

**THE USE OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACKS TO  
IMPROVE STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING ABILITY**

(A Classroom Action Research of Seventh Grade of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri  
1 Pontianak in Academic Year 2011/2012)

**AN ARTICLE**

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## **THE USE OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' DESCRIPTIVE WRITING ABILITY**

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**Abstrak** : Ini merupakan sebuah penelitian tindakan kelas. Dalam penelitian ini dijabarkan bagaimana koreksian langsung dan tidak langsung dapat meningkatkan kemampuan siswa dalam menulis teks deskriptif khususnya keroganisasian teks, tata bahasa, dan cara penulisan. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan koreksian mana yang lebih tepat untuk siswa khusus kelas satu SMP. Ada dua siklus dalam penelitian ini dimana setiap siklus terdiri dari dua pertemuan. Guru memberikan koreksian langsung dan tidak langsung pada tulisan siswa. Data dianalisis menggunakan ceklis observasi, catatan lapangan dan nilai rata-rata siswa

**Kata Kunci** : koreksian, teks deskriptif.

**Abstract** : The method of this research is classroom action research. The focus of this study was the use of the direct and indirect corrective feedback that provided by the teacher. As the corrective feedback is common technique used by the teacher, this research reveals how corrective feedback students' writing. It also showed which feedback preferred to the students as there were differences sequences of direct and indirect corrective feedback on students' writing. There were two cycles in this research whereas consisted of two meetings in every cycle. The teacher provided the students both of direct and indirect corrective feedback. The data is analyzed by describing the observation checklist, field note, and by use the students' score.

**Keywords**: corrective feedback, descriptive text.

**W**riting is communicative skill which permits the writer share his/her idea to the reader in the form of written language. As Olshtain (2001:207) viewed that "viewing writing as an act of communicative suggests an interactive process which takes place between the writer and the reader via the text." It was not a simple task for foreign language students to learn writing. They put a lot of effort in their attempt in mastery writing. In second language writing, students are required to focus on the content and also on the language. Weigle (2002) said that writing in the second language tended to be more constrained, more difficult and less effective than writing in the first language.

During her teaching in MTsN 1 Pontianak as a substitute teacher, the researcher found out that the students still lack in writing ability of the descriptive text. Descriptive text was one of the texts that had to be mastered by the seventh grade students of MTsN 1 Pontianak. Descriptive text referred to kind of text which describes someone or something in specific. It dealt how something looks, smells, feels, acts, tastes, sounds and so forth. Writing this type of text required students to know its organization. The organization of this type of text was

identification and description. The students made errors in certain areas such as grammar, lack of vocabulary, gathering idea, and mechanism. Many students of seventh grade of MTsN 1 Pontianak thought that their weakness in writing because they had difficulties in finding and developing their ideas, lack of vocabulary, and they often forget about the grammar rules in the writing.

In the teaching writing, usually the students were asked to make a piece of work of free writing based on the theme given and submitted their work. The teacher handed back their writing which had been provided with corrective feedback. Mostly the corrective feedback on students' writing was in forms of indirect corrective feedback. The teacher preferred this kind of feedback because she thought that the indirect corrective feedback was the easiest and the fastest way to give correction to the students' writing. It was less time consuming. Indirect feedback was one of types of feedback which provides the students by underlining or signing their errors without making the errors into the correct form. As to the students of MTs N. 1 Pontianak, this kind of written corrective feedback was helpless for them. They were still confused on the errors which they made. Many students ignored the feedback which had been provided by the teacher. It led to a tendency of making the same errors on their subsequent writing task.

As the problem above, the researcher found out the lack of technique in providing the feedback by the teacher. The input of the teacher on students' writing was indirect corrective feedback which was still lack in making the students comprehend what errors were they have made. The researcher viewed that the teacher should combine direct and indirect corrective feedback.

The researcher believed that providing direct and indirect corrective feedback was crucial in order to improve students' writing ability. Direct and indirect corrective feedback was written form of input in students' writing works. Feedback had been widely discussed in SLA field. Behaviorism viewed an error should be corrected. As Ellis (1997:31) pointed out that "habit are formed when learners respond to stimuli in the environment and subsequently have their response reinforced so that they are remembered." Many researchers had been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the corrective feedback. As Truscott (1996) argued that corrective feedback does not improve students' accuracy, there were numerous researcher who against his idea. Ferris (2004), Bitchener (2005) and Chandler (2003) believed corrective feedback indeed can improve students' writing accuracy.

