



**A STUDY ON THE EFFECTIVENESS OF FEEDBACK GUIDELINES IN  
IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILLS IN SMJK YUK KWAN**

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**UALZ3013 – FYP2 REPORT**

**SUBMITTED IN  
PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS  
FOR BACHELOR OF ARTS (HONS) ENGLISH EDUCATION  
FACULTY OF ARTS AND SOCIAL SCIENCE**

**3<sup>rd</sup> MAY 2023**

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# **Chapter 1:**

## **Introduction**

### **1.0 Introduction**

This chapter will explain the background and the problem statements of the study. The research objectives and research questions will be clearly stated in this chapter. It will explore the significance of the study as well as the limitation. The definition of the key concept will also be explained in this chapter.

### **1.1 Background of the study**

In Malaysia, there is a major examination that is needed to be taken by students at the secondary school level which are Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM). Writing skills are one of the most important skills as it carries a lot of marks, and students need to write two essays in their examination papers. As writing is so prevalent in both the industry and higher education, it is crucial. Students won't be able to interact effectively with lecturers, companies, colleagues, or essentially anyone else if they lack the ability to express themselves in writing (Walsh, 2019). Akinwamide (2012) states that writing skill is the most arduous task to accomplish in the classroom. It is the hardest skill to master as students need to include many aspects in their writing such as grammar, vocabulary, plot, and even organization. Tan Sri Khair Mohamad Yusof, board member of the Ministry of Education (2016), indicated that students' writing skills still need to be enhanced. Students need guidance in their writing, and that is why students will need feedback from teachers to help improve their writing skills. According to Zaru and

etc (2013), it is commonly accepted that feedback can improve students' engagement and productivity if the provided is appropriately given and thoughtfully chosen.

Feedback can be essential as it helps students to identify mistakes made which enables them to do corrections and made improvements. According to Wahyuni (2017), in a learning course, teacher feedback helps students become more aware of their strengths and limitations, and it is believed that they would be able to use their strengths to overcome their deficiencies by comprehending the feedback provided. For instant, students who can write essays with good organization and minor mistakes in their grammar are clueless about how to improve their writing; feedbacks provided by teachers can aid them to identify their weaknesses in vocabulary and allow them to overcome it in an attempt to strengthen their writing skills. However, due to the lack of standardized guidelines for teachers to provide feedback, it is difficult for students to correct their mistakes and identify space for improvement.

In this study, the researcher would like to focus on the writing skill of students in Chinese Secondary Schools (SMJK). Chinese secondary school is known as “Sekolah Menengah Jenis Kebangsaan” (SMJK) where mandarin is the main medium of instruction. Even with the policy of “Bilingual Program DLP” that is launched in 2012, there are still a lot of Chinese Secondary Schools (SMJK) that use Mandarin to deliver classes for non-language subjects such as Mathematics and Science. These will result in a lower level of proficiency in English for students in Chinese Secondary Schools. Therefore, students will rely more on the teachers in language subjects such as English and Malay, especially in their writing. Teacher feedback is one way for students to improve their writing as they are able to identify their strengths and weakness and try to overcome them.

Based on the research conducted by Plaidaren & Shah (2019), the authors suggested that standardized guidelines should be done to have adequate feedback. Teachers can follow a

certain rubric or guideline while they are marking the student's papers and giving feedback to them. Therefore, it is important for this research to be conducted as it can help educators to identify the efficacy of standardized feedback guidelines in boosting students' writing skills.

## **1.2 Problem Statement**

Learning a second language has always been significantly aided by writing. The majority of students find writing to be fairly challenging, especially when they are required to write paragraphs or essay using a second language. The main problem is students understand the feedback provided or not. Some students might have trouble understanding the feedback provided by teacher such as the error codes used. In research carried out by Ferguson (2011), he discovered that students desired customized comments with explicit guidelines on how to enhance their work. Students are struggling as there are still a lot of teachers that are not equipped with the knowledge on providing valuable feedback to students. Carless' (2006) research highlighted the students' dilemma of not comprehending the codes used by their teachers in providing written feedback for the marked essays and the teachers' unawareness of their students' incomprehension of the feedback given.

Based on the research conducted by Plaidaren & Shah (2019), it proved that feedback is mandatory in order for students to upgrade their writing skills. The process of giving feedback also needs to investigate as the authors mentioned that the method used in their research is not effective and time-consuming. With the heavy workload of teachers, it is understandable that the process of giving feedback needs to be fast and productive so that it will be efficient for both students and teachers.

On the other hand, according to the research done by Nasir (2013), the author suggested that future studies can involve more genres such as explanatory text, descriptive text, and narrative text. In the examination questions of SPM, students have a variety from descriptive, narrative to reflective, argumentative, and expository; future researchers can expand on the genre of the essay to see if the genre will affect the effectiveness of feedback or not. Nasir also noticed that some teachers do not have the habit of supplying feedbacks on students' writing. Additionally, It is suggested that teachers should increase the frequency of providing feedback to students. This is because if teachers are able to provide feedback on every essay that students wrote, students will be able to track their improvement and have more motivation in writing.

