ENGLISH LECTURERS` PREFERENCES IN CORRECTING STUDENTS` RESEARCH REPORT WRITING ERRORS
(A Study at IAIN Raden Intan English Department)

Iwan Kurniawan

ABSTRACT

Although there are pros and contras about the benefits of writing errors correction, error correction is believed very useful in writing process. Due to its benefit, this research tried to describe the preferences of IAIN Raden Intan English lecturers in correcting students` research report or *Skripsi*. The investigation explored issues regarding techniques used by lecturers in correcting writing errors, error symbols used, and kind of corrected errors. To know the answers, questionnaires were deployed to those lecturers. Findings show that favourite technique was consulting grammar book & dictionary, underline was the most often used symbol and grammar was the most corrected error.

Key Words
Error Correction, Correction technique, Correction symbol, Error types.

A. Background

Learning writing is considered the most difficult for students of English as foreign language. There are some reasons of it. First, it is very hard to generate ideas in starting writing and it will be more complicated when those chosen ideas are organized into parts such as sentences, paragraphs, outlines, etc. Second, skills which are involved in writing are very complex. Writing is actually a synthesis of many abilities and to produce good writing, a student must master skills of spelling, punctuation, grammar, etc. Third, to produce a good academic writing, a student must read materials related to the topic as references to support his arguments. In other words, to write we need to read and it is additional job for a student.

Fourth, writing takes a long process. To generate a good written product at least there are four stages that must be passed through by a writer. These stages consist of planning, drafting, editing, final drafting. Each of those phases still has parts. For example, planning stage can be divided into generating ideas and organizing ideas.

Due to its complexity, teaching writing must be done carefully by a teacher or lecturer. According to Richards and Renandya (2002) to design a successful teaching learning process in writing class, a teacher should include the following considerations: course goals, theories, content, focus, syllabus, materials, methodology, activities, and course evaluation. In writing class, a teacher also can perform the following roles to help students develop their ability; (1) *Motivator*, a teacher must motivate the students by creating good condition for generating ideas, asking them to do beneficial activities. (2) *Resource*, a teacher should supply information and offer advice toward students` product. For example, giving comment on students` writing ideas organization. (3) *Feedback provider*, giving feedback takes important part in teaching writing. A teacher must respond positively and correct carefully to the content of students` work otherwise student will not be successful (Harmer, 2001).

Related to third role of teacher that is feedback provider. A teacher generally will perform two actions, Responding and correcting. In responding, a teacher tends to emphasize on students` writing content and design. On the other hand, in correcting, teacher will react to something that is not right. There are some actions to show errors such as Syntax (word order), Concord (grammatical agreement between subjects and verbs), collocation (words which live together), or word choice (Harmer, 2004). In writing class, responding and correcting are not only helpful but also expected by students to improve what they have done.

Giving feedback is imperative for a teacher to do because of the benefits for students. It can sharpen their competencies in generating ideas, organizing ideas, ordering words, choosing words and using mechanics. Besides, giving feedback is not only important to show students` weaknesses but also growing the feeling among students that well-organized ideas and good accuracies are useful to deliver message for our readers.

Because giving feedback is a broad effort, it is important to limit only one part of feedback that is giving correction. Students make errors with language that they do not know yet or they transfer from their mother tongues and these are two reasons of problem sources. In learning writing, a teacher should motivate students that making errors is one part of process. In other words, it is unavoidable phase. After that, teacher must correct those errors. There are some benefits from correcting students` writing. First, it can reduce students` errors. Second, it can upgrade students` ability in generating ideas, organizing ideas, choosing ideas, structuring words, using mechanic correctly. Third, Correcting students` errors not only to show students` weaknesses but also to grow the feeling that a well organized idea and grammar are useful to convey message for our readers.

State Institute of Islamic Study (IAIN) Raden Intan, Lampung, Indonesia, has Department of English Study Program. One requirement to graduate and to get Bachelor degree from this program, a student must conduct a research and defend it in front of a board of examination. In the process of writing the research, a student is guided by two lecturers in phases of proposal writing and research report. Definitely throughout the process from the beginning until the end, the students make errors in writing and the lecturers have to correct those problems. The preference among the lecturers in guiding and correcting students writing errors is different in the forms of what technique that they used, what errors that they correct, and what symbols that use to correct. The differences of lecturers' way in doing correction are interesting for researcher to investigate. Based on explanation above, the problems of research were formulated as follows:

1. What error correction techniques are used by English lecturers in guiding research report writing?
2. What error correction symbols are used by English lecturers in guiding research report writing?
3. What error types are corrected by English lecturers in guiding research report writing?