After the interviewed that was done to the teacher, the researcher found out that there was no output from the students after they got their writing which had provided with feedback. It led to one of the problems of the students' reluctance to understand what errors that they had made. As the problem from the students above, the researcher viewed that the revision as the output was necessary in order to make the students know and analyze what errors that they had made.

The researcher conducted classroom action research to the seventh grade students of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 Pontianak with the purpose of solving students' problem in writing descriptive text. By applying two of feedback techniques those were direct and indirect corrective feedback, the researcher provide the students with the feedback on their writing as the input and also asked the students to revise as the output.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improve students' writing ability in text organization?
2. How do direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improve students' writing ability in grammar?
3. How do direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improve students' writing ability in mechanism?

## THE USE OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACKS

Providing feedback is seen as important task to the teachers. As the students, feedback from the teacher guided them to see how the teachers responded to their work and learn from the teacher's response. The students were demanded to learn their errors based on the teacher's feedback.

Feedback was seen as an encouraging activity. The students tried to write what the teachers told. As the teacher provided their writing with the feedback, it was the evidence that the teacher also act as a reader. Students saw it as a praise of their work. It showed how teacher responded to their writing.

There were two types of feedback that researcher use. They were direct and indirect corrective feedback. As they were commonly used by the teacher in the class, the researcher tried to figure out which feedback that better for the student in the first grade of Junior High School.

### *Direct Corrective Feedback*

In this feedback, the teacher provided the students with correct form. This took a number of different forms like crossing out unnecessary word, phrase, or morpheme, and writing the correct form above near to the erroneous form.

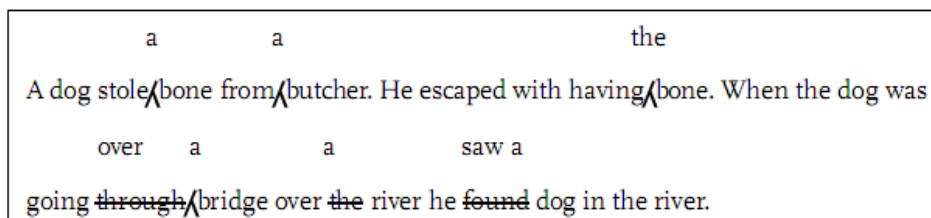


Figure 1: Example of direct corrective feedback, Ellis (2009:99)

Ellis (2009) stated that direct corrective feedback was which the teacher provided his/her students with correct form. He claimed that direct corrective feedback was beneficial in providing learners with explicit guidance about how to correct their error. Ferris and Robert (2001, quoted in Ellis, 2005, p.97) argued that direct corrective feedback was better than indirect corrective feedback in improving students' accuracy which had a low level of proficiency. Beunigen (2008) found that direct corrective feedback have a long term effect on student's accuracy.

### *Indirect Corrective Feedback*

This was the feedback which the teacher indicated that an error existed but did not provide correction. This can be done by underlining the errors or using

cursors to show omissions in the students' text or by placing a cross in the margin next to the line containing the error. In effect, this involved deciding whether or not to show the precise location of error. Beunigen (2008) stated that indirect corrective feedback consist of an indication identities both the error. Ellis (2009) stated that indirect corrective feedback providing student's error without actually correcting it. Ferris (1995, quoted in Beunigen, 2008, p.282) claimed that indirect corrective feedback was more benefit since the students self-editing the teacher's providing. The finding of Lalande (1982, quoted in Ellis, 2009, p.100) suggested that indirect corrective feedback was more effective for students in correct their errors.

A dog stole X bone from X butcher. He escaped with XhavingX X bone. When the dog was going XthroughX X bridge over XtheX river he found X dog in the river.  
 X = missing word  
 X \_\_X = wrong word

Figure 2: Example of indirect corrective feedback, Ellis (2009:100)

## METHOD

In this research the writer used a classroom action research because this research is aimed to improve the quality of teaching and learning process. In this case, the writer wanted to improve the writing ability on descriptive text of the seventh grade of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri 1 Pontianak by providing corrective feedback.

According to Kemmis and McTaggart in Burns (2010:18), the action research process had four main stages which were planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. The description of those stages can be seen below:

