

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1. Background of the Study

Writing is one of the four main language skills that students need to learn when studying English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Among all the language skills, writing is often seen as the hardest for EFL students because it requires them to use many language abilities at once, such as knowing enough vocabulary, using correct grammar, and organizing ideas clearly (Richards & Renandya, 2002). This problem is especially common among Indonesian EFL students. They usually find it hard to write in English. A recent study by Hamdani and Abid (2025) discovered that Indonesian EFL students have difficulty using enough vocabulary, writing with correct grammar, connecting their ideas, and developing their thoughts in writing.

In the Indonesian EFL curriculum, particularly under the current Merdeka Curriculum implemented at the senior high school level, a recount text is one of the text types that must be taught to students. Recount text is a type of writing that retells past events or experiences in chronological order, typically using past tense forms (Derewianka, 1990). According to Gerot and Wignell (1994), recount texts have a specific generic structure consisting of orientation, events, and reorientation, along with distinct language features such as the use of the simple past tense, action

verbs, and temporal conjunctions. For tenth-grade students in their first year of senior high school, learning how to write recount texts can be quite a challenge. They need to understand the general structure of such texts as well as the appropriate language features. These students are in a transitional stage from junior high school to senior high school, where they encounter recount text writing at a more advanced level and with higher academic expectations.

The difficulties students face when writing recount texts make the teacher's role in guiding and supporting them throughout the writing process very important. One of the most important ways teachers can help students improve their writing is through written feedback. Written feedback refers to written responses, comments, corrections, or suggestions that teachers provide on students' papers to help them identify errors, understand their mistakes, and revise their work effectively. According to Ferris (2003), written feedback is not just pointing out mistakes or giving corrections. It is an important part of learning how to write. Good feedback helps students carefully consider their writing, understand their errors, and improve their skills step by step. Ferris also notes that when feedback is done well, it can help students become better, more confident writers who can plan their work independently.

However, research has shown that not all types of written feedback are equally effective in supporting student learning. Different types of feedback may have different impacts on student learning, depending on factors such as students' proficiency level, the nature of the errors, the learning context, and how the feedback is delivered. Ferris (2003) identifies five main types of written feedback

based on how teachers respond to student errors. These types are direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focused, and unfocused. Direct feedback occurs when the teacher provides the correct form directly on the student's paper, while indirect feedback requires students to identify and correct errors themselves through guided problem-solving. Metalinguistic feedback uses grammatical codes or labels to indicate error types, whereas focused feedback targets only specific error types, and unfocused feedback addresses all error types simultaneously. Understanding which types of feedback teachers actually use in their classrooms and why certain types are preferred over others is important for improving the quality of writing instruction and supporting student learning more effectively.

Several previous studies have examined written feedback practices in EFL contexts. For example, Cheng and Zhang (2022) investigated teacher beliefs about written feedback in EFL writing classrooms in China and found that teachers hold different views about which feedback type is most effective, with some preferring direct feedback and others preferring indirect approaches depending on students' proficiency levels. Kong, Molnar, and Xu (2022) used Ferris' (2003) framework to analyze the types of feedback that pre-service and in-service teachers provide on student writing and found that teaching experience influences the quality and specificity of feedback. More recently, Abdel Latif et al. (2024) profiled the written feedback practices of EFL writing teachers at Saudi universities and found that handwritten feedback was the most dominant mode of delivery. These studies provide valuable insights into written feedback practices in various EFL contexts.

Despite these contributions, a gap remains in the research literature on written feedback practices at the tenth-grade level in Islamic State Senior High Schools, particularly in the Medan context. Tenth grade marks a critical stage in which students are just beginning their senior high school education and are still developing their academic writing competence. At this level, students encounter recount text writing with more advanced requirements compared to their junior high school experience. However, they still need a lot of support and guidance from their teachers. Furthermore, Islamic State Senior High Schools may have different characteristics and ways of teaching English compared to regular state senior high schools. Previous research has not specifically examined what types of written feedback teachers commonly use at this level and in this setting. Additionally, no previous research has explored why teachers prefer certain types of feedback. Understanding these reasons is important for developing more effective feedback practices that suit the needs and learning styles of tenth-grade students.

This study is designed to explore the types of written feedback that English teachers provide to tenth-grade students when they write recount texts at MAN 2 Model Medan. Specifically, it aims to identify the types of feedback used and understand the reasons behind teachers' preferences.. This research analyzes actual classroom feedback practices using Ferris' (2003) framework and examines why teachers choose certain types of feedback. The study seeks to understand how teachers teach tenth-grade students to develop their recount text writing skills through written feedback in Indonesian Islamic senior high schools. The findings of this study are expected to provide valuable insights into improving written

feedback practices and, ultimately, enhancing the quality of writing instruction at the tenth-grade level.

A preliminary observation was conducted at MAN 2 Model Medan to explore one of the teachers' feedback practices on students' recount texts as an initial investigation. A tenth-grade student's recount text about a "school festival" was analyzed after receiving feedback from one of the English teachers. The observation showed that the teacher mainly used direct feedback when correcting students' mistakes. For example, when the student wrote "my school hold a festival," the teacher marked 'hold' and wrote the correct form "held" above it. Similar corrections appeared throughout the text, such as "make" corrected to "made," "is" corrected to "were," and "win" corrected to "won." Most corrections focused on past tense errors, including regular verbs (joined, finished, started) and irregular verbs (held, won, taught), as well as subject-verb agreement errors (is → were).

