Analysis of Minimal Marking Technique on Student's Writing Given by Teachers at MAN Kota Baru, Padang Panjang

Fajrilhuda Yuniko[1]*, Andry Azhari[2]
Universitas Syedza Saintika, Indonesia[1]
STBA Prayoga Padang, Indonesia[2]
Corresponding Email: fajrilhudayuniko@gmail.com*

Abstract

This research was based on a phenomenon that the students' writing ability was still low. It was assumed that there were two main factors influencing the students' writing. One of them was about facilitating the students with appropriate written feedbacks. In line with that, this research was a kind of descriptive study, which was aimed at finding a deep description of the implementation of minimal marking technique given by teachers at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang. Participants of the research were all English teachers there. Furthermore, the data were collected by using two instruments, documents and interview. There were two findings of the research. First, almost all of the written feedback items given through the minimal marking technique were provided to help students working on their grammatical mistakes or forms of the writing, it was proven by the percentage that 99.66% of the written feedback items were focused on forms whereas only 0.34% of the written feedback items were focused on contents. Second, the written feedback technique applied by the English teachers was minimal marking technique. It is used since it is effective for teachers, particularly, in the process of giving the feedback which is time-saving. In addition, it also helps the students to be a critical writer because this technique lets the students working on the mistakes they have made.

 Keywords: Written feedbacks, minimal marking technique, students' writing

Introduction

The researcher assumes that the failure of the students' writing is caused by two factors, internal and external factors. This assumption is also emerged by some previous studies done by some researchers; one of them was conducted by Nacira (2010). She states that the difficulty in writing lies not only in generating and organizing ideas, but also translating these ideas into readable texts. In addition, the difficulties are also derived from teacher's approaches, methods, teaching techniques, and ways in reacting to students' writing productions. The idea can be

understood that generating and organizing ideas as well as translating these ideas into readable texts are as internal factors which derive from students. It means that to create the readable texts, the existence of sufficient vocabularies as well as the ability to construct those vocabularies into sentences which are called as grammar competence is undeniable. In the same way, the students' motivation brings much influence in students' writing as well. Furthermore, the writing products are also affected by the external factors which generally deal with the teachers' approach, teachers' technique in teaching writing, the class atmosphere, and also the one that cannot be put away from the writing process which is known as giving proper feedback toward students' writing.

Dealing with the external factor in writing which is known as giving feedback on students' writing, somehow this process is sometime ignored by English teachers. In fact, the existence of proper feedback will give benefits to students' writing. Peterson (2010:1) says "teachers provide feedback on students' writing to support students' writing development and nurture their confidence as writers. It means that the feedback is one of many ways that can help the students' development in writing as well as keep their motivation high as a writer. Besides, it is proved by some studies which discuss about the importance of giving feedback on the students' writing. One of them was done by Ferris and Roberts (2001:176). They observed that students who received any kinds of feedback significantly gave better writing products than those who did not receive any feedback. This research is also supported by an argument given by Chiang Kwun-Man (2004:1). He argues that most of writing instructors believe that providing students with effective feedback on their writing is vital as it helps students to correct their own mistakes and be more independent writers, which help them to become better writers. Briefly, in the process of writing, the teachers or English instructors cannot abandon the process of giving proper feedback, which will guide and help them in producing better writing.

Furthermore, the paradigm among English teachers giving feedback on the students' writing is only about marking the students' writing, especially, focusing on the students' errors in grammar should be changed. The reason is that the feedback itself does not only provide the students with grammatical feedback but also the content as well as organization of the writing. In line with that statement, Fathman and Whalley (1990:7) say that teacher feedback can be in the forms of content and form feedback. It means that the content refers to comments on the organization, ideas, and amount of detail, while form involves comments on grammar and mechanic errors. In short, proper feedback must contain those items so that it brings improvement to the students writing.

Referring to those phenomena discussed above, it comes to a conclusion that there are two main factors that influence the students' low writing ability which are internal and external factors. One of the crucial external factors is derived from the way teachers give written feedback on students' writing product. Dealing with the issue, in this research, the researcher tried to analyze deeply about one of the external factors, which is teachers' written feedback through minimal marking technique at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang. This research tried to figure out the focuses of minimal marking written feedback technique given by the teachers and the reasons of applying that technique in responding to the students' writing.

Literature Review

The Concept of Written Feedback on Students' Writing

Feedback is a key element in language learning. Generally, it can promote minimal or deep learning to students. As a concept, feedback itself is defined as any responses which are given to the students' work. Hattie and Timperely (2007:91) state that "feedback is information provided by an agent regarding some aspects of one's task performance". In addition, Narciss (2008:44) also defines feedback as "all post-response information that is provided to a learner to inform the learner on his or her actual state of learning or performance". From these two definitions, it can be regarded that the feedback itself is designed to provide an understanding of performance through offering guidance on the knowledge that they possess. One of the factors which seems to be a great influence dealing with the feedback is that it helps students to reconstruct their knowledge or skill to what is desired.