B. The role of Written Error Correction

Even though there are some pros and cons about the importance of written error correction, this activity really plays beneficial roles. Corpus (2011) mentions errors correction is important in some ways. First, error correction really enhances the students` ability to write accurately. Second, Error correction can guide, motivate, and push students to write better. Third, though error correction takes a long time to do, and makes frustrated for the teacher, it enables face to face communication between teacher and student that might rarely happens. Fourth, Error correction in foreign language can promote written productions that are grammatically correct and applicable for communication process. Fifth, Error correction also can function as noticing facilitator that is able to show students not only errors but also new form of target language. Sixth, error correction reveals the teacher how far teaching objective has been reached and how many are still left for students to learn.

Writing Correction techniques

Byrne (1993), Harmer (2004), and Ellis (2009) mention that some strategies are utilized by teachers or lecturers to correct what students have written.

- Direct correction

  If students make errors, the teachers will correct directly by giving the correct form. It is called direct strategy. This activity can take actions such as crossing out unnecessary word, phrase, or morpheme, inserting a missing word or morpheme, and providing the correct form above, or closed to wrong forms. One advantage of this strategy that it gives learners with clear guide about how to correct the errors made.

- Indirect Correction

  In this strategy, a teacher or lecturer does not provide correction for errors that made by students. An instructor commonly underlines the errors; place a cross in the margin beside the line where errors are located. The results of some

studies really show that this strategy is really effective to improve students`
inaccuracies.

- Correcting all the errors

  It is a traditional way of correction. It is very time consuming for the teachers
  and it is very intimidating for students to see their works full of correction.
  There are some teachers who are not really sure with its effectiveness. A teacher
  is really suggested to use alternative procedure.

- Correcting error selectively

  In this attempt, a teacher does not need to correct all items from students` errors
  but only focus on certain areas such as tenses, articles, punctuations or other
  where students need improvement. It also can be done because a teacher wants
  to focus on particular item. This approach is believed more positive than total
  correction. If a teacher decides to use this way, it is very crucial to tell them that
  he or she just want to emphasize on certain aspect. As a result, students can
  concentrate on particular area.

- Using marking scale

  Many teachers use different marking scale. One benefit of it, if a student falls
  down on one aspect, say vocabulary, he or she may be still good at punctuation.
  In addition, marking scale also can push students to pay attention on specific
  item that they need to revise. In this way, teacher usually will give score for
  category which are corrected such as grammar, vocabulary, punctuation,
  spelling, etc. One marking scale that is very familiar is proposed by tribble.

- Using Correcting symbol or Metalinguistic Strategy.

  To avoid too much correction pen drawings, a lot of teacher use correcting
  symbol. This technique is also important to force students thinking about their
  errors, so they can improve by themselves. There are many books which inform

about the symbols but they are different. Even though they are different, the following list is commonly used.

Symbol	Meaning	Example of errors
S	A spelling errors	The asnwer is obvius.
WO	An error in word order	I like very much it
G	A grammar error	I am going to buy some fornitures.
T	Tense error	I have seen him yesterday
C	Concord (Subject-verb agreement	People is angry
^	Something has been left out	He told ^ that he was sorry
ww	Wrong word	I am interested on jazz Music
{ }	Something is not necessary	He was not {too}strong enough
?M	The meaning is unclear	That is a very excited photograph
P	A punctuation Error	Do you like London.
F/I	Tool formal or Informal	Hi Mr. Franklin, Thank you for your letter…

Teachers usually will write the symbols above, margin, between sentence lines or beside the place where the errors occur. The students who have already known the meaning will find out and revise the problems. In practicing the symbols, the teacher can ask the students to work in individual, pair, or group to recognize the errors and if they fail to do so, they can discuss it to the teacher. Besides providing symbols, it is also commonly used giving underlining, marginal description, and encircling.

- Asking student to consult grammar book or dictionary.
  If students have been known to make errors in spelling, teacher should suggest them to look dictionary up. In the same way, if students have problem with grammar and word order, teacher can ask them to learn more from grammar

book. The advantages to use this way, it trains them find information with purpose.

- Asking me

  Sometimes it is not easy for a teacher to explain an error on a paper or it is hard to understand exactly what a student means by writing something. In this situation, a teacher can ask student to see face to face and discuss the problem.