In this research, I would like to focus on upper-secondary students due to their cognitive maturity level are higher compared to lower secondary. Students in the upper secondary have better development in their critical thinking skills compared to the lower secondary. Based on an analyses data from Icenogle et al. (2019), the cognitive capacity for individuals to reason logically matures by the age 16.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

This research aims to :

1. To investigate the Chinese Secondary school's students' perceptions towards feedbacks provided by teachers.
2. To investigate the effectiveness of standardized feedback guidelines in improving students' writing skill in Chinese secondary schools.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

This research aims to response three main questions:

1. What are the Chinese Secondary school's students' perceptions towards feedbacks provided by teachers?
2. How effective are the standardized feedback guidelines in improving Chinese secondary school students' narrative writing skills?

### **1.5 Significance of Study**

This study is significant because it needs to establish the necessity of standardized feedback guidelines in assisting the improvement of secondary school students' writing skills. The findings of this study will clarify the effectiveness of feedback guidelines on students' perceptive and help teachers and other educational organizations acknowledge the effect of teacher's feedbacks on students' writing skills. Moreover, this study will explore the suggestions given by students to enhance their writing skills with better organization. It allows teachers to consider suggestions for future improvement in English classes. Besides, educational organizations and institutions can also take the suggestions into consideration and enhance the syllabus and curriculum for future generations.

### **1.6 Limitation of Study**

This study will collect data using a mixed method that includes qualitative and quantitative. This data collection is limited to one Chinese Secondary Schools only which caused the accuracy and the adaptability of the result to other educational organizations is still questionable. Besides that, the data collection is limited to upper secondary students only which results in a lack of consideration and opinions on lower secondary students. The genre of essay used in this study is also limited to narrative essays only.



## **1.7 Definition of Key Concept**

### **1.7.1 Teacher's Feedback**

The written feedback that students receive from teachers has a significant impact on their writing process. It assists students in identifying their own assets and liabilities, which, in the latter instance, will teach students how to improve their writing skills and become good writers (Penaflorida, 2002). Additionally, according to Ressor, teacher's feedback to students is thought to give them both the motivation to develop and the direction on how to do so (as cited in Vengadasamy, 2002). In this way, feedback takes on a new role, pushing and inspiring students to write. Teacher feedback can be categorized into few types which include positive feedback, negative feedback, marginal feedback, end feedback and etc.

## **1.8 Conclusion**

To summarize this research aims to accomplish two objectives which are (a) to investigate the Chinese Secondary school's students' perceptions towards feedbacks provided by teachers, (b) to investigate the effectiveness of standardized feedback guidelines in improving students' writing skill in Chinese secondary school. By the result of this research, teachers should be able to identify the problems in previous given feedbacks and enable teachers to provide beneficial feedbacks to students.

# **Chapter 2: Literature Review**

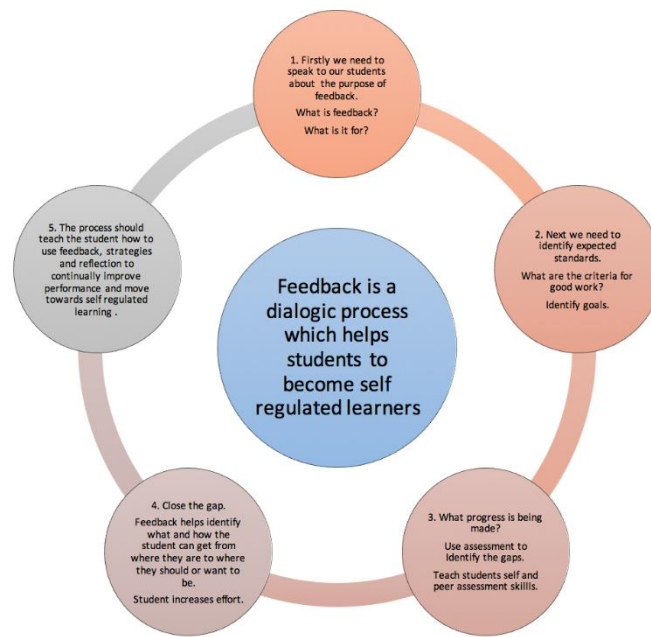
## **2.0 Introduction**

The motive of this research is to assist teachers and students in Chinese upper secondary schools understand how feedback guidelines might help students improve their writing skills. This chapter will mainly concentrate on the previous studies that had done inside and outside of Malaysia regarding the effectiveness of teacher feedback and the importance of standardized guidelines on students' writing skills. Theories related to feedback are also covered in this chapter. The topics include the feedback loop, written feedbacks, error correction codes and also the past studies conducted are covered in this chapter. Besides, both teachers' and students' perception towards feedbacks are also stated in this chapter.

## **2.1 Theories Related to the Research**

### **2.1.1 The Feedback Loop**

Feedback can be crucial since it enables students to recognise their errors and make repairs and improvements. Wahyuni (2017) asserts that in a learning environment, teacher feedback aids students in better understanding their strengths and weaknesses. It is hoped that by understanding the feedback given, students will be able to utilise their strengths to make up for their weaknesses. To be absorbed, feedback must be simple to understand. Feedback ought to be constantly given in an objective and constructive manner. It is important to follow up on feedback to make sure it was understood (*The Feedback Loop*, n.d.). The simplified model will assist in giving appropriate feedback in a variety of ways. This is because the simplified model combines ideas from various feedback models that includes: Butler and Winne(1995), Nicol and Macfarlane Dick(2004), Hattie and Timperley's Model(2007), Brookhart (2008), and Nash and Winstone(2017). The procedures for getting information when seeking for ways to offer comments will be made simpler.