In writing, the term of feedback is found in the writing process which is very worthy for students' improvement in writing mastery. As one of the important processes, feedback is expected to give a significant effect on the students' writing. Some experts have argued that the feedback will be very beneficial for the students. One of them is Brown (1994). He states that providing effective feedback will be one of the keys to successful learning. In other words, it can be said that whenever the feedback given properly, it will bring positive influences to the students' learning, including the improvement on the students' writing ability. However, it can also be time-consuming and frustrating, if the feedback is not given properly and efficiently. Therefore, to be successful in the writing product, teachers must be able to respond to students' work efficiently and effectively.

Dealing with how to respond properly, the term of feedback in writing can be seen by its form, it means that the feedback may be given in the form of written feedback or oral one. Since the research deals with the teachers' written feedback, the further review focuses on the written one. Some studies related to the written feedback have categorized the types of written feedback which are known as direct and indirect written feedback. Farrokhi (2012:50) defines the direct written feedback as the provision of the correct linguistic form or structure by the teachers to the learners above the linguistic errors. It means that the teachers provide the written feedback explicitly on the students' errors. For example, when the students make mistake in the use of verb-2 in simple past tense, the teachers will directly cross the verb and change it into the correct form of the verb. On the other hand, the indirect written feedback only clues the errors and lets the students think and make the revisions over those mistakes. In line with that, He (2003:51) states that the indirect written feedback indicates some errors without explicit attention drawn.

Related to those two types of feedback, throwing the written feedback by giving codes and comments will train the students' critical thinking. Gipps (1994:55) regards that written feedback as a critical feature of teaching and learning process. By providing indirect written feedback, it is hoped that the students will be more critical and will be able to figure out the meaning of codes given to them. This way also guides the students to become autonomous

learners because the indirect written feedback makes the students responsible toward the written feedback and it is hoped that the students will give appropriate responses to the written feedback.

Furthermore, William (2003:2) adds that the most prominently used of written feedback method fall into two common categories, they are the feedback on form and the feedback on content. The most common method of the written feedback on form is teachers' correction of surface errors, teachers' markings that indicate the place and type of error but without correction, and underlining to indicate only the presence of errors. This kind of the written feedback requires the students to be familiar with the codes written on their paper. Usually, such kinds of codes have been introduced by the teachers so that there will be no misunderstanding toward the teachers' written feedback.

Feedback on content mainly consists of written comments by teachers on drafts that usually point out problems and offer suggestions for improvements on the next draft. Students are usually expected to incorporate information from the comments into other versions of their papers. In contrary with the form written feedback which focuses on grammar, the written feedback on content will be more helpful and appropriate for intermediate or advance students where they have been good on grammar, what they need is only to produce a good paragraph, essay, or even paper based on the inputs given through the written feedback.

In brief, feedback as one of the processes in writing still needs to be considered in order to help students in improving their writing skill. Generally, feedback can be defined as teachers' response toward the students' work whether in the form of direct or indirect one. In addition, the written feedback means any comments or marks given on students' piece of writing. The written feedback might be explicit or implicit; it depends on the teachers' interest or the students' need.

Focuses of Teacher's Written Feedback toward Students' Writing

Giving written feedback is not merely about writing something on students' writing or marking toward the students' writing, it is more about how the written feedback can be accepted as a tool to help the students in revising their writing. It means that exposing too much on the students' writing will not warranty that the students will be able to produce a proper revision or vice versa. Thus, deciding a workable written feedback toward the students' writing is another work that teachers should do. Here, some experts have discussed theories related to what to response. They argue that whether the written feedback is only in the term of form-focused feedback or content-focused feedback.

The term of the form-focused written feedback refers to any responses in which the emphasis of the responses only takes place on grammatical and mechanical aspects. Such kind of feedback is usually found in the form of written feedback, such as minimal marking or correction codes. In certain occasions, the form-focused feedback is not only delivered through written one but also can be done orally. Furthermore, some experts have argued that such kind of feedback is beneficial for students' improvement in writing. Ferris (1999:9) says that form-focused feedback cannot be abandoned since students rely heavily on it to improve their

grammar in writing. He emphasizes that the existence of form-focused feedback will affect positively on students' grammar, especially for novice writers. This argument is also supported by Ashwell (2000:360) by comparing to content-focused feedback. He argues that feedback on content has only moderate effect on revision because the students really depend on form feedback. It means that the content feedback will not be successful if it does not come along with the form feedback.