- Giving remedial Teaching

  This procedure is generally done if in one class many students make the same error. In this case, it is important for the teacher to correct the problem in front of the class. Remedial teaching can also be done for individual student for one problem. Remedial may take forms of explanation, exercises which are considered appropriate to correct errors either oral or written.

C. Research Method

It is a quantitative survey research. It is called quantitative because the main instrument of this investigation is questionnaire. According to Dornyei (2007) the results of a questionnaire survey are typically quantitative. The main purpose of survey is to get information that relates to facts, attitude, opinion, feelings of research respondent (Suratina, 2002).This research will try to collect information from English lecturers who guide students in writing research report about techniques, symbols, that they use in error correction, and also areas of correction.

Population and sample

Population of this research was all lecturers who guide students in writing their Research Report at IAIN Raden Intan English Study Program. The number was 16 people. Because the population is very limited, this research will use total sampling. It means all population will be sample. All English lecturers who guide students in writing research report will be the sample.

Technique of Data Collection

The instrument that will be used in this research is questionnaire. The questionnaire will be distributed to English lecturers who guide the writing of students` research report or *Skrpsi*. The questionnaire contains two options, YES and NO that is adapted from Guttman Scale (Sugiyono, 2011). The code of YES is 1 and NO is two. The coding is important for try-out analysis.(Bell, 1987). The questionnaire that will be used is the combination of closed and open ended. The function of questionnaire is to seek information about techniques, codes, and areas of lecturers` writing errors correction.

Data Analysis Technique

The collected data will be put in the table and then analyzed by using the following percentage formula:

$$P = \frac{n}{N} \times 100\%$$

(Kasiram, 1994)

P   = Percentage of respondent who give similar answer

n   = The number of particular answer

N   = Number of Respondent

D. Finding and Discussion

Lecturers` Techniques in correcting students writing

Table.1
Direct Correction

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES	12	75%
NO	4	25%

As the table 1 shows, it appears that majority of English lecturers in IAIN Raden Intan used direct correction technique in guiding students writing their research report or *skripsi* (75%), Meanwhile, only 4 lecturers or (25%) who did not correct students` work without using this way. From the table, it can be concluded that direct correction is favourite technique for IAIN Raden Intan English Lecturers where they did not only show the students errors in writing *skripsi* but also gave the correct forms for students to revise. This action can take form such as crossing out the unnecessary words, providing the missing words, etc.

Table.2
Indirect Correction

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES	11	68.7%
NO	5	31.3%

Table 2 indicates that more English lecturers or (68.7%) also used indirect method as the mostly used technique to correct students` skripsi beside direct method. However, minority of lecturers or (31.3%) do not like this way. It reveals majority of English Lecturer at IAIN Raden Intan English Department like to use this strategy. In practice, lecturers who used this technique only show to the students the errors that they made without giving the correct forms and students had to find the correct ones by themselves. The lecturers usually underline or circle the errors. This way is considered very useful to improve students writing ability. This table also tells us that there is similarity between findings from table 1 and table 2 where both direct

and indirect correction techniques were applied together by those English Lecturers and they possibly used those techniques interchangeably.

Table.3
Correcting all the errors

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	12 4	75% 25%

Table 3 describes that generally English lecturers or (75%) corrected students` skripsi by checking all kind of errors that they wrote. However, minority of lecturers or (25%) did not like this way. It reveals majority of English Lecturer at IAIN Raden Intan English would correct all the mistakes that the students had done such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary choice, capitalization, punctuation mark, etc. This way of correction is very traditional and time consuming. A few lecturers who did not employ this technique might doubt the effectiveness and they might focus on certain area to correct instead all errors.

Table.4
Correcting the error selectively

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	1 15	6.3% 93%

From table 4, it was found that there was only one English Lecturer (6.3%) who corrected the students` errors selectively. Majority lecturers (93.7%) said that they did not select certain error or on other words they corrected all students mistake such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary choice, capitalization, punctuation mark, etc. This finding supports the data on table 3 where the practice of writing correction among

English Lecturer used correcting all errors. This finding contradicts to the statement of Hammer (2004) who says that correcting selectively is more positive than correcting all errors. In real practice, the lecturer who used this technique would focus on specific areas of error. For example, he or she on first meeting corrected grammar but next consultation would focus on spelling.

Table.5

Using marking Scale

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES	2	12.5%
NO	14	87.5%

Table 5 opens a fact that the use of marking scale is not common among English lecturer of IAIN Raden Intan in correcting students` *skripsi* errors. There were only 2 lecturers (12.5%) who said that they used it, whereas, more lecturer (87.5%) ignored it. It happens because this way is commonly used in teaching or evaluating students` writing ability in writing class practices but rarely employed in guiding students in writing their research reports.