*Figure 1: The Feedback Model*

It can take a lot of effort to prepare feedback and have a feedback process in place, but the initial time investment will be worthwhile in the long run. Students' work will get better as they get better at self-regulation, and they won't rely on the teacher as much, leading to a sustainable process. Furthermore, the procedure benefits teachers because it gives them pertinent data they may utilize to guide their future lessons.

### **2.1.2 Written Feedback**

Written feedback is crucial when giving students writing assignments as it allows them to know their progress (Plaindaren & Shah, 2019). Feedback can be given in written or verbal form. Written feedback will be the centrepiece of this research. Wiggins (2012) claims that feedback will give the students a greater knowledge regarding how they can improve their writing skill. When students are aware of their mistakes, it will ease the correcting and editing process. According to Bitchener (2008), fixing a mistake in a student's writing assignment benefits them since it increases their linguistic correctness both instantly and over time. When

errors are pointed out to students via writing rather than just verbally, they are more likely to remember the errors they made.

It is teacher's responsibility to ensure the feedbacks provided are effective and helpful to students in order to guide students improve their writing skills. When students receive comments on their writings, they frequently note both their capabilities and their weaknesses, allowing them to correct their errors and avoid repeating them (Corcoran, Halverson and Schindler, 2014; Iqbal, Gul, Lakhani and Rizvi, 2014). Effective feedback must apply the right tactics, and be encouraging and non-judgmental, whereas feedback that simply contains criticism may only serve to discourage students from writing (Plaindaren & Shah, 2019). Writing tasks need plenty of exercise to become better, so it is essential that teachers to inspire and drive students to write.

## **2.2 Error Correction Codes**

### Academic Writing Error Correction

<b>V</b> = good point / good idea
<b>W</b> = very good point
<b>?</b> = confusing
<b>^</b> = missing word
<b>T</b> = Tense
<b>Gr</b> = Grammar
<b>A</b> = Article (a, an, the, /)
<b>WW</b> = Wrong Word
<b>WF</b> = Wrong form
<b>Coll</b> = Collocation
<b>W/O</b> = Word Order
<b>Inf</b> = informal
<b>Prep</b> = Preposition
<b>P</b> = Punctuation
<b>R</b> = repetition
<b>Sp</b> = Spelling
<b>RC</b> = Relative clause (which, that, who etc..)
<b>Ref</b> = in-text reference problem
<b>Cau</b> = caution (too strong – soften with could, may, might, appears, possibly)

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*Figure 3: Error Correction Codes*

Error correction codes are used to show students what sorts of mistakes they have made in writings. Each mistake is highlighted by adding a symbol or an abbreviation indicating the type of error next to it. Error correction codes is an effective way for teachers to help facilitate students' error in their writing task. According to Ekinici (2020), for students to identify and correct their own mistakes and generate quality paragraphs or writings, indirect error correction such as error codes are necessary. In addition, utilising error correction codes, as mentioned by Hyland (2003), makes correction straighter and less daunting than direct correction and enable students to remedy their errors. This is because error codes not only provide students the information regarding their mistakes, but it also allows students to make correction themselves rather than “spoon-feeding” students the correct answers. This will result in improvement in

students' s linguistic competence as well because students will have to think and “investigate” the mistakes they made (Yugandhar, 2014).

### **2.3 Students' Perception on Feedback**

In research from Saidon et al. (2018), some participants claim that they are demotivated by the negative feedback received. Students said that these negative comments make them lose confident and reduce their motivation in writing. This finding is in line with Ferris (2007) and Campbell (2016) that declare harsh comments written by teachers will arise fear among students that caused them to afraid of writing. However, participants in this study still agree that the feedback given are able to assist them improve.

According to research by Dowden et al. (2013), they found that students' emotion and the support received are connected with students' perceptions. In this study, the researchers noticed that feedback is a “one-way communication” where students need to interpret the feedbacks received on their own for improvement. This have result is misleading or misunderstanding of students on the feedbacks received. For example, teachers are providing general comments, but some students interpret the feedbacks in a negative way which had affected the students' emotion and their perception on feedbacks. Thus, the researcher suggested that it is important to make feedback a “two-way communication” in order to reduce misunderstanding and assist in better improvement.

Based on the research from Irwin (2018), it is discovered that students prefer teachers to point out all of their mistake and apply direct feedback. It shows a difference between students' perception and teachers' perception because students think it is more effective in correcting when all mistakes are pointed out, but teachers think that it might demotivate the students by doing so. Besides that, it is showed that students wanted teachers to focus on their

grammatical mistakes instead of the improving the content of their writing. Majority of students have positive perception on feedback as they feel that they are able to improve their writing skills with the help of teacher's feedbacks.

## **2.4 Teacher's Perception on Feedback**

According to Gul et al. (2016), they discovered that the majority of educators view written feedback as a key instrument for guiding and assisting students in improving their work. Teachers play a significant role in creating a motivated classroom environment for students to develop and improve. Giving students feedback on their work is among the instructional strategies for enhancing their grammar and writing abilities (Bitchener, 2012 as cited in Mahmood et al., 2022).

In research conducted by Lee (2008), teachers in this study assert that giving students only direct feedback is preferable and that they can always be able to spot and remedy their own mistakes. Surface mistake such as grammar mistakes and spelling mistakes can be easily spotted, and students can just correct it immediately. Besides, teachers realize that the error codes actually will confuse the students as students do not understand what does the code means, however, teacher still continue to do so (Lee, 2008). This issue should be taken seriously as written feedback will lose its benefits when students are unable to improve from it.