Besides the form-focused written feedback which aims in improving students' grammatical competence, another term which is also found to enhance the quality of the students' writing is a content-focused written feedback. This written feedback is needed since the academic writing is not only about writing sentences which are grammatically correct but also producing paragraphs which are meaningful. It means that the ability to arrange those sentences becoming a good paragraph will consider some aspects such as topic sentences, details, and concluding sentences. Therefore, exposing written feedback which aims to improve those areas need to be given to the students. Some experts have argued the advantages of giving written feedback on the content of students' writing. Zamel (1985:96) states that exposing the students with grammatical feedback only is not enough, there is a need for more content-based feedback. In line with that argument, Truscott (1996:360) states that grammar correction in writing classes should be abandoned, since it is not only inefficient but also rather harmful. In other words, these two experts emphasize that giving written feedback on the students' grammar only is not enough. As a result, the combination between the two focuses of written feedback will be much better for students' improvement in writing.

For more detailed, the feedback on those two aspects are shown in the following table;

Table 1. Feedback on Forms and Contents

FEEDBACK	
Form-focused categories	Content-focused categories
Tense	Topic
Word orders	Main idea
The usage of modals	Topic sentence
The usage of nouns	Details
Articles	Conclusion
S-V-agreement	
Adjective	
Adverb	
Preposition	
Pronouns	
Writing mechanics	
Insertion of words/phrases/sentences	
Deletion of words/phrases/sentences	
Passive voice	
The usage of conjunctions	

Adapted from Begham and Mohamad (2009)

In conclusion, what to response is another crucial thing that contributes much on students' writing? The quantity of the written feedback items will not warranty that the students will get benefit from. In other words, it can be said that the workable written feedback items are needed by the students. As a result, understanding the two focuses of the written feedback, form and content focused feedback is a key to be successful in responding to the students' writing.

Written Feedback Techniques

Here are some written feedback techniques proposed by O'muircheartaigh (2002:4) and other experts;

a) Peer Reviews

Another technique that is mostly used by writing teachers is by asking students to exchange their writing and let their peers commenting and giving suggestions toward it. This technique can be done in the classroom or outside the classroom. Let's take a look at this example where the peer reviews done outside the classroom. With this technique the students do the written work at home and then bring the piece to class. They hand it to their partners, who then assess the work and give comments.

A good idea is to give the students some types of questionnaire to work through while they are reading the written work. This can be done by giving the students guidelines or structured checklists that can be focused on a specific set of criteria such as paragraphing, linking words, punctuation etc. The learners then talk each other through revisions and comments, asking you for clarification or arbitration when necessary. Again this idea helps the learners to be autonomous and it is positive that the teacher is not always the only audience for the written work. Caulk (1994:183) states that peer response provides students with an audience for their writing which is more authentic than teacher's responses. Moreover, peer reviews can also be very effective, as the learners themselves can often be a lot more honest with each other so that they will not hesitate to correct their friends' mistakes.

b) Written Commentary

Another technique which is mostly used by English writing teachers is written commentary. This technique involves writing detailed comments on the problems that exist in the learners' work. The idea is to guide the learner so as they can try to self-correct. At times this may not be easy or possible for them so you might want to give them the correct version or advise them on where in their dictionaries or grammar books that they are able to find the correct answers. Here, you will be giving feedback on both content and language. As a result, it is probably the best to read over the piece once or twice, thinking about what areas you are going to focus on most before giving the feedback on paper. An alternative is doing this type of feedback by e-mail and/or using the Insert Commentary facility in Microsoft Word.

c) Minimal Marking

This technique is similar to using correction codes but not as obvious. Instead of having different symbols for different types of problems, the idea is that you write an X in the

margin for every language error in the line. I.e. two errors, two X's. The students not only have to find the problems, but work out what type of problems they are as well. From the teacher's point of view the technique is a quick one and this idea again works well with surface errors. On the other hand, sometimes some students may find it a lot more frustrating than the correction codes if the teachers do not provide this activity with guidance.

Research Method

This research was a descriptive research since the main aim of this research was to find out and explained deeply the phenomenon of minimal marking technique on students' writing at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang. The data were collected from October to November 2023 through two instruments, document observation and interview. The participants of the research were all English teachers at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang consisting of six teachers. The procedure of data collection was as the following; to answer the first question dealing with focus of the written feedback through minimal marking technique, the researcher gathered the data by collecting the students' writing which had been responded by teachers. It means that the researcher gathers all of the students' writing, one class for each participant (six English teachers). Then, to answer the second question in this research which was about reasons of applying the minimal marking technique given by the teachers, the researcher used interview guidance. Next, the data were analyzed through the following steps; the data collection (students' writing) was analyzed through tabulating. It means that written feedback items provided by each participants were put based on the table of teachers' responses on students' writing. Next, based on the table, the researcher grouped the teachers' written feedback whether they belong to form-focused feedback, content-focused feedback, or they use both of them. Then, to gain the pattern that each teacher applied, the researcher put percentage for each participant. In addition, the percentage was described to conclude the focuses of the minimal marking feedbacks provided by each teacher. To report the findings of the research, the researcher used narrative discussion which was meant that the researcher tried to explain the findings deeply. Furthermore, the researcher also interpreted the findings by reviewing the major findings, comparing with the previous studies.

