

# **A Study on Teacher Correction Techniques in Assisting Student to Write English Composition**

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*Abstract. This study was conducted to find out the teacher correction techniques on students writing composition. There are some techniques that can promote to correct the students composition, and the elements corrected show the errors of students' sentence pattern commonly appear. Moreover, this study also answers the student perceptions toward the teacher correction. The students' perceptions are the guideline for the teacher in choosing the most suitable techniques which match with their need for composition revision and the elements corrected also show how the ability of students in mastering sentences pattern, vocabulary, and another skills of languages.*

**Key words:** *Techniques of correction, elements corrected, students' perceptions*

## **Introduction**

Hyland (2003:177) states that students hope their work to be read and given correction which aims to provide the opportunity for them to observe how others respond to their work and learn from the response. In line with this, providing correction is important task for teachers as well as paying attention on what students want from correction because some want praise, others want a response on the ideas, others demand on their errors marked, some prefer teacher comments, and surprisingly others just ignore it. In responding student preferences and demand, teachers should respond to all aspects including grammar, organization, style, content, and presentation. It is obvious that students make errors frequently because writing is not only putting the ideas in written form but also organizing the structure, lexical items, and content into chronological composition. Furthermore, the ability to organize all the aspects above needs skill and practices to minimize the errors.

In education, the role of teachers is to help students to enhance their writing by providing correction detailed enough to let students to perform well, and to change in their writing. As it is written by Hyland (2003), there can be different application of correction on teachers' preferences, the writing task they have set and also the effect they expect to create. There are many techniques of correction have been promoted that teachers can select, the most popular being commentary, cover sheets, minimal marking, taped comments, and electronic correction. This study tries to find out the techniques of correction that teacher use whether she applies marking, comments, or electronic correction. The correction is taken from students writing composition of Hang Tuah

University who join Business Correspondence material. In the class, the students write complaint letters in which the teacher gives correction on their work. Every time the students submit their composition, the teacher always gives correction. From this, the writer will analyze the students' improvement of writing from time to time by analyzing the students letter revision.

As mentioned before that there are various techniques of correction to provide teachers in selecting the most suitable one for them, and it is crucial to search techniques of correction used by English teacher and the elements which are corrected from the students writing. Furthermore, the questionnaires are given to the students in order to know the students' perceptions and opinion about the correction. In line with the questionnaire analysis, Hyland (2003:180) suggests teachers to use questionnaires for gathering students' opinion or input in which areas of their writing that they want correction to focus. From the steps mentioned above, the writer will describe all the results of the analysis and questionnaires. In short, the findings of this research are expected to give the answers of the research questions in analyzing techniques of correction used by teacher in assisting students to write English composition. In this research, there will be detail statement of the problem to find out teacher correction techniques in assisting students to write English composition. The statement of the problems as follow:

1. What elements are corrected in student composition?
2. What techniques are used by the English teacher in giving correction on student composition?
3. What are the student perceptions about correction techniques given by the teacher?

### **The Nature of Correction**

Richards, Platt and Platt (1997:89) define techniques of correction is the way of providing appropriate language usage in the place of what is considered incorrect. Hyland (2003:188) states that correction is also considered as the input since it offers advantages for students in fact gives encouragements to make improvement on their composition. Consequently, teachers need to utilize positive comments with care, but a lack of positive correction influence students' attitude to writing and reaction of correction. It is also a big task for teachers in choosing the correction which is helpful for students. In addition, Hyland (2003:187) suggests the key point is a balance between positive and criticism correction because some teachers may prefer too much praise on students' writing, especially on the early stage of writing, those can cause students satisfied and discourage revision. Burt and Kiparsky (1974) about giving too much correction can cause various effects, such as lack of confidence, interrupt students' sentences, lose their ideas and thought

It is a fact that teachers may prefer correction that matches with students need since teachers expect the progress of students writing from

time to time. Moreover, teacher correction techniques can be varied, such as commentary, cover sheets, symbols, taped comments, and electronic correction. Those corrections above have the same purpose to provide the teachers with sufficient correction for learners enhancement. Zainuddin (2004:120) states that correction is the information given to the students following the learning process which aims to enhance writing performance.