According to new research conducted by Mahmood et al. (2022), the results show that there were no training courses offered specifically for written feedback methods. In the interview conducted, teachers found that feedback is less effective due to students' attitude. Students show less interest on the feedback given as they only care about their marks. Therefore, teachers started to put less effort on providing feedback as that is time consuming and less effective (Mahmood et al., 2022).

## **2.5 Past Studies Conducted**

Famous research conducted by Zahida et al. (2014) examine the effects of three types of written feedback on the enthusiasm and writing ability of Hebron University English major students. The findings suggest teachers to focus more and provide constructive criticisms on the content of students' writing than the surface mistakes. The results gained from this research are in accord with Fattash (2006) and Covill's (1997) that claim meaning-focused feedback will bring better effect on students' writing.

Besides that, an empirical study conducted by Hakimi (2020) attempts to ascertain how EFL teachers at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi High School handle writings from students. It is established that EFL instructors at Abu Hayyan al-Tawhidi High School frequently provide feedback to students' works by using form-focused feedbacks. The researcher also suggest that teachers can consider providing both form-based and content-based feedback in order to guide students to compose accurate and consequential writing.

Moreover, in research from Ganapathy et al. (2020) evaluated the different sorts of written corrective feedback that teachers used in five secondary schools in Malaysia when teaching writing in English as a Second Language (ESL). It is clear that teachers' and students' perspectives on the application of WCF in the ESL classroom were usually in agreement (Ganapathy et al., 2020). Teachers reported that WCF was successful in their writing pedagogical approaches, and students reported that it was helpful, resulting in improved student learning outcomes. The researchers hold an opinion that it's also essential for schools to standardise their feedback mechanisms, but Malaysia's ESL student population comes from a variety of cultural and linguistic backgrounds which make this hard to achieve.

Apart from that, Ekinci's (2020) research examine the effectiveness of utilising error correction codes in improving students' writing skills and EFL students' perception about



using error correction codes to help them write better. It demonstrates that giving students indirect written feedback in the form of error correction codes is an effective method for assisting them in becoming more proficient writers.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Thus, this chapter discuss about the theories related to this study that includes feedback loop, written feedbacks, and error correction codes. Students' and teachers' perception towards feedbacks from previous studies are also mentioned in this chapter. It shows that students and teachers hold different opinions on feedbacks. Moreover, four past studies on similar topic from different countries are discussed as well.

# **Chapter 3 : Methodology**

## **3.0 Introduction**

This chapter will examine the methodological approach taken in order to carry out the study. This chapter will cover a number of topics, including research design, sampling, participants, data collection methods, and data analysis.

## **3.1 Research site**

This research will be carried out in a Chinese secondary school that is located in Perak state. This type of school is chosen to answer the research questions posted that emphasize on

Chinese secondary schools. As a result, there is a chance to observe and gather all the data and information required for this investigation.

### **3.2 Research Design**

The intention of this research is to investigate the effectiveness of standardized feedback guidelines in improving students' writing skill. Besides, this research also want to find out students' perception toward the feedbacks provided by teachers. In this study, a mixed method will be used as part of the research methodology.

In this research, both quantitative and qualitative will be used for data collection. Quantitative research is the method of gathering and interpreting statistical data. It can be used to identify trends and averages, formulate hypotheses, examine connection, and extrapolate findings to larger populations. The result gained from quantitative research is direct and it allows statistical comparison in different group or setting. On the other hand, qualitative research aims to better comprehend ideas, opinions, or experiences, qualitative research entails gathering and evaluating non-numerical data. It can be utilised to uncover intricate details about a situation or to spark fresh study concepts.

#### **3.2.1 Interview**

Move on to the next section, an interview will be conducted to 5 selected participants after they done the post-test. The interview seeks to learn more about the opinions of and aspirations for writing among the students. The aim of the interview is to find out students' perception on standardized feedback guidelines on their writing. It is to see from the students' perspective if the feedbacks provided is useful to them or not. Students can see the comparison of result and feedbacks between their pre-test and post-test.

### **3.2.2 Pre-test and Post-test**

First of all, 30 participants with mix ability will be given a writing project as part of the data collection method. This writing project will be divided into two sections : Pre-test, and Post-test. The Pre-Test will take place prior to the feedback, while the Post-Test will take place after the feedback. In Pre-test, one hour will be allocated for participants to write a narrative essay based on SPM format. Papers will be collected for marking using error codes by the schoolteachers. Afterwards, participants will receive their paper back to read the comments correction. Post-test will then be conducted a week after participants received their feedbacks. As for Post-test, participants will have to write another narrative essay within one hour. The paper will then be collected for analysis and comparison.

In this study, it is targeted to see the effectiveness of standardized feedback guidelines in improving students' writing skill. This can be seen in the comparison of marks between Pre-test and Post-test. Prior to receiving any feedback, the purpose of the pre-test was to determine whether there were any appreciable differences in the students' writing performance. The objective of the post-test, on the other hand, was to determine whether there had been any appreciable changes or advancements in the groups' writing abilities.