Results

Focuses of the Written Feedback through Minimal Marking Technique Given by the Teachers

To identify the focuses of the given written feedback through minimal marking technique, the researcher collected the students' writing which had been responded by all the teachers and grouped them. The table below shows the written feedback items provided by all the teachers.

Table 2. Focuses of Written Feedback through Minimal Marking Technique Given by All Teachers

No	Teachers	Focuses of Written Feedback and Their Percentage				Total
		Form	%	Content	%	
1	A	223	100	0	0	223
2	B	270	98.54	4	1.46	274
3	C	308	100	0	0	308
4	D	378	100	0	0	378
5	E	263	99.25	2	0.75	265
6	F	296	100	0	0	296
	Total	1738	99.66	6	0.34	1744

The table above describes that almost all of the written feedback items focus on the form of the writing. It is proved by the total percentage of written feedback items given by all participants (English teachers), in which 99.66% of the given written feedback items focus on the forms of writing, while only 0.34% of the written feedback items are on the contents of writing. In detail, it is described that there are four teachers, teacher A, C, D, and F, who give all of the written feedback items to help students working on the form of their writing. Otherwise, two teachers, teacher B and E, put few written feedback items to help the students with contents of their writing.

To see deeply about the provided written feedback items, here is one of the samples of the student's writing.
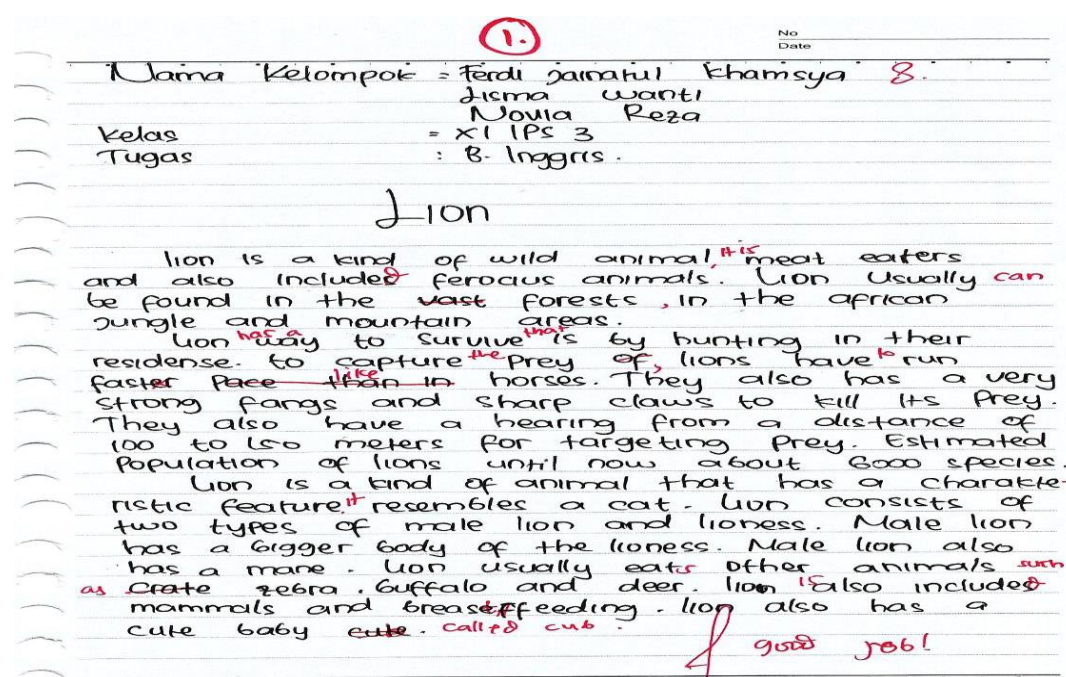

Figure 1. The sample of student's writing

As it is seen in the sample of the writing above, the writing is about an explanation text, which is about the explanation of a lion. From the feedback given, it indicates that the teacher only focuses on students' grammar, since all the feedback items help the students in improving their grammar skill. Totally, there are 17 feedback items that are focused on the students' grammar. It can be seen from the first sentence of the first paragraph. In that sentence, the given feedback is about the completeness of a sentence. In that writing, the student only wrote "meat eaters" and the teacher provided the feedback by adding the subject and verb so that it became a sentence. Then, in the next sentence, the student wrote "Lion usually be found ….". This sentence is grammatically wrong, so that the teacher gave feedback by adding modal auxiliary of "can" which was formed in passive voice. The sentence became "Lion usually can be found …". Next, it is still in the first paragraph, the teacher provided the feedback on punctuation. It is shown through this sentence, "Lion usually be found in the vast forest, in the African jungle and mountain areas". In that sentence, the student forgot to write the comma before the places where we can find lions.