Table.6

Consulting the grammar book or dictionary

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES	15	93.7%
NO	1	6.3%

From Table 6, it can be seen that most English lecturers (93.7%) really asked the students to consult their grammar books and dictionary when they made mistakes and only one lecturer (6.3%) who did not use it. This finding shows that this technique is widely applied by English lecturer at IAIN Raden Intan in correcting students *skripsi* writing.The benefit of fostering this technique is that the students can find out or solve their errors by searching the correct forms. The students learn as they correct problems and it can trigger the spirit of independence among students. Asking the students to learn from their grammar book and dictionary also can reduce the lecturers` burdens in correcting students` works.

Table.7

Asking me

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	12 4	75% 25%

Table 7 informs us that majority English teacher at IAIN Raden Intan Lampung (75%) employed asking me technique in correcting students *skripsi* writing and only (25%) of them who did not give chance for students to discuss face to face the errors that they made. This finding tells us that it is one of favourite technique applied by English teachers in guiding students` research report. This way is important to do because sometimes it is not easy to explain errors by writing on paper, or lecturers find it difficult to understand what the students really mean. Therefore, meeting and discussing the errors seem interesting.

Table. 8

Remedial teaching

Options	Responds	Percentage

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	3 13	18.7% 81.3%

Table 8 tells us that English lecturers rarely give remedial teaching to students where there was only (18.7%) of lecturer used this way and majority of them (81.3%) is reluctant to apply. It shows us that Remedial teaching is not popular among those English teachers to correct student mistakes in writing *skrips*i. Remedial teaching can be done by a lecturer if students under his or her supervision make the same mistakes. The lecturer can ask the students to gather and show the problem together with the correct forms.

When asked to mention the possibilities to use other techniques, some English lectures said that they not only used the techniques above but also SQ4R (Survey, question, read, recite, revise, and review), peer correction and computer error correction checker. The techniques that have been found and discussed will enrich the theories regarding error correction in writing generally.

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Lecturers` Symbols in correcting students *skripsi* writing

Table.10
Underline symbol

Options	**Responds**	**Percentage**
YES NO	16 0	100% -

Table 10 informs that all English lecturers (100%) at IAIN Raden Intan used this symbol to correct students errors in writing their *skripsi* or research report and no English Lecturers (0%) who deny the benefit of it. This finding informs that

Underline symbol is very well-known among English lecturers to correct students`
errors during *skripsi* writing.

Table. 11
Circle symbol

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	15 1	93.7% 6.3%

Table 11 mentions that majority English Lecturer (93.7%) used this symbol to
correct students errors. In contrast, there is only one lecturer (6.3%) who checks
students` error without using it. It can be concluded that this symbol was also very
popular among English lecturers to use despite its popularity was still under
underline symbol.

Table.12
Cross symbol

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	14 2	87.5% 12.5%

From table 12 it was found that majority of English lecturers (87.5%) prefers this
symbol to check students` errors. There are only 2 lecturers or (12.5%) who did not
like it. It can be concluded that this symbol was also popular among lecturers to
correct students` *skripsi* writing at IAIN Raden Intang English department despite its
popularity was still under underline and circle symbols.

Table.13

Metalinguistic symbol

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	3 13	18.7% 81.3%

Table 13 shows a different result. If table 10, 11, 12 indicate that majority English lecturers prefer using symbols such as underline, circle and cross but table 13 informs that majority English lecturers (81.3%) did not use Metalinguistic symbols such as WO =word order, S=spelling, G=grammar. There were only 3 lecturers (18.7%) who employed this symbol. It occurred possibly because this symbol is not popular among lecturers. This symbol is actually important to push students thinking about their errors and improve by themselves.

Table.14

The position of symbol use

Options	Responds	Percentage
Above the errors	8	50%
Under the errors	5	31%
Beside the errors	6	37%
At the margin of Paper	4	25%

Table 14 shows the position where commonly the English language lecturers put the symbol to correct the students` errors. Half of lecturer (50%) put the symbol above the errors and 37% used the symbol beside the errors. 31% of lecturers make the symbol under the errors and only 25% on the margin of paper.

From this finding, it can be concluded the most popular places for the lecturers to locate the symbol are on above, beside, under of errors and margin of paper.

