollard, 1990) cited in (Almasi & Tabrizi, 2016).

Indirect teacher feedback is viewed as an alternative strategy to teach writing because it has many advantages. The first advantage of indirect teacher feedback is stated by (Frodesen, 2001), which says that through indirect teacher feedback students are able to express their ideas more clearly in writing and to get clarification on any comments that teachers have made. The second advantage is stated by ((Ferris & Roberts, 2001). They add that indirect teacher feedback is more helpful either on students' long-term writing development or editing their writing than direct feedback.

Besides the advantages, indirect teacher feedback has disadvantages. As claimed by (Frodesen, 2001), the process of giving indirect teacher feedback to each students' writing can consume much time if the number of students in the class is large. He adds that students may feel confused because of the symbol given is not familiar to them.

Indirect teacher feedback is one of the strategies that is used to address grammatical errors in students' writing (Purnawarman, 2011). Indirect teacher feedback is usually provided by teachers using particular codes to mark the types of errors that occur in the process of writing. Some teachers use codes, and can then put these codes either in the body of the writing itself or in a corresponding margin. This makes corrections neater, less threatening, and considerably more helpful than random marks and comments (Harmer,

2001 p.111). Therefore, indirect teacher feedback can be used to address grammatical errors on students' writing especially in recount text. It makes teachers easier to identify and mark grammatical errors on students' writing based on the error symbols that have been made.

**METHOD**

The study was a mixed-method study explanatory sequential type because this study used quantitative data first followed by qualitative data. For quantitative data used pre-experimental design and content analysis for qualitative data. The researchers involved seventeen of the first-year students' academic year 2018/2019. The determination of the subjects in this study was based on a purposive sampling technique in which the study was not conducted on the entire population but focused on the target. The data for this study were collected from pre-test post-test and students' document tests which went through several steps. On the first meeting of the three-meeting sequence, students were required to write personal recount text based on a given prompt.

After the students submitted their writing, the researchers put indications for error correction on the students' work. In the second meeting, the researchers gave the corrected work back to the students and asked them to revise their original work. The same activity was conducted on the third meeting after the researchers put indication for error correction on students' work, the researchers gave the corrected work back to the students and ask them to find out the differences between their writing and the corrected version, and revised the second draft. The original version, the second draft, and the third draft were then collected. The types of errors on the students' writing from the first draft to the final draft were compared to investigate how successful indirect teacher feedback is. The students' writing of personal recount text in each draft was also used to strengthen the result of pre-test and post-test

After the students performed writing prompt, the researchers analyzed the quantitative data of the students' work by comparing the result of the first draft and the final draft to see the grammatical error frequencies that the students committed before and after receiving the indirect teacher feedback by using t-test. Then, in analyzing qualitative data, the researchers investigated the grammatical errors committed by the students from the first draft to the final draft to see which one of the lexico-grammatical aspects indicated the significant progress in error reduction.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

This study attempts to find out the effectiveness of indirect teacher feedback in reducing students' grammatical errors in writing recount text and to describe lexico-grammatical aspects of students' writing that indicate significant progress in error reduction. The followings were the steps that the researcher underwent to get the data.

First, for the quantitative data, the researcher counted the number of students' grammatical errors by referring to grammatical aspects including Word Choice, Word Form, Missing Word, Unclear Meaning, Subject-verb Agreement, Not Necessary, Preposition, Article, Word Order, Spelling Error, Capitalization, Punctuation, Verb Tense or Grammar, Does Not Support, Need More, and Organization. Afterward, the results of each sequence were analyzed to prove whether indirect teacher feedback effective in reducing the students' grammatical errors in writing recount text between the pre-test and the post-test.

From the calculation, it was obtained that in the pre-test, the students made 309 of grammatical errors. The highest number of grammatical errors was 35 and the lowest number of grammatical errors was 12. In addition, the researchers assessed the students' writing of personal recount text by referring to the aspects of writing consisting of content, organization, vocabulary, language use (grammar), and mechanics. The calculation of the students' score in writing personal recount text of the pre-test showed that the highest score before being given the treatment was 79, meanwhile, the lowest score was 56.

It can be said that when the number of students' grammatical errors increased, the result of students' writing decreased. Afterward, from the calculation of the post-test after being given the indirect teacher feedback, the students made 71 of grammatical errors. The highest number of grammatical errors were 16 and the lowest number of grammatical errors were 0. Like the prior steps, the researcher also assessed the students' writing of personal recount text. The calculation of the students' score in writing personal recount text of the post-test showed that the highest score of students' writing recount text after being given the treatment was 85, meanwhile, the lowest score of students' writing was 73.