In the next paragraph, as it is seen in the sample of the writing above the teacher provides six feedback items, which are about the form of the sentences. In the first sentence, "Lion way to survive is by hunting in their residence", the teacher put two written commentary feedback items which were the verb of the main clause (has a) and the relative pronoun (that) that must be used in that sentence. So the sentence becomes "Lion has a way to survive that is done by hunting their residence". Then, in the next sentence, the feedback items were given to correct the phrase, "to capture prey of lions", and that phrase became "to capture the prey, lions….". Other feedback items are also given in the next sentence; the feedback is about the use of modal and comparative adjective. It is seen from this sentence, "lions have run faster ….", so after getting the feedback it becomes "lions have to run fast ….". Moreover, it is still in same sentence, "lions have run faster pace than in horses", the teacher underlined the phrase "pace than in" and it was changed with the word "like". It is used to show the example of the prey.

In the last paragraph, the feedback is also found in the first sentence, "resembles a cat", this kind of part cannot be said as a sentence since there is no subject. To revise that part, the teacher provided the feedback by adding the subject. Therefore, the sentence became "it resembles a cat". Another feedback is also found in the next sentences, one of them is "lion usually eat other animals ….". In this sentence, the teacher provided the feedback by adding "s" after the verb. It indicated the problem on subject-verb agreement. Then, it is still in the same sentence, "lion usually eat other animals crate, zebra, buffalo and deer". Here, the feedback was given to show the student that he/she needed to use a marker (such as) to indicate examples.

Besides, the table 9 above also shows few written feedback items on content which are given by teacher B and E. One of the examples is seen from this sample of writing.
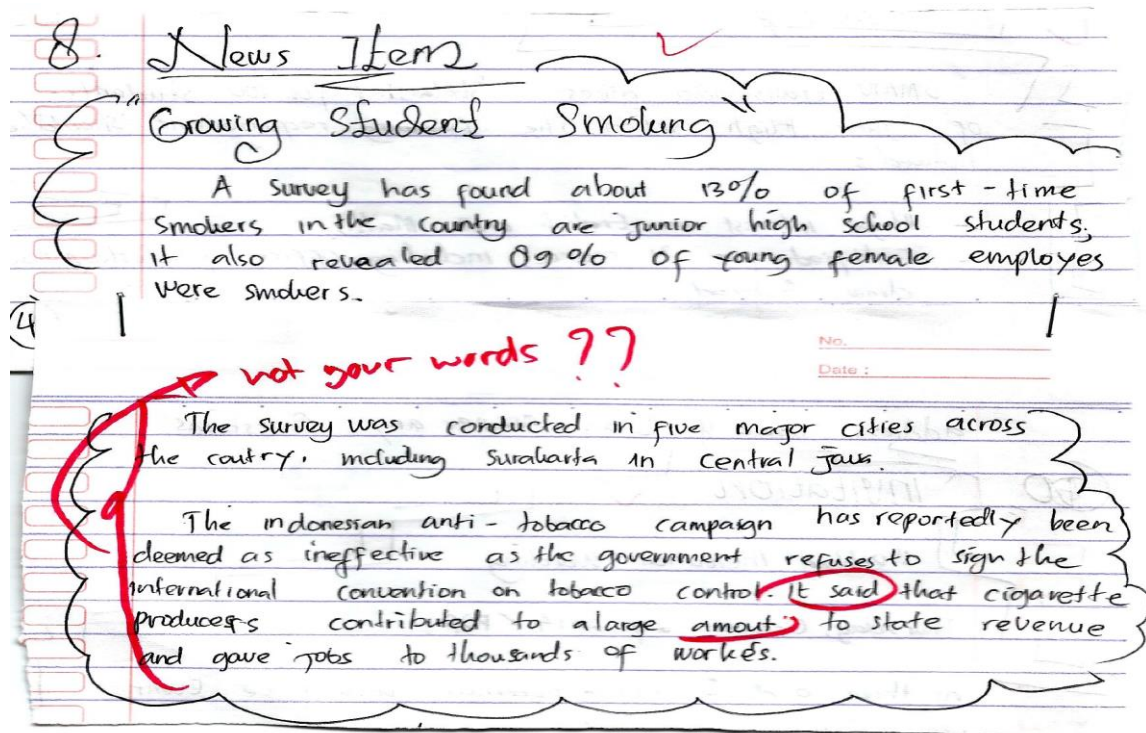
Figure 2. The sample of student's writing