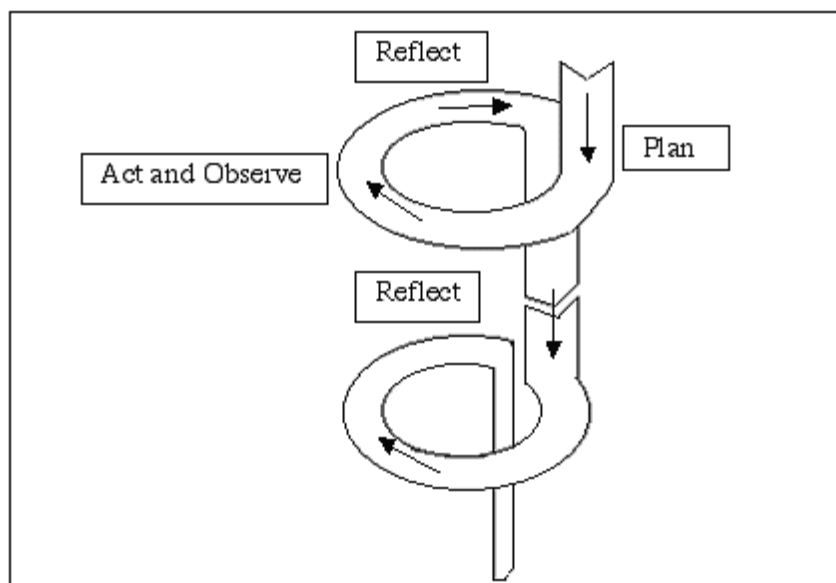


Figure 3: Kemmis and Mc Taggart (1988) cited in Burns (2010:9)

### *Participant*

The data were collected from the first grade in MTs N. 1 Pontianak. The researcher determined one class randomly. It consisted of 36 students. There was variant English proficiency in this class. Most of the students were around 13-14 years old.

### *Technique of Collecting Data*

There were two kinds of techniques used by the researcher. They are observation technique and measurement techniques. Observation checklist and field note were used for the observation technique. As to measure the students' writing, the researcher used scoring profile. Observation checklist was used to observe students' and teachers' behavior while the teaching process where conducted. It was filled by the collaborator. Scoring profile was used to score students' writing test. It is provided in the students' second writing in every cycle. The scores emphasized on text organization, grammar and mechanism. Field note is used to record the aspect that was not provided in the observation checklist. It was filled by the collaborator whereas the unpredictable things happened during the teaching process.

### *Procedure*

In the planning stage, the researcher identified the problem or issue and develop plan in order to bring about improvement in the specific area. The researcher prepared everything that she needed in doing classroom action research. The teacher needed to have pre research to know the situation of the school before applying the action research. The researcher also needed to prepare lesson plan, scoring table to assess the students, hand out, observation checklist and field notes.

In the action stage, the teacher and her collaborator worked together cooperatively. The collaborator observed the teaching and learning process by using observation checklist and field notes while the writer as well as teacher applied step by step procedures in the lesson plan. First the teacher gave the students brainstorming by displaying the pictures. She explained about 'identification' and 'description' in the descriptive text and also the language features in descriptive text. Next, Teacher asked the students to engaged in a group to do some task which related to the descriptive text. After that, the teacher asked the student to present their works. Then, the teacher asked the students to write the descriptive text individually. She gave direct and indirect corrective feedbacks on the students' writing.

In the next meeting, teacher handed back the students' writing which had given direct and indirect corrective feedbacks, she showed one of the students' papers by using projector as a sample. The teacher asked the students to discuss it in a group. Then the students revise the model voluntarily in front of the class. Next, teacher asked the students to revise their own paper that had got direct and indirect corrective feedbacks.

In the observation stage, the researcher observed systematically the effects of the action and documenting the context, actions and opinion of those who involved.

In the reflection stage, the researcher reflected on evaluation and describing the effects of the action in order to make sense of what had happened and to understand the issue that have been explored more clearly.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **a. Finding**

1. Direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improved students' writing in text organization.

To improve students' writing ability in text organization, the teacher provided the students with indirect corrective feedback on their writing. The feedback on the text organizing was by underlining the sentences which was disorder. It was a surface error which was indicated only by a cross or underlines the lines in which the error occurred. It helped them in identifying the problem and corrected it before submitted the revision.

In the first cycle, most of the students could not decode the error code meant. It made them ignored the errors marked. They submitted the text without revised it. In the subsequent text, they made the same errors regarding to text organization. In the second cycle, to avoid misunderstanding by the students, the teacher gave a substantial comment orally to help them understand the errors they had made.

The teacher did not provide direct corrective feedback since the teacher thought that the students can easily figure out the indirect feedback which providing by the teacher.

Teacher explained the type of feedback, the type of error, and the correction code she provided in order to help students understand the feedback which had been given by the teacher. In this activity, the teacher displayed one of students' writing by using projector. The teacher explained the code and marks of errors on the text organization

This activity allowed them to raise the question on the written feedback. Thus, it helped them to construct the revision plan. As for the teacher, conference gave her a chance to respond, clarifying the meaning and resolving ambiguities. After that, the students were asked to revise their work. The teacher asked the students revise the text organization that had mark on it. The teacher guided the students to do it properly.