Each teacher should decide which types of errors to correct. There are several researchers give suggestions and opinion about which part of students writing to be corrected. Harmer (2004:108) states that teachers correct the student errors of written performance, such as word order, grammatical agreement between subjects and verbs, collocation, and word choices. Besides, Reid (1993:235) states that in giving correction on students writing, teachers can use ESL Composition Profile which offers the criteria in correcting the students errors in content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. In line with this, Grittner (1977) also suggests that teachers should supply more emphasis to what is correct than what is wrong. Furthermore, Lewis (2002:4) states that teachers can provide the students not only the descriptions of their grammar but also comments for students' learning process.

### **Global and Local Errors**

Lewis (2002:9) points out the terms global and local errors. Global errors are those that block communication but local errors are those that appear in isolated sentence elements, such as inflections, articles, auxiliaries. The example of global and local errors can be seen as follow.

- (1). Global errors: errors that interfere with meaning, for instance, verb tense, word order, confusing word choice, confusing spelling, using word parts of speech (nouns, adverbs, adjectives), agreement (subject-verb, pronoun), verb tense and forms, active and passive voices.
- (2). Local errors: errors that are less likely to interfere with meaning, for instance, article mistakes, preposition mistakes, pronoun agreement, comma splices, minor spelling mistakes, infinitives, punctuation.

### **Purposes of Correction**

Lewis (2002:4) states that there are five purposes of correction for teacher and students. The purposes of correction are:

- (1). Correction provides information for teachers and students
- (2). Correction provides students with advice about learning.
- (3). Correction provides students with language input.
- (4). Correction is a form of motivation.
- (5). Correction can lead students towards autonomy.

## Techniques of Teacher Correction

Hyland (2003:180) suggests the various techniques of correction have been promoted for the teachers in correcting students work, namely commentary, rubrics, marking, praise and constructive criticism comments. Below is the detail explanation about techniques of correction.

### 1. Commentary

Hyland (2003:180) points out the handwritten commentary as the common type of teacher correction on students writing. This correction is used to respond students' work rather than evaluate what they have done, starting how the text appears for the readers, how successful we think it has been, and the improvement so far. In this process, teachers also can attach with comprehensive end note to summarize and give general observations on students writing.

### 2. Rubrics

Another variation of teacher correction is the use of cover sheets in which the purpose is to assess the assignment and how far the student performance is. In this case, different rubrics can be used for different genres and it is useful to make grading decisions understandable and show the teacher values in particular piece of paper writing. Here is the example of rubrics:

Symbol	Meaning
<b>S</b>	Incorrect spelling
<b>W</b>	Wrong word order
<b>T</b>	Wrong tense
<b>C</b>	Concord (subject, verb do not agree)
<b>Wf</b>	Wrong form

### 3. Using Marking

Marking can be said as the type of correction which gives indication or symbols of errors location rather than direct correction. This method is considered to be more useful for students in stimulating their response and developing self-editing strategies. Furthermore, the advantage of this technique is that minimal marking is neater and help students to identify their mistakes. The example of minimal marking can be in form of circle, check, arrow, cross, and underlined. **Table 1** shows the symbols and explanation.

**Table 1**  
**Marking Symbols**

Symbol	Meaning	Explanation
✓	tick	A mark to show the missing part
O	circle	A mark to show a certain part need to be revised
<u>Take</u>	underline	A mark to show particular word needs to be corrected
X	cross	A mark to show a certain word is completely wrong
→	arrow	A mark to show the suggested correction
<del>          </del>	scratch out	A mark on something already written to show that it's wrong.

