

## IMPROVING STUDENTS' WRITING SKILL THROUGH MARKING SYSTEM FEEDBACK

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### Abstract

Writing is one of the four language skills that the learners should master. The 2013 curriculum also says that composing short written texts, using coherent text structures and Linguistics elements fluently and accurately, is one of the English language competencies specified for high school level. Accordingly, this study aims to find out whether marking system feedback can improve students' writing skill. This is a two-cycle classroom action research at a public high school in Bantul, Yogyakarta. The subjects were 26 grade ten of science students. The data were collected from observation, written documents, writing scores, and questionnaire. The study results showed that by applying the marking system feedback, students' writing skills improved. The mean scores of the students' writing ability in the pre-cycle was 63.65 at the poor category, the first cycle was 73.65 at the fair category, and the second cycle was 81.35 at the good category. In addition, students tend to give positive responses to the implementation of the marking system feedback. As many as 88.46% believe that the feedback is useful in writing activities and can help them in correcting their mistakes, 73.08% admit that the technique facilitates better understanding of grammar, and 80.77% claim that this technique leads them to be more careful in their writing and motivates them to improve their composition.

**Keywords:** writing skill, feedback, marking system

### INTRODUCTION

In today's era of technology and information, English has become very important as a tool for communication. English subject at the high school level aims to facilitate students' communication competence in oral and written forms to reach the level of informational literacy. The competence is manifested in four language skills which include listening, speaking, reading,

and writing. Teaching integrated four skills is recommended (Brown, 2001). It means each language skill, including writing, is given proportion in the curriculum.

The National Education System Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 20 of 2003 states that one of the principles of education is to develop habit of reading and writing. In English language learning, writing belongs to productive skill. This means that students are required to be able to produce written texts.

Based on the Regulation of Minister Education and Culture Number 21 of 2016 concerning Content Standards, one of the English language competencies specified in high school level is composing short written texts using coherent text structures and linguistic elements fluently and accurately.

Based on the interview and researcher observation, the subjects of this study still have difficulties in writing as indicated by errors in arranging words into correct and meaningful sentences. Admittedly, one of the most difficult things is choosing the right tenses in constructing sentences. The choice of words (diction) they use is also sometimes inappropriate or not in accordance with the context. The students have many ideas to put into writing, but because of their lack of grammar skills, their messages through writing are not conveyed properly.

In addition, the teacher has not provided sufficient portions for learning to write, therefore, students only have little time to practice writing. Like Parmawati in (Yulianti, Nuraeni, Parmawati, 2019) confirms that writing skill is important but it does not get enough attention and proper time allocation in the teaching and learning process.

The students are asked to produce a text and after they finished, they immediately collected their text without going through the editing process. The teacher also does not provide feedback on the students' writing. As the result, when the learners are asked to rewrite, the quality of their writing has not increased.

From these observed problems, it is considered necessary to improve the quality of the students' writing. Expectedly, the students' writing achievement would be at good category based on the school benchmark. As Wahyuni et al. (2020) suggests that teacher should pay more attention in writing, providing good technique in the teaching learning process to improve the students' skill.

Providing feedback on the students' writing is, therefore, chosen as the focus of this study. There are some techniques of feedback that can be used in writing. In choosing the appropriate technique, some factors must be considered such as who gives the feedback, what mode is used, and whether the feedback is for the whole class or individual. Based on the source, feedback can be categorized as the one from the teacher, from peers, and from the students themselves (Nation, 2009). Feedback can be verbal or written. Oral feedback allows dialogue between students who are given feedback and teachers who provide feedback. While written feedback data is more durable and can be used to measure student progress or improvement.

Considering some factors, the feedback used in this study was in written form given by the teacher since the students' different level of ability may lead to problems when they do peer or

self-feedback. Faroha et al. (2016) research finding recommended that English teachers should give written feedback to students' writing task to enable them to improve the skill.

One of the feedback systems is proposed by Nation (2009) called *Marking System Feedback*. It is a technique that aims to help students improve the quality of their writing. It would be more useful if the teacher does not correct their mistakes but showing students where their mistakes are. To show these errors, it is necessary to have the marking system. (Nation, 2009:122)

This technique is used on the editing stage of writing. After students write a composition, feedback from the teacher is given in the form of symbols or signs. The symbol indicates the errors that the students need to correct. In a composition, similar errors are commonly found. Therefore, the tool hopefully addresses to these common errors. The following is an example of marking that can be used to provide feedback on student writing proposed by Nation.