The students were engaged in a group work to do some activities. It helped them in sharing their ideas between them. The students were asked to make a short descriptive text in a group. They had to submit it on time. Then, the teacher provided them the feedback. The teacher asked the other to group to revise it. It helped them to find the errors on their friend's work.

On the second cycle, the students in a group were asked to rearrange the sentences into a good paragraph based on the descriptive text organization. And then they were asked to make a descriptive text based on the picture given. Then, they had to present their work in front of the class. The teacher gave the indirect corrective feedback on their work and asked the other group to revise them. In the end of the meeting, the



students were asked to make a text based on the topic given. They had to make it individually.

On the second meeting of the second cycle, the teacher showed the student's writing model by projector. The students were asked to revise it in a group. And after that, they had to revise theirs that already got the direct and indirect corrective feedback by the teacher.

Students' mean score for this aspect improve from 18.86 in the first cycle to 23.38 in the second cycle. In the first cycle, the students hardly differentiated between identification and description in their writing. Thus, the teacher gave the direct and indirect feedback on the students writing and also the substantial comment to make the students understand clearly. Later on the second cycle, the teacher explained about the text organization and gave questions which differentiated the identification and the description. Thus, it really helped the students in understanding the text organization of the descriptive better.

2. Direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improved students' writing in simple present tense and subject verb agreement 'has/have'.

In writing descriptive text, simple present tense was mainly used in this text. It also used subject verb agreement 'has/have' to describing people appearance. In the first action, the students were engaged in a group to fill the blank with the correct simple present tense and subject-verb agreement 'has/have'. They were presented when they were finished.

The teacher gave direct and indirect corrective feedback on the students writing. The corrective feedback on the simple present tense and 'has/have' was by marking the error by circling words to indicating the error or giving the appropriate words to the errors directly on their paper. The teacher provided the direct corrective feedback on the beginning of the students' writing. Then, she provided the indirect corrective feedback which was by circling the errors on the rest. It is in order to make the student identified it the easily.

In the first cycle, unfortunately many students did not write the teacher's explanation about the simple present tense and 'has/have' that was used in writing the descriptive text. This also one of the reasons the students made many errors regarding to 'has/have'. As for the subsequent cycle, the teacher provided the students with the handout.

Before the students revised their writing, the teacher was exposing one of their friend's writing as a sample. The teacher asked the students to revise it together. In the revision session, mostly the students could revise their writing regarded to the 'has/have'. The students' improvement on the grammar of the descriptive writing had increased.

3. Direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improved students' writing in mechanics of writing.

Many of the students ignored the mechanism in the writing. Most of them were male students. They tended to write in messy way. As long as the teacher could understand what they wrote, it would be tolerated. Otherwise, when the teacher hardly read their writing, it led to the

problem. The teacher found out mostly male student ignored the mechanism.

At first, the students were asked to rewrite the text with the correct punctuation and capital letter in a group. After they finished, they had to present their work in front of the class.

After the students done their writing work, the teacher provided them with the direct and indirect corrective feedback regarding to their writing mechanism. This made them conscious that the teacher aware of their mechanism.

In this session, the teacher reminded them about mechanism errors that would also be marked by the teacher. This alerted the students to pay attention to their mechanism. The students had to revise the errors on the mechanism that had been marked by the teacher.

The result of students writing in second cycle was satisfying. The students' skills in writing descriptive have improved by applying direct and indirect corrective feedback. After doing all of the steps in this cycle, both collaborator and teacher discussed and reflected that had been done in this cycle. As students followed the process more frequently, they became more independent in writing. The successfulness in both of the writing process and the results of the students' writing made the writer sure that the cycle could be stopped. The following figures showed improvements of the students' mean score in writing descriptive from first cycle and second cycle.