4. Praise and constructive comments.

According to Hyland (2003:187), the suitable approach for teachers to respond the students' writing is using praise and constructive comments. Praise comment aims to motivate students, for example, *"An excellent essay, the ideas are clear and easy to follow."* Furthermore, constructive comment is used for improvement and revision on students writing, for example, *"Try to express your ideas as simply as possible and give extra information."*

## Research Method

In order to get the data and describe the result of the research, the process has been done, namely questionnaires, data collection, and data analyzes. The following will be the detail explanation about the method in applying this research.

### 1. Instruments

This research obviously needs instruments to support the findings and meet the validity. Some instruments are used, namely questionnaire and the writer analysis. The following will be the explanation about those instruments:

(1). Questionnaires

Another step of the research method is giving questionnaires to the students to communicate their input for the teacher. In this section, they are asked to answer some questions related to the teacher correction. The questionnaires are in the form of paper sheet as the media for gathering the input. The purpose of using this method is to know the students perceptions about correction they have received and it can reflect what they might think about the correction whether it can fulfill the students need or not.

(2). The writer analysis

In this study, the writer analyzes the students writing results to find out what kind of elements are corrected and the teacher correction techniques. Furthermore, the role of the writer in this research is to search the student perceptions of teacher correction by looking at the questionnaires result.

## 2. Data Collection

The data of this study is taken from the teacher correction on students' writing composition in Hang Tuah University. Those students are asked to make a composition about complaint letters in which they complain the service of Health Insurance in covering someone's health. The composition is analyzed by the writer after the teacher has given correction.

The purpose of this process is to identify what kind of correction that the English teacher in Hang Tuah University has used. It is said in the statement of the problem about the elements corrected and the teacher correction techniques. Therefore, the writer wants to know the correction of English teacher whether using marking, comments, electronic correction or another kind of correction techniques.

In order to find out the students perceptions, the writer gives questionnaires to the students and analyzed them. The result of the analysis will show the students perceptions toward teacher correction techniques.

## 3. Data Analysis Technique

The process of analyzing writing needs attention and careful observation. In short, these are the techniques to analyze the data:

- (1). Elements which are corrected, can be content, vocabulary, language use, and organization
- (2). Analyzing the questionnaires: describe the students perceptions or opinion about the feedback.

## Result and Discussion

### 1. Elements Corrected

**Table 2**  
**Elements Corrected**

Elements	Number of real errors	Teacher correction
		Number of correction
Content	6	-
Organization	8	-
Vocabulary	50	24
Grammar	289	115
Mechanics	47	19
$\Sigma=$	<b>409</b>	<b>158</b>

**Table 2** shows the result of elements corrected by the teacher. Basically, the students made errors in 5 elements such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics. However, only 3 elements are corrected by teacher, they are vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics elements. Furthermore, the teacher doesn't give attention on content and organization of students writing. This finding is promoted by theory of correction by Reid (1993:235) in giving correction on students writing, teachers can use ESL Composition Profile which offers the criteria in correcting the student errors in content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. The writer here emphasizes the correction on the vocabulary, grammar, and mechanics.

## **2. Techniques of correction**

There are two techniques applied by English teacher. They are marking and giving comments. The marking technique is in the form of symbol and some of them followed with suggested correction. The comment techniques are praise and constructive criticism.

### **(1). Techniques of grammar correction**

According to Hyland (2003:177), there can be different application of correction based on teachers' preferences, the writing task they have set and also the effect they expect to create. In line with this, the teacher prefers to use marking symbol and some of them followed with suggested correction in correcting student errors in grammar. The suggested correction itself is promoted by Richards, Platt and Platt (1997:89) who define correction is pointing out the faults then providing appropriate correction on what is wrong. In term of subject verb agreement, the teacher doesn't provide too much correction but various techniques have been used, such as circle, tick, and scratch out symbols. Those symbols are used since the teacher expects the students to be autonomous in finding the correction. This proves the theory of Burt and Kiparsky (1974) about giving too much correction can cause various effects, such as lack of confidence, interrupt students' sentences, lose their ideas and thought. In correcting verb tenses and forms, she frequently uses scratch out, suggested correction and given pattern. The teacher feels that students really need suggested correction since they have lack of knowledge in irregular verb and past tense form. Furthermore, the teacher also provides correction using scratch out and suggested correction in term of to-infinitives, modal and prepositions. In term of gerund, the teacher provides circle with suggested correction, scratch out with suggested correction, and suggested correction. In correcting the error in adverb of time, the teacher only give circle. She doesn't provide suggested correction since the teacher feels less important to correct all the aspects especially adverb of time. The students are expected to master and memorize the simple grammar such as adverb of time. In addition, the teacher provides cross and suggested correction in grammar article. As it is stated by Lewis (2002:9) global errors are the errors that interfere with

