

**USING INDIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE  
STUDENTS' WRITING ABILITY OF THE FOURTH SEMESTER  
STUDENTS OF STIK STELLA MARIS MAKASSAR**

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**Abstract**

This research explored the use of indirect corrective feedback could improve the students' writing ability to the fourth semester students of *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Keperawatan* (STIK) Stella Maris Makassar. The researcher chose two classes of the fourth semester students of *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Keperawatan* (STIK) Stella Maris Makassar randomly, as the experimental class and the control class. The two classes were given treatment. This paper describes the control class, which was taught with indirect corrective feedback. The data were collected through writing test. The result of the data analysis showed that there was significant difference between the students' score who were taught by using indirect feedback and class without indirect corrective feedback. It is proved by the mean score of the experimental class is higher than control class in the posttest. Based on the result, it could be concluded that the use of corrective feedback improved the students' writing ability of the fourth semester students of *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Keperawatan* (STIK) Stella Maris Makassar in academic year 2013/2014.

Keywords: indirect corrective test, writing, experiment

**Abstrak**

Penelitian ini menjelaskan penggunaan *indirect corrective feedback* dapat meningkatkan kemampuan menulis mahasiswa semester empat di sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Keperawatan (STIK) Stella Maris Makassar. Peneliti memilih dua kelas secara acak, sebagai kelas *experiment* dan kelas *control*. Dua kelas diberikan *treatment* yang berbeda. Tulisan ini mengulas data yang diperoleh pada kelas *control* diberikan perlakuan *indirect corrective feedback*. Data dikumpulkan melalui tes *writing*. Dari analisis data menunjukkan bahwa ada perbedaan signifikan antara mahasiswa yang diajar dengan menggunakan *indirect corrective feedback* dan mahasiswa yang diajar tanpa menggunakan *indirect corrective feedback*. Hal ini dibuktikan dimana nilai rata-rata kelas *experiment* lebih tinggi pada post-test. Dari hasil tersebut dapat disimpulkan bahwa penggunaan *indirect corrective feedback* dapat meningkatkan kemampuan *writing* mahasiswa semester empat di Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Keperawatan (STIK) Stella Maris tahun akademik 2013/2014.

Kata kunci: indirect corrective test, menulis, penelitian eksperimen.

## **INTRODUCTION**

As English learners, students at school find that English language is different from their mother tongue. Indonesian, for example, does not introduce what is called tenses (past, present, and future) while English, the new foreign language which students are obligated to study at school, is formed by tenses. Another problem, which students fail to overcome, is the lack of writing ability. In nearly all English classes at school, the English teachers teach their students elements of language and other language knowledge. Consequently, students do not have opportunity to try practicing the language skills.

Harmer (1991) classified the language into four skills namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Furthermore he classified listening and reading as receptive skills while speaking and writing as productive skills. Both productive skills, writing and speaking are used to deliver or convey ideas, thought, experiences feeling and desires. As a productive skill, students should also prioritize their effort to improve their writing and speaking abilities.

Writing is also an essential part of communicating, thinking, and learning. It allows students to express their ideas, to negotiate relationships, to give definition to their thoughts, and to learn about language skills. Therefore, to utilize the language well, students should master all language elements, i.e.: vocabulary, pronunciation, structure, spelling, and the language skills: listening, speaking, writing, and reading. In relation to this matter, the researcher focuses this research on writing as one skill in English.

Writing includes many aspects of language that should be covered. The writing skills are complex and sometimes difficult to teach, requiring mastery not only of grammatical and theoretical devices but also of conceptual and judgmental elements. That's why teaching writing is different from other aspects of language skills (Heaton, 1990: 135).

In writing class, the teacher should realize the students' difficulties in writing. Sometimes the students have a lot of ideas in their minds but they worry to start writing and even they do not know how to develop the ideas. The difficulties are due to weaknesses in grammar and vocabulary, they feel worry about making mistakes in writing. In this matter, the teacher has important role in

correcting students' writing by giving corrective feedback in order to help the students have better writing ability. This problem is faced by not only the students as beginner writer, but also an advance writer.