### **3.3 Sampling**

Purposive sampling will be used to select the participating school and participants as it is able to help identifying the population that meet the characteristics that I need in my sample. Form 4 students will be chosen for this research as they are upper secondary students that are more mature and had develop the abilities to adapt to the feedbacks provided. This is because compared to students in the lower secondary, upper secondary students have more developed

critical thinking abilities. According to data analysis by Icenogle et al. (2019), people' ability to think logically matures by the age of 16. Moreover, the selected school does not allow exam classes to participate in this research. A consent letter will be written and pass to the school's principle and English panel to seek for their permission in order to conduct this research.

### **3.4 Participants**

A sample of 22 Form 4 students that care currently studying in a Chinese secondary school will be chosen to participate in this research. Writing proficiency is necessary to maintain decent marks (Taghizadeh et al., 2013, p. xx). It is very important for students to master their writing skills as it is significant for both academic and career wise. The reason for choosing Form 4 students is because they need to enhance their writing skills for the preparation of SPM. Form 4 students already equipped with the basic writing skills and knowledge on the writing format, they need help to boost their current marks to a higher level and this is the right time. For this study, a mix method research design was chosen since it best facilitates data collection and research question resolution.

### **3.5 Data Collection**

#### **3.5.1 Qualitative Research**

As for the next section, quantitative research will be conducted whereby an interview will be carry out to the 5 chosen form 4 students. The purpose of the interview is to discover how students feel about the standard guidelines for providing feedback. It is to determine whether or not the input given to the students is beneficial to them. The interview questions are

modified out of research conducted by Zahida et al. (2014). The inquiries have been modified to satisfy the requirement and have gained in significance in investigating the study's objectives. The questions asked are mostly on students' opinion towards error codes and written feedbacks. Besides, the questions also cover students' expectation on the feedbacks received to have better understanding on students' perception.

### **3.5.2 Quantitative Research**

First of all, a class of form 4 students with mix abilities will be chosen with the help of the schoolteachers. Students are required to write a 180-words essay. Before the test, I would confirm with their form teachers that they have already learn on how to compose a narrative essay. The essay topics are adapted from SPM trial paper in 2021.

This task will be divided into two parts, which are Pre-test and Post-test. The pre-test's goal was to find out if the students' writing abilities varied noticeably from one another. Students will be given 60 minutes to complete the essay. For pre-test, students will need to write on the topic "An unlucky day". They will need to write the description of the day and how the day end. The essay will then be collected and marked according to SPM Assessment Scale. Feedback will be generated based on the essay students wrote by using error codes. The feedbacks will then give back to the students in order to let them know how to improve based on the strength and weakness listed out.

On the contrary hand, the goal of the post-test was to see if there had been any noticeable improvements or changes in the groups' writing skills. Post-test will conduct a week after the feedback is given. Students will also be given 60 minutes to complete the essay. For post-test, students will need to write on the topic "The happiest day of my life". They will need to write the description of the day, who was involved, and how the day end. The essay will

then be collected and marked according to SPM Assessment Scale. A comparison will be made between the students' grade to see if there is any improvement after the feedback given.

## **3.6 Data Analysis Procedures**

### **3.6.1 Qualitative Data**

For the analyses of qualitative data, Microsoft Excel will also be used. The statistics will provide the necessary information to observe Chinese secondary students' opinions on written feedback that will help them become better writers. The result will be converted into table for better observation. The research question for this study will be addressed by careful analysis and observation of the data.

### **3.6.2 Quantitative Data**

The quantitative data collected will be analysed using Microsoft Excel. To aid in the observation, the data will be gathered and organised using descriptive statistics like mode, median, mean, and standard deviation. Apart from that, T-test statistic will be calculated to compare the mean of pre-test and post-test. Based on the statistic, the data will be observed to analyse the effectiveness of feedback guidelines in improving students' writing skills.

## **3.7 Conclusion**

The methodological strategy used to conduct the study was covered in this chapter. This study will employ a mixed-method approach that combines qualitative and quantitative data. 30 Form

4 Chinese Secondary School students are selected as the sample size and participants. Pre- and post-tests, as well as an interview, are all part of the data gathering process.

## **Chapter 4 :**

### **Findings and Analysis**

#### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter will present, analyse, and discuss the finding of quantitative data (Pre-test and Post-test) and qualitative data (interview). The finding and analysis of the Pre-test and Post test used to identify the effectiveness of standardized feedback guidelines in improving students' writing skill in Chinese secondary schools. Then, the finding and analysis of the interview used to identify the Chinese Secondary school's students' perceptions towards feedbacks provided by teachers.

#### **4.1 Interview**

This section will present the qualitative data analysis related to Chinese Secondary school's students' perceptions towards feedbacks provided by teachers. An interview was conducted online via zoom to 5 students from the sample group. Students were asked six questions designed to know how they felt about error codes and written feedback.

##### **4.1.1 Usage of Error Codes in Essay Marking.**

Question 1 : Do your teacher use error codes in marking your essay?

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Participant 1	Yes. My teacher will use them during her marking.

Participant 2	Yes. I found them a lot in my essay because I have a lot of spelling mistakes.
Participant 3	Yes. I think I saw them before in my essay.
Participant 4	Yes. Teacher always underlines my mistakes.
Participant 5	Yes. I also have a lot of mistakes that was underlined by my teacher.

The qualitative data analysis showed that their teachers implemented the usage of error codes in essay marking. All of them noticed the usage of error codes in their essay and some of them mentioned that their teachers will underline their mistakes as well.

#### 4.1.2 Knowledge on Error Codes

Question 2 : Do you understand the error codes used by your teacher?