The result of the computation of this study showed that the t-observed value was 14.56 and the t-table value was 2.120 at the level of significance 0.05 and df = 16. In other words, the t-observed was higher than the t-table. From these results, it can be inferred that the provision of indirect teacher feedback in this study was effective in reducing the

students' grammatical errors in writing personal recount text. Therefore, the first research question of the present study had been answered.

The next steps, for the qualitative data, were obtained through the results of pre-test and post-test and students' documents test of writing recount text. First, the researchers presented some of the students' document test in writing recount text from high, middle, and low students as the sample to see the differences in grammatical error frequencies. The high-level student made 15 grammatical errors in the pre-test and 0 in the post-test. The middle-level student made 12 grammatical errors in pre-test and 2 in the post-test. While the low-level student made 35 grammatical errors in the pre-test and 16 in the post-test. The result showed that the frequencies of grammatical errors made by the three-level students were totally different.

After that, the researchers analyzed the number of the students' grammatical errors improvement of both pre-test and post-test. It was conducted to see which of lexico-grammatical aspects indicated the reduction of the grammatical error after being given indirect teacher feedback as the treatment of this study. From the result, the most common grammatical errors made by the students in pre-test before being given the treatment were in using VT (verb tense or grammar) with the number was 104, in using punctuation with the number was 53, in using not necessary words with the number was 41, in using capitalization with the number was 37, in adding missing words with the number was 29, and in using WC (word choice) with the number was 18. Therefore, this study focused on those aspects of grammatical errors to be analyzed. After being given indirect teacher feedback as the treatment, the number of six aspects of grammatical errors made by the students had been reduced.

The number for VT (verb tense) reduced from 104 to 22, for the punctuation reduced from 53 to 1, for not necessary word reduced from 41 to 12, for the capitalization reduced from 37 to 14, for the missing word reduced from 29 to 9, and for WC (word choice) reduced from 18 to 5. In conclusion, the researcher could see that from those six of lexico-grammatical aspects of students' grammatical errors in writing recount text, VT (verb tense) had significant progress in error reduction. Hence, the second research question of the present study had been answered.

These findings are in line with the findings of several previous studies. (Hertatie, 2016) conducted the study entitled "The effectiveness of teacher feedback toward students'

ability in writing recount text at SMA-N 1 Katingan Tengah". The study used a quantitative approach and the study used pre-experimental design. Similarly, the present study and previous study emphasized on teacher feedback in writing recount text and used test and documentation for collecting the data. Differently, the present study focused on indirect teacher feedback to reduce students' grammatical errors in writing recount text. Meanwhile, the previous study used teacher feedback toward students' ability in writing recount text. In addition, the present study not only used quantitative data but also used qualitative data. The result of the previous study showed that teacher feedback gave a significant effect on the student's score in writing recount text. It was in line with the present study which represented that indirect teacher feedback also affected students' writing scores.

Furthermore, (Kusumawadhani, 2015) also conducted a study about "The use of indirect feedback to reduce students' grammatical errors in writing an analytical exposition text". The result of this study indicated that the use of indirect feedback reduces the number of grammatical errors made by the students in writing an analytical exposition text. Similarly, the present study and the previous study have the same result that indirect feedback reduces the number of grammatical errors made by the students in writing. In addition, the present study and previous study use test in collecting the data. Differently, besides using a test for collecting data, the present study used students' document test. Meanwhile, besides using a test for collecting data, the previous study used a questionnaire to get students' responses toward indirect teacher feedback. In addition, the previous study used an analytical exposition for the text, whereas the present study used recount for the text.

Moreover, (Bijami, Pandian, & Singh, 2016) conducted the study entitled "The relationship between teacher's written feedback and students' writing performance: a sociocultural perspective". Differently, the previous study and the present study have a different way in terms of collecting data. The present study collected the data from the test and students' document tests, meanwhile the previous study used writing tasks, questionnaires, and semi-structured interviews. However, the previous study and the present study have the same result which revealed that after getting feedback on their writing, they recognized that their writing performance has significantly improved. This finding was valuable because it showed that teacher can be a fundamental source in

improving students' writing. Nevertheless, the present study showed that the score of students' writing recount text increased because the number of grammatical errors decreased.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the findings mentioned previously, it can be concluded that indirect teacher feedback could reduce students' grammatical errors in writing personal recount text. It was proven by the score of students' writing before and after being given the treatment. Before being given the treatment, the number of students' grammatical errors was high, consequently, the students' writing score was low. However, after being given the treatment, the number of students' grammatical errors was low, consequently, the students' writing score was getting better. Moreover, indirect teacher feedback could reduce several aspects of students' grammatical errors, and the most aspect indicated significant progress in error reduction was in term of Verb Tense.

The researchers did not investigate the students' responses about indirect teacher feedback, and the researchers only implemented indirect teacher feedback for one class in recount text. Therefore, the other researchers are expected to attempt other types of teacher feedback to be implemented in a larger class in other materials.

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