meaning and local errors are the errors that less interfere with meaning. In this case, the writer pays attention on global and local errors on student grammar writing composition. Moreover, **table 3** below shows the writer correction techniques in language use.

**Table 3**  
**Techniques of Grammar Correction**

No	Correction	Symbol	Techniques	Teacher correction
				$\Sigma$
1	<del>subject-verb agreement</del>	we needs	tick	5
		I <u>contact</u> the doctor yesterday	circle	13
		she <del>pay</del>	scratch out	9
2	verb tenses and form	goes <del>go</del>	scratch out with suggested correction	26
		<del>did</del>	tick	4
		I not <del>don't</del>	suggested correction	1
		Last night we <del>were</del> seeing	scratch out	20
		<del>find</del> V <sub>2</sub>	scratch out and given pattern	5
		<del>taked</del>	cross	1
		the doctor checks S+V <sub>2</sub>	given pattern	2
3	Prepositions	I talk <del>on</del> <b>with</b>	scratch out with suggested correction	2
		We arrive <b>at</b> the hospital	suggested correction	3
		Really I disagree <u>to</u> <b>with</b>	circle with suggested correction	1
4	to-infinitives	to <del>met</del>	scratch out	2
		I would like <b>to</b> consult	suggested correction	4
		In order to <del>known</del> <b>know</b>	scratch out with suggested correction	3
5	Modal	I <b>have to</b> take care my daughter	suggested correction	1
6	Gerund	call <b>calling</b> the staff	circle with	2



		of health insurance	suggested correction	
		go to the hospital <del>going</del>	suggested correction	2
		give a good service <del>giving</del>	scratch out with suggested correction	4
7	Adverb of time	I went to the doctor at 4 <sup>th</sup> o'clock	circle	1
8	Article	a first thing I do <del>the</del>	suggested correction	3
		I'm waiting for the doctor about a hour <del>a</del>	cross	1
$\Sigma =$				115

## (2). Techniques of vocabulary correction.

In term of teacher vocabulary correction, the writer has corrected the word choices and word order on students writing. In order to provide correction, the writer uses marking and suggested correction. In term of correcting word order, circle with suggested correction and providing the correct written of word are used. Furthermore, scratch out with suggested correction, cross with suggested correction, and suggested correction are used in correcting the word order and word choices. In line with this, Lewis (2002:9) points out word order and confusing word choices are categorized as global errors. Here, the writer feels the need to correct the students' word order and word choices since the errors can block communication and interfere with meaning. Moreover, **table 4** below shows the techniques of vocabulary correction.

**Table 4**  
**Techniques of Vocabulary Correction**

No	Correction	Symbol	Techniques	Teacher correction
				$\Sigma$
1	Providing correct word	<del>great</del> <b>moment</b>	circle with suggested correction	7
		I'm waiting for your replay <del>reply</del>	suggested correction	5
2	Correction on word choices	to have bone operation <del>surgey</del> <b>surgery</b>	scratch out with suggested correction	8
		My girl child <del>daughter</del> <b>daughter</b>	suggested correction	2
		Discuss <del>new come</del> insurance regulation <b>the latest</b>	cross with suggested correction	2
$\Sigma =$				24

### (3). Techniques of mechanics correction.

The writer applies marking and suggested correction in correcting the mechanics of student sentences. The writer uses marking, such as scratch out with suggested correction, scratch out, cross, and suggested correction in correcting the spelling of word. Here, the writer also considers spelling error is another important aspect which needs to be corrected. This error can possibly block the meaning, consequently, the writer provides suggested correction. For detail information, **table 5** shows the techniques of mechanics correction.