The problem is why having learned English for many years but most learners feel they have no ability to use the language as a medium of communication. They probably understand English when other people speak. They may also understand the English texts when the others read or write. This case is also faced by students of *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan (STIK) Stella Maris Makassar*. The students have low ability in writing. Mostly they are able to express their ideas in simple sentences but they still make grammatical errors.

Regarding the previous explanation, the researcher considers that indirect corrective feedback is one of the teaching technique that can be used in improving students' writing ability. It is an efficient way for writing class in which the students will have corrective feedback in their writing. As described in *Descriptive Feedback (2010)*, corrective feedback gives information to students and teachers about learning. The indirect corrective feedback given can reduce the gap between the student's current level and expected goal.

In relation to the previous problems above, the researcher formulates the research questions as: How can the indirect corrective feedback improve the students' writing ability of the fourth semester students of STIK Stella Maris Makassar?

In general, corrective feedback can be defined as a useful information given to students to respond their writing task in order to improve their writing ability. According to Brookhart (2008) feedback could be described as teacher feedback on students work. She further described that feedback should be part of a classroom assessment environment in which students see constructive criticism as a good thing and understand that learning cannot occur without practice. This indicates that it is useful for teachers to give students more practices and teachers give more corrective feedback to students.

Shute (2007) described that feedback tells the students what needs to be fixed or revised. He also explained that there two main function of feedback: directive and facilitative. Directive feedback guides student concerning what they

need to be fixed or revised. In facilitative feedback, teachers give comments and suggestions in order to help students make revision. Corrective feedback is not disapproval, criticism or a personal attack, but it is given to students so that they can improve their work. Furthermore, when corrective feedback is constructive and consistent and is given by someone in an informed position it is very useful.

Indirect corrective feedback is when the teacher underlines, circles or highlights errors on students' original texts, indicating the location of these errors without correcting them. Students are asked to study their errors and correct those (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). In other words, indirect corrective feedback emphasizes the role of students in understanding and correcting their errors rather than being provided with the corrections.

Indirect feedback is applied by underlining students' writing errors so that students understand that there is a problem that should be 'fixed.' Teachers may use lines, circles or highlighting to indicate the location of errors. They also need to decide how explicit indirect feedback should be based on the goals they want to achieve by providing feedback.



*Figure 1. Sample of indirect feedback*

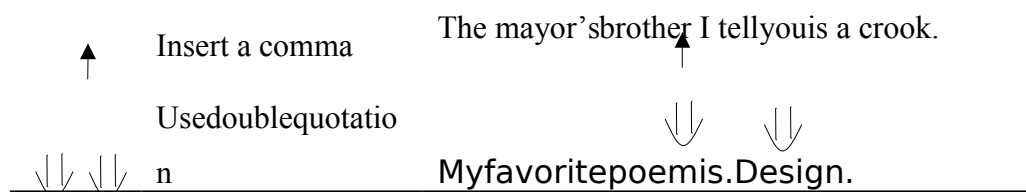
Before I **come** here, I didn't like to study English.

When I was **the** elementary school student, I started studying English because we **have** to study English at **the** middle school and at in **the** high school in my country. At that time, I felt **interesting** in it. But, I became lazy as I become a higher grade student. Actually, I **did** not like **memorize** some grammar or words. As I **study** it more, it **make** me feel tiresome. Then, I thought that I **do** not need to **studied** English more because I **will** not go out from my country. Actually, I was arrogant because the thinking was based on my score that was pretty good eventhough I didn't **studied** hard. I didn't think that it was like 'a babe in the woods'.

*Table 1. List of symbols which show typical mistakes*

<b>Symbols</b>	<b>Meaning</b>	<b>Example</b>
WF	Wrong form	The <u>strong</u> <sup>WF</sup> of Hercules amazed the spectators.
W.O.	Wrong word order	The table is <u>our</u> <sup>WF</sup> . <u>Always</u> <sup>W.O.</sup> I am happy here. We know <u>well</u> <sup>W.O.</sup> this city.