When asked to mention other symbols that they used to correct students *skripsi*, some lecturers show symbol of their own such as check list (√) = *good*, question mark (?) = *I don't understand*, double exclamation marks (!!) = *plagiarism in*dicator, arrow (→) = *to show paragraph jumping or there is no relation with previous paragraph.*

Kinds of Errors correction

Table 15
Grammar Errors

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES	16	100%
NO	0	0%

From table 15, it was found that All English lecturers (100%) prefer to check grammar errors. No one (0%) ignored grammar errors. Therefore, it can be concluded that this kind of errors was considered important among lecturers to correct when checking students` *skripsi* writing at IAIN Raden Intang English department.

Table 15

Spelling Errors

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES	15	93.7%
NO	1	6.3%

Table 15 mentions that majority of English Lecturer (93.7%) corrected students`
spelling errors. In contrast, there was only one lecturer (6.3%) who neglected to
check this kind of error. Therefore, it can be concluded that spelling errors was also
very popular among English lecturers to check despite its popularity was still under
checking grammar.

Table 16
Capitalization Errors

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES	13	81.3%
NO	3	18.7%

From table 16, it was found that majority of English lecturers (81.3%) wanted this
errors to be checked. There were only 3 lecturers or (18.7%) who did not like to
correct this error. From this finding, It can be concluded that this kind of error was
also a target for lecturers to correct while guiding students` *skripsi* writing at IAIN
Raden Intang English department despite its popularity was still less than grammar
and spelling errors.

Table 17
Vocabulary Choice Errors

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	15 1	93.7% 6.3%

Table 17 indicates that majority of English Lecturer (93.7%) corrected students`
vocabulary choice error. However, there was one lecturer (6.3%) who ignored to
check this kind of error. Therefore, it can be concluded that vocabulary choice errors
was also very common for English lecturers to check and its popularity is the same
with spelling error.

Table 18
Punctuation mark Errors

Options	Responds	Percentage
YES NO	15 1	93.7% 6.3%

From table 18, it was found that mostly English lecturers (93.7%) corrected
punctuation mark errors. There was only 1 lecturer or (6.3%) who did not like to
correct this error. From this finding, It can be concluded that this kind of error was
also one focus for lecturers to correct while guiding students` *skripsi* writing at IAIN
Raden Intang English department despite its popularity was still less than grammar
but has similar position with spelling and vocabulary choice errors.

When asked to mention possibilities of other errors types, some lecturers mentioned
that they also corrected writing formats such as space, indentation. They also paid

attention on technique of making quotation both direct and indirect, writing references, transition signal, text citations, and paraphrases.

E. Con clusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

Based on the analysis on chapter 4, there are three conclusions that can be taken:

1. In correcting students` research reports or *skripsi* writing at IAIN Raden Intan English department, English lecturers used some techniques such as direct, indirect, correcting all the errors, correcting errors selectively, consulting grammar book & dictionary, using marking scale, asking me, giving remedial teaching techniques. From the techniques above, consulting grammar book & dictionary, direct, correcting all the errors, indirect, and asking me were the most popular techniques used. Some lecturers also mentioned other their own techniques such as peer correction, SQ4R, and computer checker.

2. The English Lecturers in doing correction also employed some symbols such as Underline, circle, cross, and metalinguistic. The most often used symbol was underline and the least used symbol was metalinguistic. Majority of lecturers also wrote those symbols above the errors as preferred location. Lecturers also mentioned some other symbols such as Checklist, question mark, double exclamation mark, and arrow.

3. There were some kinds of errors that often checked by IAIN Raden Intan English lecturer in guiding students` *skripsi* writing such as grammar, spelling, capitalization, vocabulary choice, and punctuation marks. Grammar error was the most wanted type to be corrected by the lecturers. They also told some other kinds of errors such as writing formats (space, indentation), technique of making quotation both direct and indirect, writing references, transition signal, text citations, and paraphrases.

Suggestions

1. For English lecturer, they should vary techniques in checking students` errors and use new electronic tool. Lecturers can change their techniques from one consultation to

the next one. For example, first meeting the teacher use direct technique and second meeting use indirect technique, and third meeting use peer correction. New electronic tool that can be used is facility in E-mail comments and other text editing packages from Microsoft Word Application to ease the process of correction.

2. For next researcher, there are some ideas regarding writing error correction for further research such as there should be a deeper research to investigate the students` attitude toward lecturers preference in correcting students` writing, there should be also a research to test the effectiveness between one technique of error correction to another one to minimize students` errors.

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