The writing above is a kind of news item text in which the writer informs about the growing of first-time smokers. In those paragraphs, there are three written feedback items provided by the teachers. The first two focus on the form of the writing; meanwhile another one focuses on the content. The written feedback on content questions whether the paragraphs are the writer's own words or not. In other words, it can be said that the teacher does not believe that idea of the paragraphs belongs to the writer.

In addition, the data gained through documentation needed to be clarified by interviewing all of the teachers. The interview also questioned about why those teachers focused almost all of their written feedback on the forms of students' writing. Here is one of the interview scripts, the interview was conducted to teacher A; here is the script and the discussion.

IR : *Dari feedback yang ibuk berikan, kenapa ibuk lebih fokus ke form nya, bagaimana dengan content nya?*

IE : *Untuk form, ehh contentnya… karna sebelumnya mereka telah mempelajari cara membuat kalimat, karena itu mereka diminta untuk mengaplikasikannya dalam tulisan. Untuk content, saya tidak terlalu focus pada content nya hanya pada form nya saja karna sesuai dengan step nya, setelah kita mempelajari form baru kita mengembangkan lagi bagaimana memperbaiki content. Jadi form dulu baru content.*

Translation of the interview;

IR : *From the given feedback, why do you focus on the form only? How about the content of the writing?*

IE : *for the form.. eeh…, sorry the content, because previously the students have learnt the way of making sentences, they need to apply the skill in the form of writing. For the content, I don't really focus on that since I follow the step that we need to learn the form first, after mastering*

the form; we can go to the content and develop how to revise the content. So the form first then we can go to the content.

Note: IR=Interviewer, IE=Interviewee

The transcript of the interview shows that teacher A only focused on the students' grammar since her students had learnt how to make sentences previously. Therefore, to apply the materials that had been discussed, the teacher asked the students to implement the skill in the form of writing. In other words, the content was not touched because the teacher wanted to focus her feedback in improving the students' ability in creating correct sentences. Besides, the teacher believed that mastering the form was really necessary before the students dealt with the content of writing.

In conclusion, it might be said that almost all of English teachers at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang provided the written feedback which focused on the forms of the students' writing. It was indicated by the total percentage of the given written feedback items provided by all of the teachers where 99.66% of the written feedback items were aimed to revise the forms of writing, whereas only 0.34% of the written feedback items focused on the contents of writing. The detailed description of the findings was four teachers, teacher A, C, D, and F, who gave all of the written feedback (100%) in order to help students working on their grammar mistakes. In addition, the rest two teachers, teacher B and E, also focused their written feedback on the form of the students' writing although the distribution of the written feedback items was not 100% on form. Besides, the interviews done to all the teachers revealed that each teacher had their own arguments dealing with the focuses of the written feedback. Generally, all of the teachers argued that the form-focused written feedback was given since the students were considered as beginners in writing. Consequently, almost all of the written feedback items were given to help them working on the forms of the writing. Furthermore, the two teachers, they are B and E provided few written feedback items on content. Teacher B stated that the feedback on content was usually done orally, meanwhile teacher E said that the written feedback on content was not the focus of the feedback since the students needed to work more on forms.   .

Minimal Marking Technique Used by the Teachers
The table below shows the written feedback techniques used by all the teachers.

Table 3. Written Feedback Techniques Used by All Teachers

Teachers	Written Feedback Techniques and Their Percentage						Total
	PR	%	MM	%	WC	%	
A	0	0	221	99.1	2	0.9	223
B	0	0	267	98.52	4	1.48	271
C	0	0	308	100	0	0	308
D	0	0	131	34.66	247	65.34	378
E	0	0	89	51.15	85	48.85	174
F	0	0	166	56.08	130	43.92	296
Total			1182	71.64	468	28.36	1650

Analysis of Minimal Marking Technique on Student's Writing Given by Teachers at MAN Kota Baru, Padang Panjang

The table above shows that there are three different written feedback techniques which are commonly used by English teachers in responding to students' writing. Among those three techniques, all the teachers at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang only apply two of them, they are written commentary and minimal marking techniques. Totally, there are 1650 feedback items given by all teachers. The percentage shows that 71.64 % of the total feedback items are given through minimal marking technique while 28.38 % of them are provided by written commentary technique. Here is the detailed description of the two techniques.