<i>In the margin</i>	<i>Their meaning</i>	<i>In the sentence</i>
A	a, the, plural	It is <u>book</u>
P	Punctuation	This is John's book
S	Spelling	occurrence
T	Tense	I walk
	Agreement	he go
	Verb group	can going
V	Verb needed	he happy

**Figure 1. Marking Feedback by Nation (2009)**

The *Marking System Feedback* offers advantages for the students to find out their shortcomings/weaknesses in writing. This is because the teacher does not correct mistakes but showing them where their mistakes and what types of mistakes are made. This system can also facilitate good habits for the students to check their linguistic competence needed in writing. These competencies support students' ability to produce better quality of writing.

Due to findings of previous studies that demonstrate positive results of students' writing skill improvement, this technique would be implemented in the researcher's context. Therefore, this research is expected to fill the existing research gap on the marking system feedback technique. This study, therefore, attempts to determine the effectiveness of using the marking system feedback technique in improving students' writing skill. In addition, students' responses on the process of writing using this feedback would be assessed.

## **METHODS**

### **Research design**

This study was classroom action research. This kind of research has been proposed by several experts. Burns (1999) views some characteristics of classroom action research. It is mentioned that action research is contextual to investigate problems in certain situation. It is evaluative and reflective since it aims to make changes and improvement. The research is carried out collaboratively by colleagues, practitioners, and researchers. The change that possibly occurs are determined by the data collection.

The design used in this classroom action research refers to the Kemmis and Mc Taggart model (in Burns, 2010), namely each cycle consists of planning, action, observation, and reflection.

Planning is the initial stage of each cycle. In detail, the steps are as follows: a) identifying problems in learning. It is done through observation of learning in class, interviews with students, interviews with teachers and pre-test; b) Defining a research problem. The problems found are discussed with colleagues and then selected based on the weight of the problem and the affordability of the solution by considering the strength and weakness factors.

In the stage of doing action, the treatment that has been designed is implemented. Actions are planned for two or more cycles depending on the achievement of expected success indicators.

Observation is conducted during learning activities. At this stage the teacher/researcher observes the learning process. Each aspect is recorded on the observation sheet as the basis for follow up action.

After carrying out the action and making observations, the next step is reflection. It is carried out to assess the processes and problems during research activities. It is also done to evaluate the actions of each cycle to improve the next ones.

### Participants

This research was conducted at a public senior high school in Bantul, Yogyakarta, in the first semester of the 2018/2019 academic year from August to October 2018. The subjects are 26 tenth grade students of class X MIPA consisting of 10 male students and 16 females. The researcher chose class X MIPA 1 as the research subject because most of the students' writing skill in that class has not achieved the minimum standard demanded by the curriculum.

### Data collection and analysis

In collecting the data, the researcher used some techniques, i.e observation, written documentation, writing scores and questionnaire. The obtained data were then analyzed in the following way. Data from observations were analyzed through several stages starting from transcription, categorization (coding), and interpretation of data in relation to other data. The written documentation means that the students' writing product or composition. The students' pieces of work would be assessed from several aspects according to the criteria of good writing. The following table showed the writing rubric.

**Table 1. Rubric Scale of Writing Achievement**

No	Aspects	4=excellent	3=good	2=fair	1=poor
1	Content	Relevant to the theme with the development of ideas	Relevant to the theme, a little idea development	Relevant to the theme, without developing ideas	Doesn't fit the theme without developing ideas
2	Organization/text structure	There are all defined structural parts	There are only 2 parts of the defined structure	There is only 1 part of the defined structure	No part of the specified structure

No	Aspects	4=excellent	3=good	2=fair	1=poor
3	Grammar	There is not any significant error, the meaning and content of the text can be understood clearly	There are several error however do not affect the meaning	Often found error, however the meaning is still understandable	Many errors so the meaning is difficult to understand
4	Vocabulary	Quite varied, the choice of words is right	Slightly varied, the choice of words is right	No variation, the choice of words is right	No variation, the choice of words is not right
5	Spelling and punctuation	No spelling and punctuation errors	Slight spelling and punctuation errors	Often found spelling and punctuation errors	Lots of spelling and punctuation errors

Data from the students' writing score which were in the form of numerical assessment results were analyzed to determine the category of their achievement. The category was based on the school benchmark. There were four categories as shown below.