Participants	Responses
Participant 1	Yes. I can understand.
Participant 2	Not really. I only know <i>sp</i> is spelling mistakes.
Participant 3	No. I don't really understand what is written.
Participant 4	Yes, but I can understand some codes only. Such as <i>sp</i> for spelling, <i>gr</i> for grammar, and ^ for missing word.
Participant 5	I also only know <i>sp</i> is spelling mistakes.

From the qualitative data, only one student can understand the error codes written by the teachers. The rest only know some commonly used error codes. For example, *sp* for spelling, *gr* for grammar, and ^ for missing word. Besides, there are also one student that do not understand what is written by the teachers.



### 4.1.3 The Needs of Explanation

Question 3 : Do you think that is it necessary for teacher to explain the error codes for better understanding?

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Participant 1	No. I already know what it means.
Participant 2	Yes. I need explanation or else I don't know how to improve.
Participant 3	Yes, because I don't even know what are my mistakes.
Participant 4	Yes, I only know some common ones.
Participant 5	Yes, I really need help to understand them so that I can fix my mistakes.

According to the qualitative data, only one student does not need explanation because that student can understand the error codes written by the teachers. The other students think that it is very important for teachers to explain the error codes to them because they have a hard time understanding them. Besides, some students also mentioned that explanation on the error codes can help them to do correction and improve their essay.

### 4.1.4 Effectiveness of Feedbacks

Question 4 : Do you think the feedbacks provided by your teacher help you in improving your writing?

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Participant 1	Yes, because I get to know my mistakes and the parts that I need to work on.
Participant 2	Yes. I have a lot of spelling mistakes and I can learn to correct them from feedbacks.
Participant 3	Yes, because I know what are my mistakes.

Participant 4	Yes. I very bad in my writing, feedback can tell me which part did I do wrong. When I see that my content marks are low then I know I must have run away from the topic.
Participant 5	Yes. Feedback can help me improve because it can explain what do I lack.

According to the qualitative data, all students agree that feedbacks provided by teacher help them in improving their writing. This is because they mentioned that teacher will tell them mistakes made in the essay and they can correct them in future writing. Besides, the feedbacks provided can also inform them the parts that they are lack in, which enables them to identify and make changes in future.

#### **4.1.5 Suggestions**

Question 5 : What are your suggestions in providing feedbacks?

<b>Participants</b>	<b>Responses</b>
Participant 1	I am fine with what we have now, but it would be better if teacher can provide some suggestions to us as well.
Participant 2	I think teacher can have a note that explains the error codes used to help us understand what it means.
Participant 3	I think teacher can explain to us because I don't understand what they wrote.
Participant 4	I also think that teacher can give us notes on the codes.
Participant 5	I think teacher can also correct us like if I spell the word wrongly, teacher can write the correct one so that I know how to correct my mistakes.

From the qualitative data analysis, there are some students who suggested that teachers can provide a note regarding error codes to the students to ease their understanding. They suggest that explanation is needed because some of them cannot understand the error codes written. Moreover, some students think that the teachers can provide suggestions as well to guide them in correcting their mistakes. For example, the correct spelling of the word can be provided so that students know how to correct the mistakes.

#### 4.1.6 Other Feedbacks

Question 6 : What types of feedback that you would like to receive from your teacher? Why?

Participants	Responses
Participant 1	I prefer teachers write some feedbacks on my paper to tell me some details of my performance. Like maybe the flow of the story or some points that I use wrong. The details can help me know what I did wrong in my essay. (Written Feedback)
Participant 2	I think teacher can leave notes on my essay such as tell me how to improve such as my vocabulary or the conjunction used. (Written Feedback)
Participant 3	I would like my teacher to tell me directly , which point cannot use, the format and spelling because I cannot understand what teacher wrote. (Verbal Feedback)
Participant 4	Even though teacher will write how many marks I get in each part but maybe teacher can explain why the part mark so low because something I know I did wrong, but I don't know how to improve. (Verbal Feedback)
Participant 5	I think teacher can write on my essay and tell me what I did wrong and how to improve. (Written Feedback)

Based on the qualitative data analysis, there are some students would like to receive written feedbacks from teachers on the details of the essay. They suggest that teachers can explain students' mistakes and guide them on how to improve by writing on the paper. While some students wish to receive verbal feedback with the consideration of, they cannot understand written ones. They hope that teachers can explain verbally and tell them the points that can be used in the essay and also the essay format. Besides that, one student suggest teacher to explain the 4 categories of marking so that students can get a gist on how to improve.

## **4.2 Pre-test and Post-test**

This section will present the quantitative data analysis related to the effectiveness of standardized feedback guidelines in improving students' writing skills. An experiment was conducted with the help of schoolteacher to a class of form 4 students. Both teachers and students were given the standardized feedback guidelines which is the error codes. After the pre-test was conducted, students will receive feedbacks using error codes. Then, the post-test will be conducted a week later to see the improvement of students after receiving the feedbacks. The data was collected and analysed using Microsoft Excel. The score of descriptive statistic will be converted into table for observation. This section are separated into 3 sub-sections, which are pre-test, post-test, and t-test.

#### 4.2.1 Pre-test

Table 1 below shown the minimal score, maximum score and score of descriptive statistic (Mean, Mode, Median, Standard Deviation) of Pre-test from a total of 22 Form 4 students.