Based on the table 10, it was found that all of the participants applied minimal marking technique in order to respond to students' writing. It is indicated that the percentage of applying minimal marking technique by teacher A is 99.1% and the rest of the written feedback items which are in the form of the minimal marking technique are only 0.9%. The percentage shows us that the common pattern used by teacher A in responding to the students' writing is through minimal marking. In the same way, teacher B responded to students' writing through minimal marking. It is proved by the percentage of the given written feedback in which 98.52% of the feedback items are in the form of minimal marking technique while only 1.48% of them are in the form of written commentary. In addition, teacher C provided all of the written feedback items by applying minimal marking technique. The percentage of the given written feedback shows that 100% of the feedback items are exactly in the form of minimal marking technique.

Furthermore, the last three teachers, teacher D, E, and F applied minimal marking technique less frequently compared to teacher A, B, and C. From table 10, it is seen that teacher D provides 34.66% of the written feedback by applying minimal marking technique while 65.34% of the feedback items are in the form of written commentary technique. On the other hand, teacher E gave more feedback in the form of minimal marking one rather than written commentary. The percentage indicates that 51.15% of the feedback items are the minimal marking and the rest of them which are 48.85% are on written commentary patterns. Equally, the last participant that is teacher F provides more feedback by facilitating students with the minimal marking technique than written commentary one. It is seen from the percentage that 56.08% of the given feedback items are the minimal marking technique and 43.92% of them are the written commentary technique.

To be clear of how the minimal marking given by the teachers, the following sample of writing is displayed and discussed.
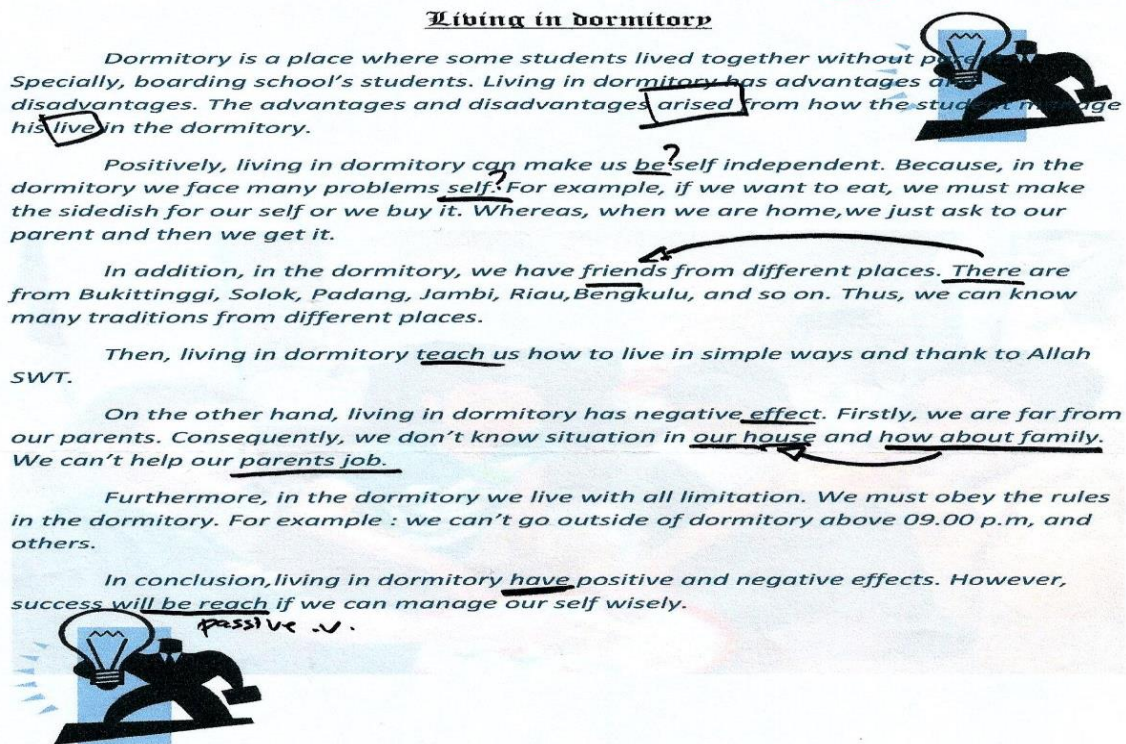
Figure 3.The Sample of Student's Writing

The writing above was written by student 3. The writing is about the arguments of living in dormitory whether it is good or bad for students. In that writing, the teacher provided some feedback in minimal marking techniques. It is seen in the first paragraph that the feedback items are given by marking the students' mistakes such as the word "arised" and "live". By marking those words, it is hoped that the student thinks of the correct ones. In the following paragraph, the feedback items were also given by the teacher. As it was given to the previous mistakes, here the feedback items were also given in the form of minimal marking. The first one can be seen in this sentence, "living in dormitory can make us be self-independent". Here, the teacher put marks on the word "be" to indicate that the part needed a revision. Then, another sentence like "because in the dormitory we face many problems self", also got feedback. In that sentence, the feedback was given by marking the word "self".