**Table 2. Category of Scores**

Score	Category
89-100	Excellent
77-88	Good
65-76	Fair
<65	Poor

The researcher gave questionnaire to students regarding their opinions and responses to the writing learning process using the *marking system feedback* technique. Based on the results of the questionnaire, it can be seen whether the students gave positive or negative responses.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### *FINDINGS*

#### **Pre-cycle**

Based on the results of the pre-test, the mean score of the students' writing skill was 63,65 which belongs to poor category. It was found that there were various problems related to writing skills faced by the students. They include: 1) the development of ideas that have not been maximized, 2) writing that is less organized, 3) the arrangement of sentences is not right, 4) the vocabulary used is little or not varied, 5) wrong spelling, and 6) use of inappropriate punctuation.

To overcome these problems, the researcher applied the marking system feedback technique in writing learning activities. As has been elaborated earlier, the system is a technique that aims to help students improve the quality of their writing. It is used when students edit or revise as one of the processes in writing. According to Harmer (2007) there are four stages in the process of writing namely, pre-editing phase, and editing, re-drafting, and final version of the work. While Graves in Johnson (2008) divides the writing process into five steps: prewriting, drafting, revis-

ing, editing, and publishing. Zemach and Rumisek (2005) mentions that the process of writing includes the steps of prewriting, drafting, reviewing, and revising, and rewriting.

By implementing the marking system feedback, it is hoped that there would be improvement on the students' writing skill. The indicator of the success of the implementation is when the mean score of the writing skill has reached 77 which is at the good category.

## **Cycle 1**

### ***Planning***

In this stage, the researcher and collaborator discussed the preparation before doing the teaching and learning process that focused on improving the students' writing by implementing the marking system feedback. Three points were agreed. They were choosing the material or basic competence to be taught, designing the lesson plan, and providing observation sheets to write field notes or any important things occurred during the learning process.

### ***Action***

The implementation of this stage on the first cycle consisted of two meetings of 90 minutes for each meeting. The first meeting was held on 7 August 2018 and the second one on 14 August 2018. The material was about the personal information as stated in the basic competence of the senior high school syllabus.

At the first meeting, after the teacher opened the lesson and made sure of the students' learning readiness, the teacher led the students to the material to be studied by asking questions such as "Have you ever met new people from other countries? How do you introduce yourself to a foreigner?". After the students responded to these questions, the teacher introduced the material that would be studied. It was about the personal information or identity. The learning objective was that the students were able to make oral and written texts related to the material.

Then, students were asked to watch a video of personal information conversation. After that, the students and the teacher discussed the information contained in the video. The teacher explained several things to be paid attention when giving personal information such as how to use simple present tense sentences, use pronouns, use verbs, and related vocabulary.

After the students got an explanation, they began to practice applying the concepts contained in describing identity such as the use of simple present tense, pronouns, and appropriate vocabulary. They were asked to complete a form related to their identity. In this activity, the students were given the freedom to determine identity information according to their creativity. Then, they had questions and answers/interviews based on the information they have filled in the form provided. They then wrote down the results of the interviews in the form of paragraphs/written texts.

At the end of the lesson, the teacher asked the students to collect their drafts of writing. At the next meeting the students would receive their writings back for revision based on the teacher feedback.

In the second meeting of the first cycle, the teacher distributed student writing drafts that were collected at the previous meeting. The focus of this activity was editing or revising of students' writing.

Before they did it, the teacher informed several things that they had to pay attention to when editing. The teacher gave an explanation regarding the feedback that had been given to their writing. The teacher pointed out some mistakes in their writing, such as sentences that lack of verbs, inappropriate use of tenses, incorrect pronouns, and incorrect spelling and punctuation. This activity took approximately 20 minutes. After that, the students started the main activity, namely revising their writing. In this activity, students made corrections to the mistakes they make and correct them. During the revision process, students sometimes walked in class to ask questions or compare with their friends' writings. There were also those who came to the teacher to ask some words in English. Some students discussed with their friends. During this activity the teacher observed and monitored students. The teacher also helped students if they found difficulties. This revision process lasted for 60 minutes. At the end of the lesson students handed in their writing.

