

The Implementation of Teachers' Indirect Feedback on Students' Writing Performance in Descriptive Text

Elvina Febriani¹, Nia Pujiawati², Wahyudin Fitriyana³

English Education, Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, Indonesia

¹ 2110631060132@student.unsika.ac.id, ² nia.pujiawati@fkip.ac.id,

³ wahyudin.fitriyana@staff.unsika.ac.id

Abstract

This study aims to describe the implementation of teachers' indirect feedback on students' descriptive writing skills and to examine how this feedback contributes to improving their grammatical accuracy. The research was conducted at one of the state junior high schools in Karawang Regency, Indonesia, involving seventh-grade students as participants. A qualitative approach with a case study design was employed to allow an in-depth exploration of the feedback process within a real classroom context. Data were collected through classroom observations, interviews, and analysis of students' writing drafts before and after the application of indirect feedback. The findings revealed that the use of indirect feedback effectively helped students identify and correct grammatical errors, particularly in areas such as subject-verb agreement, verb tense, and word choice. As a result, students demonstrated noticeable improvement in their overall writing quality and grammatical accuracy. Moreover, the students expressed positive attitudes toward this feedback technique, stating that it motivated them to revise their work and encouraged greater independence in learning. The novelty of this study lies in its focus on implementing indirect feedback in junior high school settings, especially in teaching descriptive texts, which remains an underexplored area in Indonesian EFL contexts.

Keywords: Indirect Feedback; Descriptive Text; Writing Performance; Grammar

INTRODUCTION

Writing is widely recognized as one of the most complex productive skills in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning, requiring learners to integrate linguistic knowledge, cognitive processes, and communicative competence. Writing is not merely transferring ideas into written form, but rather a recursive process that involves generating, planning, drafting, revising, and editing. It demands mastery of grammar, vocabulary, organization, and coherence skills that often challenge EFL learners. At the junior high school level, one essential genre that students must learn is the descriptive text, which aims to describe people, places, or objects in vivid and detailed ways. However, many EFL students still struggle to produce accurate and cohesive descriptive texts due to limited grammatical competence and vocabulary range. Common grammatical problems such as subject-verb disagreement, tense inconsistency, and inaccurate word choice frequently occur, leading to texts that lack clarity and coherence.

In this context, teachers play a crucial role in helping students identify and correct their errors through effective feedback. Feedback is widely recognized as one of the most influential factors in student achievement, as it bridges the gap between current performance and intended learning outcomes. In writing classrooms, feedback acts as both a diagnostic and developmental tool, enabling students to reflect, revise, and refine their writing. Among various strategies, indirect feedback has gained increasing attention for its pedagogical benefits. Unlike direct feedback, which explicitly provides the correct form, indirect feedback merely signals that an error exists

through underlining, codes, or symbols and encourages learners to self-correct. This approach has been shown to promote deeper cognitive engagement, foster grammatical awareness, and nurture learner autonomy (Aridah & Iswari, 2021; Kim et al., 2020; Kusumastuti et al., 2025). Recent studies have provided strong empirical support for the positive effects of indirect feedback on EFL learners' writing development. For instance, Aridah and Iswari (2021) found that indirect feedback significantly improved grammatical accuracy among Indonesian university students, particularly when combined with reflective learning strategies. Similarly, Mafulah and Basthomi (2022) reported that indirect corrective feedback resulted in higher gains in writing accuracy compared to direct feedback among Indonesian secondary learners. At the school level, Harianti (2023) demonstrated that students receiving indirect feedback outperformed their peers in grammar and coherence when writing descriptive texts. Furthermore, Reinoso (2023) highlighted in his systematic review that indirect feedback enhances learner engagement and self-regulation, aligning with contemporary principles of autonomous learning in EFL pedagogy.