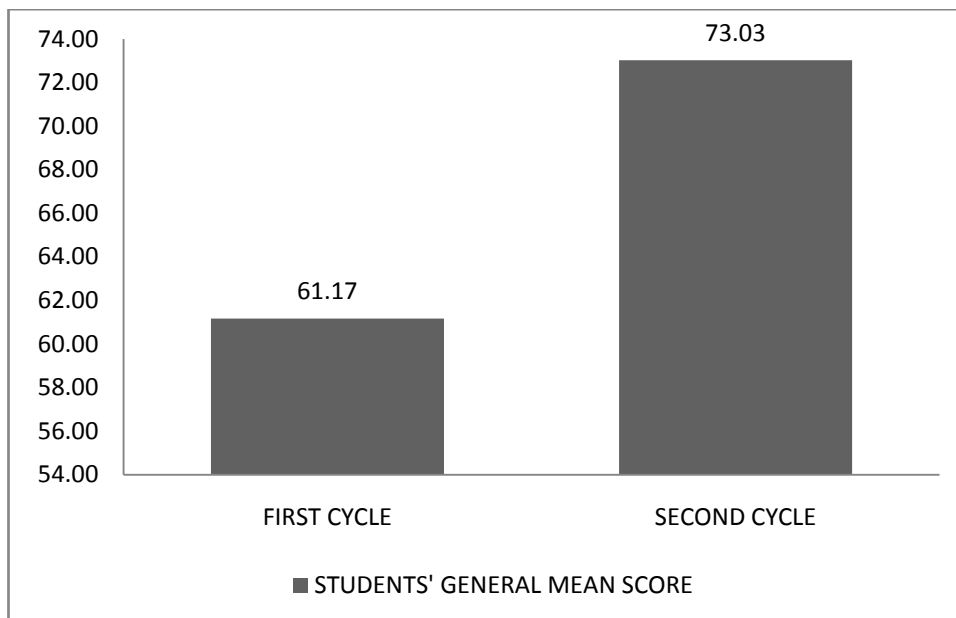


Chart 1: General means score in first cycle and second cycle

Based on the chart, in the first cycle, the general mean score of students' writing descriptive ability was 61.17 and it was 73.03 in the second cycle. This meant that the students' general mean score improved from the first cycle to the second cycle. The students' general mean score increased 11.86% from the first cycle into the second cycle. Thus the students' writing ability in writing descriptive text improved successfully after being taught through direct and indirect corrective feedback.

As the result, the number of students who achieved the KKM score became bigger in quantity for each cycle. It showed the improvement from the first cycle to the second cycle. In the first cycle, the students who passed the lesson were only 17 students. In other words, only 50% students passed the lesson. In the second cycle, the students who achieved the KKM score increased into 26 students. In other words 72% students passed the KKM score.

#### **b. Discussion**

The general research question concerned in the improvement of students' writing ability in descriptive text after being applied direct and indirect corrective feedback in the classroom. The results indicated the improvement in the students' writing ability after the teacher applied direct and indirect corrective feedbacks.

The first question of the specific research question was on how direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improve students' writing ability in descriptive text organization. The results show there was improvement on students' writing ability in descriptive text organization. The students had difficulty in organizing the idea. They made errors in organize descriptive text which is divided into two parts identification and description. The teacher applied direct and indirect correctives feedbacks. In the first cycle, there students had difficulty in decoding the feedbacks. Thus, in the second cycle the teacher gave a note in students writing to help them in decoding their errors.

The second question of the specific research question asked on how direct and indirect corrective feedback improve students' writing ability in grammar. In this case, the grammar that mostly used was simple present tense and subject-verb agreement 'has/have'. The simple students had difficulty in simple present tense and subject-verb agreement 'have/has' especially when it came to the 'she, he, it' whereas they had to put s/es in the end of the verb. The teacher applied direct and indirect for the grammar errors. The teacher circled the errors on the verbs or directly writes the appropriate form. The results showed that there was improvement in the grammar aspect after applying direct and indirect corrective feedbacks.

And the last question of the specific question asked how direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improve students' mechanism in writing. In the first cycle, many of the students ignored the mechanism in writing. Most of them were male students. To overcome this problem the teacher applied direct and indirect correctives feedback in their writing. The teacher also told them to be concerned on the mechanism when they were writing in the first meeting of the second cycle. There was improvement in the students' mechanism. They were more aware of the mechanism in the writing.

In the research process, the researcher found out that mostly the students could not decode the indirect corrective feedback. It was due to their lack understanding about the material. The students always asked the teacher what their mistakes are. It made the classroom becoming chaos. And also it about their knowledge whereas their still in the low proficiency. Meanwhile, they do not have problem with the direct corrective feedback. They can easily figure out their mistakes and revise them on the subsequent task.

## CONCLUSION

As the result, the number of students who achieved the KKM score became bigger in quantity for each cycle. It showed the improvement from the first cycle to the second cycle. In the first cycle, the students who passed the lesson were only 17 students. In other words, only 50% students passed the lesson. In the second cycle, the students who achieved the KKM score increased into 26 students. In other words 72% students passed the KKM score.

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This study showed how direct and indirect corrective feedbacks improved students' writing ability in descriptive text. Teacher found many ideas regarding to the teaching learning. The students as well could comprehend how to write descriptive text more clearly. As two types of feedbacks given to the students, most of the students prefer the direct corrective feedback.

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