### ***Observation***

During the implementation of the writing learning process in the classroom, researchers and English teachers observed and recorded things that happened in the application of the marking system feedback technique. They observed the whole process of teaching and learning activities from the beginning to the end of the lesson. The results of the observations were written on the observation sheet.

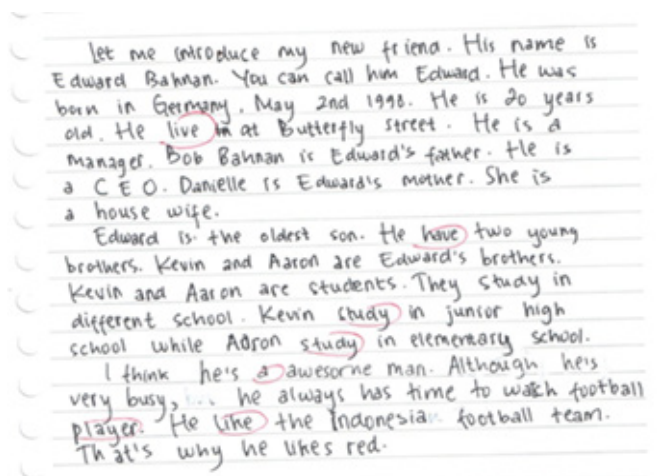
At the first and second meetings, the research teacher carried out various activities in the classroom as follows: a) The teacher explained the written and spoken text material related to the presentation of identity to students, especially with regard to social functions, text structure and linguistic features; b) The teacher introduced and explained to the students about the marking system feedback technique used in the writing process; c) After explaining and giving examples, the teacher asked students to make a written text related material; d) The teacher asked students to collect their drafts of writing; e) The teacher distributed the students' writing to be corrected based on the feedback; f) The teacher asked students to rewrite their drafts based on the revisions made; g) The teacher monitored students during revising activities and sometimes helped students who got difficulties.

Meanwhile, the activities carried out by students during the writing learning process were: a) Students responded to the teacher at the beginning of the lesson by answering several questions that lead to the material to be studied; b) Students listened to the teacher's explanation of written and oral text material related to personal identity; c) Students discussed the structure of the text and its linguistic features with the teacher based on the model or example of the text presented; d) Students practiced making written texts related to the personal identity; e) Students collected their composition; f) At the second meeting the students received their writing with feedback; g) Students made correction based on the feedback and finally submitted their final writing; h) During the writing process, there were some students who discussed with friends or asked the teacher related to grammar and vocabulary.

During the activities in the writing learning process, researchers and observers saw that students were willing to be actively involved in activities. This could be seen when students responded to the teacher and even dare to ask questions if they did not understand.

**Reflection**

Based on the writing score of the students' composition and observations during the process of implementing the actions in cycle I, it can be said that the writing skills of students increased. The mean score in the pre-cycle was 63.65 increased to 73.65. Some students still make mistakes in writing related to grammar, spelling and punctuation. For these errors, the teacher marks them by ticking, underlining, or circling them. The following is an example of students' writing.



**Figure 2. Example of Student's Writing in Cycle 1**

There were 2 students at poor category, 6 students at good category. Most students (69.23%) scored between 66-76 meaning that their writing score was still at fair category as shown in the table.

**Table 3. The Students' Writing Category of Cycle 1**

Category	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Excellent	0	0 %
Good	6	23.08%
Fair	18	69.23%
Poor	2	7.69%

The results of the students' writing showed that the students' skills in constructing sentences were better than before. However, students still needed a lot of practice in writing because only a few students reached the target of good category. For this reason, the researcher planned to conduct the second cycle with the similar treatment to improve the students' writing skill.