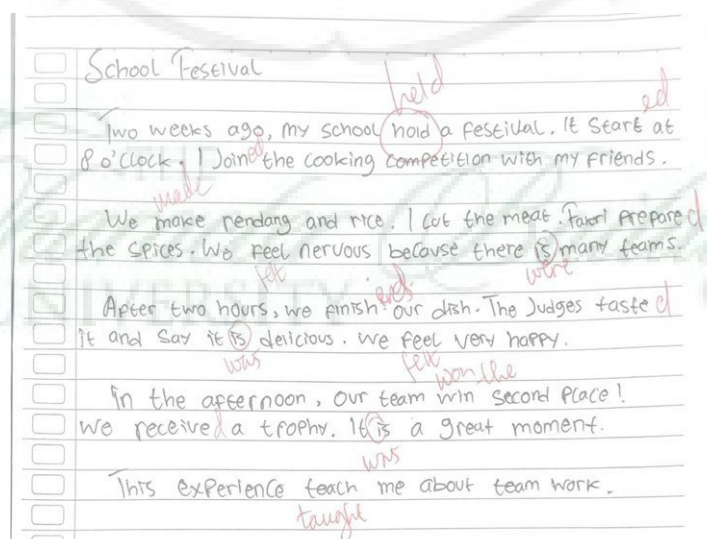


**Figure 1.1** Student's Recount Text with Teacher's Feedback

In a brief conversation with the teacher that day, she explained why she uses this feedback method. She stated that she circles the wrong word and writes the correct form above it because "it helps students see where the mistake is and what the correct form should be." When asked why she prefers this approach over using error codes or symbols, she explained, "If we only use codes or symbols, they might get confused." She also mentioned that this method makes it easier for students to find their mistakes and learn from them. The observation also revealed that the teacher corrected all types of errors she found, not just specific ones, which suggests an unfocused feedback approach. However, from this preliminary observation alone, it was not clear whether this pattern was consistent across all students' work, across both teachers, or what other factors might influence the teachers' feedback choices. These initial findings showed the need for a more detailed investigation involving both English teachers at MAN 2 Model Medan, which this study aims to provide.

## **1.2. Problems of the Study**

Based on the background described above, the problems of this study are formulated as follows:

1. What types of written feedback do the teachers use in teaching students' recount text writing at MAN 2 Model Medan?
2. How do the teachers provide written feedback in teaching students' recount text writing at MAN 2 Model Medan?
3. Why do the teachers use those types of written feedback in teaching students' recount text writing at MAN 2 Model Medan?

### **1.3. Objectives of the Study**

In line with the problems formulated above, the objectives of this study are:

1. To describe the types of written feedback used by the teachers in teaching students' recount text writing at MAN 2 Model Medan.
2. To describe how the teachers provide written feedback in teaching students' recount text writing at MAN 2 Model Medan.
3. To explain why the teachers use those types of written feedback in teaching students' recount text writing at MAN 2 Model Medan.

### **1.4. Scope of the Study**

This study focuses specifically on the types of written feedback provided by English teachers on Grade X students' recount text writing at MAN 2 Model Medan, analyzed using Ferris' (2003) framework: direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focused, and unfocused feedback. This study examines the types of feedback used, how the teachers provide them, and why they prefer them. Written feedback only is examined, excluding oral and peer feedback. The participants are two English teachers and their Grade X students at MAN 2 Model Medan.

### **1.5. Significances of the Study**

This study is expected to contribute both theoretically and practically to English language teaching. The significance of this study will be explained from several perspectives as follows.

### **1.5.1. Theoretical Significance**

This study adds to the existing literature on written feedback in EFL contexts by providing evidence of actual feedback practices in Indonesian Islamic senior high schools. By using Ferris' (2003) framework and examining not only the types of feedback used but also why teachers prefer certain types, this research fills a gap in knowledge about written feedback on recount texts at the tenth-grade level. This context has not been explored much in previous research. Furthermore, this study shows that Ferris' framework is useful for analyzing feedback practices in Indonesian Islamic schools.

### **1.5.2. Practical Significance**

- a. For Teachers: The findings can help teachers, especially at MAN 2 Model Medan, understand the types of feedback they use and reflect on their practices. By learning about the different feedback types in Ferris' framework and the factors behind their choices, teachers can make better decisions about which feedback best suits their students' needs and levels. This can lead to more effective feedback that supports students' writing development.
- b. For Students: When teachers provide more appropriate feedback based on research, students can more easily understand their mistakes and use them to improve their writing skills. When students understand the different types of feedback, they can participate more actively in the process. This helps them develop into independent writers.
- c. For the School: The results of this study can help MAN 2 Model Medan improve their teacher training programs and feedback policies. These findings

can also help create better training programs that focus on high-quality feedback and improve English writing instruction. Knowing why teachers prefer certain types of feedback can help school leaders understand the challenges teachers face.

- d. For Future Researchers: This study provides a foundation for future research on written feedback in Indonesian EFL contexts. Other researchers can use these findings to explore how feedback helps students improve their writing, how students respond to feedback, how feedback relates to different types of errors, the long-term effects of feedback, or comparisons between different grades and schools. The methods used in this study can also be adapted for similar studies in other settings.