Despite this growing body of evidence, the implementation of indirect feedback in Indonesian EFL classrooms remains limited. Many teachers still prefer direct correction methods due to large class sizes, limited time, and lack of training in applying indirect techniques effectively (Afreilyanti & Kuswandono, 2022; Maslucha et al., 2024). Consequently, students often become overly reliant on teacher corrections, which hinders the development of self-editing and reflective skills necessary for independent learning. Addressing this pedagogical gap, the present study aims to explore the implementation of teachers' indirect feedback in improving students' grammatical accuracy in writing descriptive texts, as well as to investigate students' perceptions of this feedback approach. By examining both instructional processes and learners' responses, this study is expected to offer practical insights into developing reflective, autonomous, and contextually relevant writing pedagogy in Indonesian EFL classrooms.

METHOD

The present study employs a qualitative research approach with a case study design, aiming to obtain a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon of providing indirect feedback in the context of real classroom writing instruction. As Creswell (2014) emphasizes, qualitative research enables researchers to explore complex social phenomena in their natural settings, allowing for rich and contextualized interpretations. Likewise, Yin (2018) notes that a case study design is particularly appropriate for examining contemporary phenomena within real-life contexts, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly evident.

The research subjects consisted of 30 seventh-grade students from a State Junior High School in Karawang and a teacher who also served as the classroom instructor and researcher. Multiple data collection techniques were employed to enhance the credibility and validity of the findings, following the principles of triangulation recommended by Denzin (2012). First, systematic classroom observations were conducted over three sessions to examine how indirect feedback was implemented during descriptive writing revision activities. The observations were guided by structured observation sheets designed to record both teacher behaviors and student responses in detail.

Second, semi-structured interviews were carried out with the teacher and a purposively selected group of students, chosen based on their participation and engagement during class activities. These interviews aimed to gain deeper insights into participants' perceptions, challenges, and

strategies in responding to indirect feedback, in line with Merriam's (2009) suggestion that qualitative interviews provide access to participants' lived experiences and meaning-making processes.

Third, students' written work was collected and analyzed to compare the quality of writing before and after the implementation of indirect feedback. The analysis focused on grammatical features such as subject-verb agreement, tense accuracy, and lexical choice. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis, which involved coding, categorizing, and identifying emerging themes (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To ensure the trustworthiness of the data, triangulation across observations, interviews, and document analysis was applied, providing a more valid and reliable representation of the instructional process and outcomes. The entire research process adhered to ethical principles of educational research, ensuring participant consent, anonymity, and confidentiality throughout the study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

After going through the process of classroom observation, in-depth interviews, and analysis of students' written work before and after providing feedback, this study reveals a comprehensive picture of how the application of feedback indirectly affects the development of students' writing skills in the context of descriptive texts. The data obtained showed significant changes, both qualitatively and quantitatively, in the aspects of grammar mastery and the ability to systematically formulate ideas in students' writing. This learning process that uses indirect feedback facilitates students to be more active and independent in identifying their own writing mistakes, so that they not only correct mistakes, but also develop a deeper metalinguistic awareness. This approach successfully shifts the role of the teacher from a direct corrector to a facilitator who guides students through special instructions and signs, so that students are encouraged to do critical reflection on their writing.

Furthermore, the findings of this study will be divided into two main aspects that underlie the success of the indirect feedback method. First, students' perceptions and responses to this method, where students express their various positive experiences and learning strategies in the face of feedback given indirectly. Second, the effect of providing such feedback on the quality and grammatical accuracy of students' descriptive writing, which is the main indicator of instructional effectiveness in the context of learning to write English. These two aspects not only describe the technical impact of indirect feedback on written products but also explore the psychological and cognitive dimensions of the ongoing learning process, thus providing a comprehensive picture of the interaction between teaching methods and student learning outcomes.

1. Students' Perceptions of Indirect Feedback in Eliminating Grammatical Errors

The results of interviews and classroom observations revealed that the majority of students responded positively and enthusiastically to the implementation of indirect feedback in their writing activities. Although some students initially felt confused and found it difficult to interpret the correction symbols or codes provided by the teacher, they gradually developed a clearer understanding through consistent guidance, repeated exposure, and peer discussions. As they became more familiar with the feedback system, students demonstrated noticeable progress in identifying and correcting their grammatical mistakes independently. This learning process encouraged them to think