**Table 5**  
**Techniques of Mechanics Correction**

No	Correction	Symbol	Techniques	Teacher correction
				$\Sigma$
1.	Spelling	qaurantee <del>guarantee</del>	scratch out with suggested correction	11
		cours <del>course</del>	scratch out	6
		tradi <del>t</del> ional	suggested correction	1
		arriave <del>arrive</del>	cross	1
			$\Sigma=$	<b>19</b>

### (4). Techniques in Giving Comment.

The techniques in giving comment are praise and constructive criticism to comment the students writing. As it is said by Lewis (2002:4) teachers can provide the students not only the descriptions of their grammar but also comments for students' learning process. In order to praise the student composition, the teacher applies symbol. In addition, the writer gives praise to the students writing, such as "*good and excellent.*" However, constructive criticism is less used to comment the students' grammar and sentence application. For detail analysis, **table 5** below is the techniques in giving comment.

**Table 6**  
**Techniques in Giving Comment**

No	Comments	Techniques	Teacher comment
			$\Sigma$
1.	Praise	Good	2
		Excellent	1
		Giving symbol <del>✗</del>	6
2.	Constructive criticism	Grammar application	1
		Sentence application	1
		$\Sigma=$	<b>11</b>


### 3. The students' Perceptions toward the Teacher Correction.

**Table 7**  
**Student Perceptions**


No	Perceptions	Number of students say yes/ no	
		Yes	No
1	The correction is clear and readable	27	1
2	The correction matches students expectation	21	7
3	It is useful for the next level of composition	24	4
4	Students need more encouraging comments	27	1
5	Students feel satisfied with the given correction	25	3
$\Sigma =$		124	16

Based on **table 7**, it shows the student perceptions toward teacher correction. Most of the students feel the correction on grammar skill is beneficial for the next level of writing composition. In addition, they also satisfy with teachers' correction on vocabulary and mechanics elements. Unfortunately, the students also mention the weakness of teacher correction in which they don't provide more comments since it is believed that the comments are useful for future writing project and encourages them to have improvement in writing and avoid the same errors. As it is said by Zainuddin (2004) correction is the information given to the students following the learning process which aims to enhance writing performance. In this case, providing comments are as important as providing correction on grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics elements.

### Conclusions

As it is stated in result and discussion that the elements corrected merely grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics, it gives the point of view that the teacher should provide some correction on students' content and organization of writing as parts of students writing improvement. Furthermore, the finding of the research also represents the techniques of correction used by the English teacher who applies some techniques, such as marking symbols and giving comments in correcting students' work. In giving marking, the writer uses 5 symbols, such as tick (✓), circle (O), scratch out (—), underline (take), and cross (X). In giving comments, praise, constructive criticism, and symbol . Those techniques are applied in correcting 5 elements mentioned above.

It is a fact that the students feel satisfied with teacher correction techniques, unfortunately they also need more comments on their writing composition as it is stated that the writer provides less comments. This study comes up with a conclusion that English teacher really thinks wisely about the application of correction whether it matches with the students' need or not, and the balance between teacher comment and all the aspects including grammar, vocabulary, mechanics, content, and organization.

This study also comes up with the finding of using comment, the writer uses symbol . This symbol is used to praise the student composition and based on students' perceptions in which it motivates them to have improvement in writing. Another ways to praise the students writing are giving the words "good and excellent." These words also encourage the students to have a good composition. In addition, the writer also uses constructive criticism which criticizes the student error in a sentence. As conclusion, the English teacher should respond on what students need in correction because some want praise and others on language use. The decision should be made by the teacher by recognizing the student ability and the need of correction.

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