Pre-Test	Min	Max	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Overall	4	13	6.68	6	6	1.99
Content	1	5	2.91	3	3	0.97
Communicative Achievement	1	3	1.14	1	1	0.47
Organization	1	3	1.36	1	1	0.73
Language	1	4	1.27	1	1	0.70

*Table 1: Pre-test score*

The table above shows the result of 22 form 4 students in the pre-test conducted. The lowest score for pre-test is 4 while the highest score is 13. Both mode and median of pre-test was 6. The mean of the pre-test was 6.68 and the standard deviation of the pre-test was 1.99. The overall score was divided into 4 categories which are content, communicative achievement, organization, and language according to SPM marking scheme. The lowest score for all categories is 1. The highest score for the categories is 5, 3, 3, 4 respectively.

#### 4.2.2 Post-test

Table 1 below shown the minimal score, maximum score and score of descriptive statistic (Mean, Mode, Median, Standard Deviation) of Post-test from a total of 22 Form 4 students.

Post-Test	Min	Max	Mean	Mode	Median	SD
Overall	4	14	7.59	6	7	2.50
Content	1	5	3.32	3	3	0.94
Communicative Achievement	1	3	1.63	1	1.5	0.73
Organization	1	3	1.27	1	1	0.55
Language	1	4	1.36	1	1	0.84

*Table 2: Post-test score*

The table above shows the result of 22 form 4 students in the post-test conducted. The lowest score for post-test is 4 while the highest score is 14. The mode of the post-test was 6 and median of post-test was 7. The mean of the post-test was 7.59 and the standard deviation

of the post-test was 2.50. The overall score was divided into 4 categories which are content, communicative achievement, organization, and language according to SPM marking scheme. The lowest score for all categories is 1. The highest score for the categories is 5, 3, 3, 4 respectively.

#### 4.2.3 T-test Analysis

The same group of students were given a post essay writing test after feedback of pre-test was given in order to investigate the effectiveness of standardized feedback guidelines in improving students' writing skill. The result was analysed using Paired samples T-test to determine whether students performed better after the feedback. The statistical result was presented in Table 3.

	<i>Pre-test</i>	<i>Post-test</i>
Mean	6.681818	7.590909
Variance	3.941558	6.253247
Observations	22	22
Pearson Correlation	0.941291	
Hypothesized Mean Difference	0	
Degree of Freedom	21	
t Stat	-4.6291	

*Table 3: T-test Result*

Based on Table 3, the t-score was **-4.6291** while the p value was **(0.00014 < 0.05)**. Therefore, it can be said that there was a significant difference between the pre-test and post-test. The result showed that feedback is effective in improving students' writing skills.

## **4.3 Discussions and Findings**

The data collected from the interview is used to answer Research Question 1 while the data collected from the pre-test and post-test is used to answer Research Question 2.

### **4.3.1 Research Question 1**

1. What are the Chinese Secondary school's students' perceptions towards feedbacks provided by teachers?

For the first research question, the result showed that students have positive perception towards the feedbacks provided by teachers. The findings from the interview gave insight into the effectiveness and usefulness of feedbacks in essay writing. Students' comments confirmed the value of teacher's feedbacks in improving students' writing skills. The findings are in line with the research from Ganapathy et al. (2020) that proven that students agree with the use of feedbacks as it was helpful in improving their learning outcomes. They all noted the use of error codes in their essays, and several of them said their teachers would also highlight their errors. There are some doubts stated by the students on the understanding of the error codes used by teachers in essay writing. Some students admit that they faced problems in understanding the error codes. However, students did not deny the effectiveness of error codes in improving their writing skills. This is because they stated that the teacher would point out any errors in the essay so that they could rectify them in the following writing. Additionally, the feedback they receive can help them identify areas where they need improvement so they can fix them in the future. Apart from that, students provided some suggestions on the implementation of error codes such as having a note that clarify the meaning of codes used and provide suggestions of improvement as guidance in the future. Ganapathy et al. (2020) believe that standardising feedback methods in schools is also crucial.

### 4.3.2 Research Question 2

2. How effective are the standardized feedback guidelines in improving Chinese secondary school students' narrative writing skills?

For the second research question, the outcome indicated that feedback is successful in enhancing students writing skills. . The Pearson Correlation of the pre-test and post-test is **0.9** while the p value was (**0.00014 < 0.05**), each value proves that there are significant different in pre-test and post-test. There are a **rising of 0.91** in the mean score which shows that improvement is spotted in students' writing. Although it is not huge raise in their marks, but many a little makes a mickle; students can improve slowly in the process with the help of feedbacks. The findings are in agreement with Ekinci's (2020) research as it illustrates that helping students become better writers by providing them with indirect written feedback in the form of error correction codes is a successful strategy. The students made fewer mistakes and improved their writing skills as a result of error correction codes. In order to avoid repeating the same mistakes in their writing, students also learned to recognize various error types and take note on them. Besides that, consider the research from Zahida et al. (2014) and the empirical study conducted by Hakimi (2020), both studies also provide evidence in the effectiveness of having feedbacks in improving students' writing skills.

### 4.4 Conclusion

This chapter had presented, analysed, and discussed the finding of quantitative data (Pre-test and Post-test) and qualitative data (interview). According to the statistical result, students did show improvement after the feedbacks and there was a significant difference when comparing the mean of pre-test and post-test. As for students' perception on feedbacks provided by teachers, students show positive attitude toward the use of feedbacks and positive



comments on the effectiveness of feedbacks. Besides, students also provided some suggestions and opinions regarding the feedbacks given.