WT	Wrong tense	I <u>knew</u> <sup>WT</sup> him for years.
C	Concord, subject & verb do not agree	Two policemen <sup>c</sup> <u>has</u> come. The <u>news</u> <sup>c</sup> <u>are</u> bad today.
Sp	Incorrect spelling	SpSp I received jour letter
S/P	Singular or plural, wrong form	We need more informations <sup>s</sup>
Λ	Something missing	They said <b>λ</b> was wrong.
[ ]	Something is not necessary	It was too [much] different.
?M	Meaning not clear	?M Come and <u>rest</u> with us for a week.
NA	The usage is not appropriate	NA He <u>requested</u> me to sit down.
P	Punctuation wrong	P PP Whats your name_ He asked me what I wanted?
WW	Wrong word	WW Teacher, please <u>learn</u> me English!
aA	Capital or lowercase letters	mr.Globa Class lives in Canada. Mr. Globa Class lives in CAnada.
//	Begin a new paragraph	//Mr. Globa Class lives in Canada. It is a lovely place to learn about the world.
	Devide letters or words	Mr. <u>Globa Class</u> lives in Canada.
	Movethis here	Mr. Globa' <u>da</u> Class lives in
	Delete	The girlis a happy.
—	Replace	The boyishappy.
#	Addspace	She has #aprescription
{	Close space	I wenttothepharmacy.
—	Switch order	I wentthetopharmacy
→	Indent first line of new paragraph	Thisisthetopicsentence of mywritingwhich I wrote yesterday.s



Adapted from Harmer (1991:111).

## METHOD

The data in this paper was taken from a quasi-experimental research in 2014. In this research, the researcher applied direct and indirect corrective feedback for two classes, an experimental class and a control class. The experimental class received treatment by using direct and indirect corrective feedback while the control class received treatment by using indirect corrective feedback. Students were given some common topics or texts related to nursing and ask them to write based on the topics given. The control class was needed for comparison purposes to see whether direct and indirect corrective feedback was effective to improve students' writing ability.

The sample of this research was selected through cluster random sampling to select Class A, as experimental class and class B, as control class. As a consideration, the students of both classes had the same ability. Besides, the students also had the same background knowledge in learning English.

This research used descriptive statistics in analyzing the data. Descriptive statistics that was used in this research consisted of the sum number, mean, standard deviation number, and frequencies table.

## Findings

### *Giving Indirect Corrective Feedback*

Indirect corrective feedback was introduced to students. By introducing this, students understood that in indirect corrective feedback, the students found that the researcher only underlined or located the errors without correcting them. Symbols used in the correction were described to students clearly. It seems that they did not know the symbols. After introducing the symbols, they were able to read the correction made by the researcher. The list of symbols was presented above.

The researcher, then, described elements or components of writing. It seems that students did not pay attention these elements when they were writing a topic. The elements of writing are content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The process of writing was explained well to students. The researcher described clearly the steps done when students were writing a topic. From the students' questions, it was found that they wrote directly what they had in their mind. The steps of writing are pre-writing, writing, revising or editing, and proofreading.

The researcher gave familiar topics related to nursing. Different topic was given in every meeting. In meeting three, for example' the students wrote about "Blood donor". The writing task was collected and the researcher gave corrective feedback. Below is presented some examples of corrective direct and indirect feedback taken from students' writing.

- "....., more heart disease resulting in <sup>death</sup> deat of human. For people heart disease <sup>s</sup> make a lot of human fear".
- "Heart is <sup>Sp</sup> reasting when we're sleeping, but resting does not mean that the heart <sup>S/P</sup> stop beating".
- "..... note book is a small book that can we input in the posttest ? In note book, we can <sup>WT</sup> writing patien nome".
- "Heart <sup>Sp</sup> deseases is a killer <sup>Sp</sup> deseases, heart <sup>Sp</sup> deseases can happen for all people".
- "Nurse is <sup>a</sup> good profession".
- "Everyone feels <sup>WT/WF</sup> stress from time <sup>WW</sup> for time".
- "Some peopple cope to stress more effective <sup>ly</sup> than others".

***The Data Analysis of Writing Test***

The following table showed the frequency and the percentage of the students' pretest and posttest in control class.