To sum up, it was found that there were three English teachers at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang who dominantly applied minimal marking technique. Besides, the last three teachers, teacher D, E, and F applied the written commentary technique less frequently than the first three teachers, A, B, and C. In other words, the last three teachers used the two techniques, written commentary and minimal marking, in balance. The minimal marking technique was carried by providing the marks to let the students find the correct versions of the mistakes.

Discussion

Focuses of the Written Feedback

Dealing with the finding where almost all of the teachers provided the written feedback in order to help students working on the forms, the interview done gave some inputs why those teachers did that. Generally, the interview emerged a major reason that encourages the teachers focusing their written feedback on grammar (form). It was done since most of the students were categorized as beginners in writing. In line with that, Ellis (2008:355) has stated, "the effectiveness of direct and indirect feedback is likely to depend on the current state of the learners' grammatical knowledge". It means that considering the students' ability is really crucial to determine what focuses of the given written feedback. By considering the fact, form-focused written feedback is the best way to help the students improving their skill, especially on the English basic skills. It is supported by the idea proposed by Ferris (1999:9). She argues that form-focused feedback cannot be abandoned since students rely heavily on it to improve their grammar in writing. Similarly, Porte (1997:61) states that unskilled writers have been seen to revise from a narrow outlook and make changes addressing the surface grammatical structure of compositions, usually at the level of words, rather than deeper issues of content and organization. In other words, these two ideas precisely prove that beginner writers or unskilled writers seem relying much on the feedback that is focused on the forms of writing.

Furthermore, the previous research findings also support this finding that feedback on form is appropriate to be implemented, especially for students who are considered beginners in writing. Some of them are studies done by Chandler (2003) and Hyland (2003). They showed that teachers' feedback on students' grammatical and lexical errors resulted in a significant improvement in both accuracy and fluency in subsequent writing of the same type over the same semester. Moreover, research done by Ferris (2006) showed that students made statistically significant reductions in their total number of errors over a semester in five major grammar categories with a particular reduction in the verb and lexical errors. In other words, it can be said that by proving students with corrective written feedback on form, it is expected that there will be changing and improvement on the students' grammar competency which aims to improvement on the students' writing.

In contrast, written feedback on forms only does not warranty that the students' writing might improve significantly. As it is shown in this research in which generally the students' still get problems in writing might be affected by the teachers' written feedback where the written feedback mostly focuses on forms. This is in line with some researchers who already did researches on the form-written feedback on writing. They are Kepner (1991) and Sheppard (1992). They argue that the grammar corrections or correction on forms do not have a positive effect on the development of L2 writing accuracy. Similarly, Truscott (1996) claims that error corrections that are on forms should be abandoned. He argues that direct corrections on form are not useful for students' development in accuracy and that grammar correction might bring about harmful effects on both teachers and students. In short, providing the students with both written feedback, form-focused and content focused, is suggested to be applied to help the students in writing.

The Minimal Marking Technique Applied by the Teachers

The technique which is called as minimal marking was used by English teachers at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang. Here, all teachers applied minimal marking technique. The technique used by teachers since it is not time-consuming. It is supported by an argument stated by McNeilly (2014), the minimal marking process helps the learners recognize, diagnose, and correct their own typical error. This type of feedback is more effective and time-efficient method than the traditional teacher "red-markings" to encourage and help the learners improve sentence-level errors. The minimal marking technique is usually used to revise the students' errors on forms rather than contents. This is in line with Hyland (2003:181), who states that minimal marking refers to a type of in-text, form-based feedback, which indicates the location and perhaps type of error and is more effective in stimulating a student response. Similarly, O'muircheartaigh (2002:7) states that the minimal marking technique is like correction codes but not as obvious. In other words, the minimal marking technique just gives the students signs of the mistakes they have and let them work on the signs.

Conclusion

Here are some points that can be drawn to give conclusions toward the findings. First, Almost all of the written feedback items given by English teachers at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang focus on the form of students' writing. Kinds of the form are varied; however, the most dominant one is about the written feedback toward the students' mistakes on S-V agreement and the least dominant one deals with the written feedback on the usage of adverb. Second, English teachers at MAN Koto Baru Padang Panjang mainly apply minimal marking technique. The minimal marking technique is used since it is effective for teachers, particularly, in the process of giving the feedback which is time-saving. In addition, it also helps the students to be a critical writer because this technique lets the students working on the mistakes they have made.

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