## **Chapter 5 :**

### **Recommendations and Conclusion**

#### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter provides some suggestions for further research. Finally, a conclusion is made at the end of the research.

#### **5.1 Recommendation**

First of all, since this data collection was restricted to just one Chinese secondary school and only 22 students are involved, there are still concerns about the results' accuracy and applicability to other educational institutions. It is suggested to include larger sample size and students from different education settings in future research.

Besides that, being that only upper secondary students are included in the data collection, opinions, and consideration of lower secondary students are absent. It would be best for future research to expand the range of students in order to investigate the impact of feedbacks on different levels of students.

Lastly, only narrative essays are used as the type of essay in this study. It is suggested that future research involve different genre of essay in the research to see the effectiveness of feedbacks in different type of essay.

#### **5.2 Conclusion**

This research was conducted in order to find out whether standardized feedback guidelines help in improving Chinese secondary school students' narrative writing skills and also to explore students' perception toward feedbacks provided by teachers. The findings of the mix-method research had provided a holistic view of the effect of feedbacks. When looking at the descriptive statistic which is the mean score, it revealed that the students improve in essay writing. Additionally, the result of t-test also proved that there is significant difference between pre-test and post-test result.

The findings of the interview showed that students held a positive attitude toward feedbacks provided by teacher. Although some faced problems in understanding the feedbacks but students still admit the effectiveness of feedbacks in improving their writing skills. There are some suggestions stated by students as they wish teachers can provide direct feedback as in giving suggestions of correction. This is in line with research by Irwin (2018), students prefer teachers to point out every mistake they make and provide them immediate feedback since they believe this makes for a more successful correction process.

As a conclusion, standardized feedback guidelines are useful tools for students to improve their writing skills.

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## Appendices

### Interview Questions

1. Do your teacher use error codes in marking your essay?
2. Do you understand the error codes used by your teacher?
3. Do you think that is it necessary for teacher to explain the error codes for better understanding?
4. Do you think the feedbacks provided by your teacher help you in improving your writing?
5. What are your suggestions in providing feedbacks?
6. What types of feedback that you would like to receive from your teacher? Why?

Adapted From:

Zahida, R., Farrah, M., & Zaru, N. (2014). The Impact of Three Types of Written Feedback on the Motivation and Writing Skill of English Major Students at Hebron University

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## **Pre-test Question**

### Essay 1

Your teacher asked you to write a story for your school magazine. The story must have the title:

#### An Unlucky Day

Your story should include:

- A description of the day
- How the day ended

Write your story in 180 to 250 words.

## **Post-test Question**

### Essay 2

Your teacher asked you to write a story for your school magazine. The story must have the title:

#### The Happiest Day of My Life

Your story should include:

- A description of the day
- Who were involved?
- How the day ended

Write your story in 180 to 250 words.

## Error Codes Sheet

**v** = good point / good idea

**vv** = very good point

**?** = confusing

**^** = missing word

**T** = Tense

**Gr** = Grammar

**A** = Article (a, an, the, /)

**WW** = Wrong Word

**WF** = Wrong form

**W/O** = Word Order

**Inf** = informal

**Prep** = Preposition

**P** = Punctuation

**R** = repetition

**Sp** = Spelling

**RC** = Relative clause (which, that, who etc..)

Adapted From :

Academic English UK. (2023, April 17). *Academic English for International Students & EAP*

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## SPM Marking Scheme

### SPM Writing Part 3 assessment scale

SCORE	CONTENT	COMMUNICATIVE ACHIEVEMENT	ORGANISATION	LANGUAGE
5	<p>All content is relevant to the task.</p> <p>Target reader is fully informed.</p>	<p>Uses the conventions of the communicative task effectively to hold the target reader's attention and communicate with ease, fulfilling all communicative purposes.</p>	<p>Text is well-organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices with generally good effect.</p>	<p>Uses a range of vocabulary, including less common lexis, appropriately.</p> <p>Uses a range of simple and complex grammatical forms with control and flexibility.</p> <p>Occasional errors and slips may be present.</p>
4	<b>Performance shares features of Scores 3 and 5</b>			
3	<p>Minor irrelevances and/or omissions may be present.</p> <p>Target reader is on the whole informed.</p>	<p>Uses the conventions of the communicative task to hold the reader's attention and communicate straightforward ideas appropriately.</p>	<p>Text is generally well-organised and coherent, using a variety of cohesive devices.</p>	<p>Uses a range of everyday vocabulary with occasional inappropriate use of less common lexis.</p> <p>Uses a range of simple and some complex grammatical forms with a good degree of control.</p> <p>Errors do not impede communication.</p>
2	<b>Performance shares features of Scores 1 and 3</b>			

1	<p>Irrelevances and/or misinterpretation of task may be present.</p> <p>Target reader is minimally informed.</p>	<p>Produces a text that communicates straightforward ideas using the conventions of the communicative task reasonably appropriately.</p>	<p>Uses simple connectors and a limited number of cohesive devices appropriately.</p>	<p>Uses basic vocabulary appropriately.</p> <p>Uses simple grammatical forms with a good degree of control.</p> <p>While errors are noticeable, meaning can still be determined.</p>
0	<p>Content is totally irrelevant.</p> <p>Target reader is not informed.</p>	<p><b>Performance below Score 1</b></p>		