*Table 2. The percentage of the students' writing skill in control class*

Classification	Score	Pretest		Posttest	
		F	%	F	%
Excellent to very good	100 – 84	0	0	0	0
Good to average	83 – 68	0	0	6	15
Fair to poor	67 – 51	2	5	34	85
Very poor	50 – 34	38	95	0	0
Total		40	100	40	100

In pretest, there were 38 students (95%) were grouped in very poor classification, 2 students (5%) were fair to poor classification, and none of them were scored in good to average classifications. In posttest, there were only 6 students (15%) were classified as good to average, 34 (85%) were fair to poor classification. None of the students was in excellent to very good.

Thus, the mean score in pretest was 44.50 categorized as very poor classification and in posttest it was 64.25 which was categorized as fair to poor classification. This indicated that the mean score in posttest was higher than the pretest.

*Table 3. The statistical summary of the students' pretest and posttest assessed in control class.*

Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimal Score	Maximal Score	N
Pretest (O <sub>1</sub> )	44.50	4.151	39	59	40
Posttest (O <sub>2</sub> )	64.25	5.908	57	85	40

The result showed the statistical summary of the students pretest and posttest in control class. It showed that the total number of subjects was 40 students. The scores achieved by the students increased from 44.50 in pretest to 64.25 in posttest. As the result, the mean scores in pretest had very poor score



while in posttest the mean scores was still around fair to poor. The standard deviations of each component of both tests were also varied. In general, the pretest seemed to have smaller standard deviations (4.151) than the posttest (5.908).

In applying indirect corrective feedback, the researcher only underlined, circled or highlighted errors on students' original texts, indicating the location of these errors without correcting them. So the students understood that there was a problem that should be 'fixed. In this case, the researcher asked the students to study their errors and correct them.

In this case, using indirect feedback for the students who did not know how to correct their writing or had low ability in grammar could not finish their writing well. Otherwise, for the students who were given direct feedback, they could correct their writing as the researcher helped them correct their writing.

Based on the students' writing during treatment for six meetings, most of the students got high improvement when they were given indirect corrective feedback. The reason was indirect feedback was a challenging task for them to fix it.

### **Discussion**

The results showed that the use of indirect corrective feedback can also improved students' writing ability. This means that there was a good applicable technique in teaching writing. Most of the students did active participation in applying types of corrective feedback because it could develop their writing ability. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) found that after receiving written corrective feedback students could improve their writing development. After applying types of corrective feedback, the researcher had assumption that this strategy was one way to assist the students to practice and improve writing skill.

Based on the result of the students' writing skill either in control class or experimental class prior to and after treatment, the researcher found that from five writing components, some of the students still found difficulties in improving their writing especially in mechanics. It seemed that the students ignored the use of punctuation and capitalization.

Furthermore, some students still had serious problem in all writing components which increased only a few points in experimental class. However, based on the research, the students had already made a significant progress in all writing components after they were given treatment.

However, from five writing components, it seemed that students gained higher score in both classes. They did much better in the content than in other components. In control class, for example, students' mean score increased from 14.90 in the pretest to 18.02 in the posttest. Then, it was followed by vocabulary (9.02 to 14.0), organization (9.32 to 13.72), and language use (8.52 to 13.72). Mechanics, as one of the components, was the most difficult component for students in control class. The mean score was only 3.87 in the posttest from 2.52 in the pretest.

The results of this research concluded that after each meeting, by using corrective feedback (direct and indirect), the students were in fairly good category. It means that the corrective feedback was successful to improve the writing skill of the fourth semester students of *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu keperawatan (STIK) Stella Maris Makassar* 2013/2014 academic year.

## **CONCLUSION**

Based on the result of data findings and analysis, the researcher conclude that the use of corrective feedback significantly improved the students' writing ability to the fourth semester students of *Sekolah Tinggi Ilmu Kesehatan (STIK) Stella Maris Makassar*. It could be seen from students' mean score, which was increased to 64.25 from 44.50 in pretest while experimental class, the mean score was 79.20 from 45.47 in pretest. Therefore, indirect corrective feedback was also effective. However, students got better improvement when they were given direct corrective feedback compared with indirect corrective feedback.

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