more critically, take greater responsibility for their learning, and engage actively in revising their descriptive texts rather than relying solely on the teacher's corrections. Many students stated that they collaborated with classmates to discuss the meaning of the feedback, exchanged ideas about possible corrections, and sought clarification from the teacher when necessary. Through these interactions, they not only improved their grammatical accuracy but also developed collaboration skills and confidence in expressing their ideas in English. The act of revising their writing multiple times fostered persistence and a sense of ownership over their learning outcomes. This shift from passive acceptance of corrections to active self-correction indicates a deeper engagement with the writing process. Overall, the students' positive perceptions highlight that indirect feedback serves not only as a corrective tool but also as a means to nurture reflective thinking, learner autonomy, and sustained motivation key elements that support long-term language development and writing proficiency.

2. The Impact of Indirect Feedback on Grammar Quality in Students' Descriptive Texts

Analysis of student documents before and after the implementation of indirect feedback showed significant improvements in various aspects of grammar and overall writing quality. Before the intervention was carried out, many students still made fundamental mistakes, such as incompatibility between the subject and the predicate, the improper use of tenses, and the inaccurate choice of vocabulary in a descriptive context. However, after getting a correction mark or symbol that serves as a clue from the teacher, the student is encouraged to revisit the writing and find the correct form independently. The revision process that takes place repeatedly makes them more accustomed to recognizing error patterns and understanding grammar rules more deeply. Thus, indirect feedback not only serves as a tool of correction but also as a medium of cognitive exercise that encourages students to internalize the structure of language through a process of reflection and self-evaluation. The results of the revision of the writing show an improvement in the fluency of sentences, the accuracy of grammatical structure, and the integration of ideas in the resulting descriptive text. Students' writing becomes more coherent, coherent, and easier to understand because they can relate antitheses to more logical transitions and use more consistent grammatical forms. This improvement proves that the application of indirect feedback not only corrects linguistic errors technically, but also enriches students' writing competencies comprehensively, including the ability to think critically, reflectively, and independently in developing quality texts. In other words, this strategy is effective in combining corrective functions and autonomous learning, making it one of the relevant and sustainable approaches to improving students' writing performance in the context of English language learning at the junior high school level.

Discussion

This study reveals that the application of indirect feedback in learning to write descriptive texts provides significant benefits to the development of students' language skills. Through this feedback technique, students are encouraged to become more autonomous and active in identifying and correcting their grammatical errors. This finding aligns with Ferris (2006), who emphasizes that indirect feedback promotes learners' self-awareness and critical engagement with language form, leading to deeper grammatical understanding. Moreover, the process reflects the development of metacognitive skills, students' ability to reflect on and evaluate their own learning progress, which Flavell (1979) identifies as a key component of effective

language learning. The positive attitudes observed during interviews and classroom observations also indicate that this method creates a more supportive and motivating learning environment compared to direct correction, which can sometimes make students feel anxious or dependent on the teacher (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). However, the success of indirect feedback largely depends on the teacher's ability to deliver it clearly, systematically, and consistently, ensuring that students understand the correction symbols and receive adequate scaffolding to avoid confusion. This is consistent with Vygotsky's (1978) sociocultural theory, which highlights the importance of guided interaction between teachers and learners within the zone of proximal development (ZPD). By providing feedback that stimulates students' cognitive engagement while maintaining supportive teacher-student interaction, the writing process becomes more meaningful and sustainable. Overall, these findings not only provide empirical support for the pedagogical value of indirect feedback but also reinforce the need for professional development and teacher training to optimize its implementation in EFL writing instruction at the junior high school level.

CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the application of indirect feedback by teachers has proven to be very effective in improving the quality of grammar and improving the writing ability of grade VII students in learning descriptive texts. This method not only helps students understand and correct mistakes gradually, but it also encourages them to think critically and be more active in the writing revision process. Through the use of marks or correction codes, students learn to find the mistakes they make on their own and find solutions to correct them, so that their writing skills develop independently. In addition to producing significant improvements in grammatical aspects such as subject and predicate suitability, the use of tenses, and the right choice of words, the application of this method also has a positive impact on improving the fluency, clarity, and integration of ideas in students' writing. The learning process becomes more interactive because students not only wait for corrections from the teacher, but are actively involved in improving their own work. The success of this strategy can also be seen from the increase in students' confidence and motivation in writing English. However, in order for the results to be optimal, teachers need to provide clear and systematic explanations on how to understand symbols or feedback signs and provide sufficient assistance during the revision process. Therefore, it is recommended that English teachers at the junior high school level consistently implement indirect feedback as a learning strategy that is able to foster independence, responsibility, and reflective thinking skills in students.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my supervisor and mentor for their continuous guidance, support, and valuable feedback throughout this research. I am also grateful to the English teacher and the students of the junior high school in Karawang for their cooperation and enthusiasm, which made this study possible. Special thanks go to my family and friends for their encouragement and understanding during the research process. Lastly, I appreciate all those who have contributed directly or indirectly to this study, as their support has been invaluable.

REFERENCES

- Aridah, A., & Iswari, W. P. (2021). The effect of indirect feedback on students' writing performance across different learning strategies. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Sciences*. Retrieved from ERIC.
- Bekele, T., Seyoum, G., & Tibebe, A. (2022). Comparing the effects of direct and indirect feedback on students' writing performance. *East African Journal*.
- Dehqan, M., & Bay, Z. H. (2019). The effects of gradual and indirect feedback on EFL learners' grammar development and beliefs. *Teaching English as a Second Language*.
- Fukuta, J., Tamura, Y., & Kawaguchi, Y. (2019). Written languaging with indirect feedback in writing revision: Is feedback always effective? *Language Awareness*, 28(2), 99–117.
- Garofolini, A., Oppici, L., & Taylor, S. (2020). A real-time feedback method to reduce loading rate during running: Effect of combining direct and indirect feedback. *Journal of Sports Sciences*, 38(12), 1433–1440.
- Harianti, H. (2023). *The effect of using teachers' indirect feedback on students' writing skills*. [Unpublished manuscript].
- Kim, Y. J., Choi, B., Kang, S., & Kim, B. (2020). Comparing the effects of direct and indirect synchronous written corrective feedback: Learning outcomes and students' perceptions. *Foreign Language Annals*, 53(2), 348–370.
- Kusumastuti, A., Rodchom, P., Intolo, W., & Phusavat, K. (2025). Roles of indirect feedback and attitude for sustainability in learning. *Sustainability*, 17(1), 23.
- Mafulah, S., & Basthomi, Y. (2022). The effect of direct and indirect corrective feedback on students' writing quality. In *Proceedings of the Virtual Conference & the 9th ICOELT*.
- Melly, S., Listyani, L., & Sumakul, T. Y. G. (2024). Students' perceptions of direct and indirect feedback in speaking for social purposes. *Satya Widya*, 40(1), 23–32.
- Mido, L. (n.d.). *The effect of teacher indirect feedback on students' writing performance*. [Unpublished manuscript].
- Nusrat, A., Ashraf, F., & Ahmad, N. (2019). Effect of direct and indirect teacher feedback on accuracy of English writing: A quasi-experimental study among Pakistani undergraduate students. *3L: Language, Linguistics, Literature*, 25(4), 55–71.
- Oshima, A., & Hogue, A. (2007). *Introduction to academic writing* (3rd ed.). Pearson Longman.
- Reinoso, J. V. (2023). A systematic literature review: Direct and indirect feedback strategies in EFL contexts. *rEFLECTIONS*, 30(1), 45–61.
- Shahab, M. L., & Saeed, K. M. (2024). Direct and indirect written corrective feedback: Lecturers' perspectives. *The Qualitative Report*, 29(2), 456–468.
- Sugianto, A., & Elhawwa, T. (2020). The effectiveness of direct and indirect feedback on learners' writing performance across different genders and cultural backgrounds. *Systematic Reviews in Pharmacy*, 11(12), 1830–1837.
- Uzun, K., & Köksal, H. (2020). Direct vs indirect written corrective feedback: An action research. *Trakya Eğitim Dergisi*, 10(2), 470–484.
- Yao, Q. (2019). Direct and indirect feedback: How do they impact secondary school learners' writing anxiety, and how do learners perceive them? *The Asian EFL Journal*, 21(2), 87–109.