**Cycle 2**

**Planning**

The plan carried out on the second cycle still focused on improving the students' writing skill using the marking system feedback. The researcher cooperated with the fellow teacher as the collaborator to choose the material to be taught, namely oral and written texts related to stating a plan or intention to do something. Then, they prepared the lesson plan and the observation. In this cycle, they also distributed a questionnaire/list of questions to find out student responses regarding the implementation of writing activities using the marking system feedback technique.



### **Action**

This cycle consisted of two meetings which were held on October 2 and 9 2018. Activities were also carried out at the same schedule as the cycle I, namely the 3rd and 4th lesson hours every Tuesday. The material chosen is oral and written text related to the intention to do something. On the first meeting of cycle 2, after opening the lesson, the teacher led the students to the by asking questions such as “Do you like holiday? What activities do people usually do on vacation? Have you planned your next holiday?”. After responding, the students listened to a conversation related to the material of intention to do something. Next, the students and the teacher discussed the information contained in the audio. The teacher explained several things related to the expression of stating the intention to do something / stating a plan, especially the use of *be going to*, *will*, and *would like to*.

Then, the students began to practice using the concepts of *be going to*, *will*, and *would like to* to express the intention to do something. Students did several activities to understand the concepts. They filled incomplete sentences, practiced identifying the pattern, explored some vocabularies related to the intention to do something, especially vocabulary related to holidays. They were asked to find vocabulary in the form of nouns and verbs. This vocabulary would be useful when students create a text both oral and written about a holiday plan. Finally, they were asked to write a text of their plan in the next holiday. The topic of the writing was ‘my dream holiday’. At the end of the class, they submitted their writing to the teacher.

The editing activity carried out in the second meeting. The teacher returned the students’ writing with feedback. The students then corrected the mistakes found in their writing based on the sign or symbols given by the teacher. During the revision process, they sometimes walked in class to ask questions or compare with their friends’ writing. There were also those who came to the teacher to ask some words in English. Some students discussed with their friends. During this activity the teacher observed and monitored students. At the end of the lesson students collected their final writing. Moreover, the teacher also asked students opinion related to the implementation of writing activities using the marking system feedback technique. The students filled a questionnaire online.

### **Observation**

During the learning process on the second cycle, it was found that the students were excited in doing their activities. The teacher gave various activities that was slightly different from those in the first cycle. The students actively responded during the learning process.

The material was about expressing intention to do something, namely the use of *be going to*, *will*, and *would like to*. It seemed that the students enjoyed when they did chain writing in the group as one of the activities to practice applying the concept of expressing intention by using the right pattern. They were also eager to write their writing about their dream holidays. The topic of the writing made them possible to creatively gather ideas and then write them into sentences to produce a composition. They used their imagination and hoped that what they planned about their holiday would become true someday.

In the process of editing or revising activities using the marking system feedback technique, the students also seemed enthusiastic. They discussed each other and gave their opinions while editing. Students who had more skills gave explanations to other students assisting their peer to correct the writing errors or mistakes.

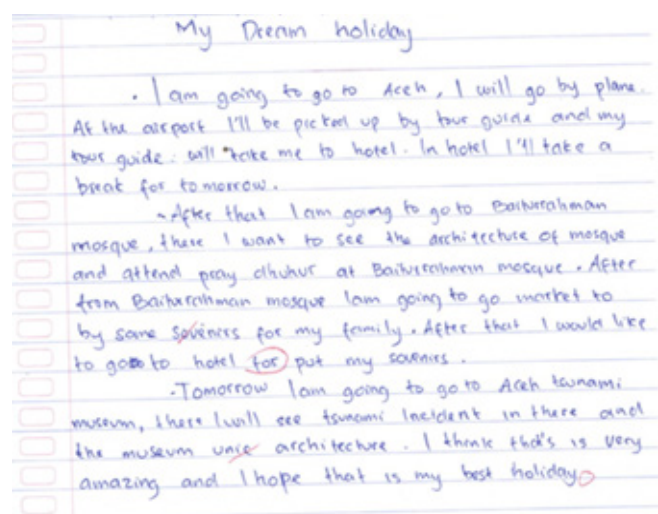
**Reflection**

The mean score of the students' writing on the second cycle rose from 73.65 to 81.35. There was an increase of 7.7 points. It means that the category changed from fair category to the good one. The following is the result of the students' writing category.

**Table 4. The Students' Writing Category of Cycle 2**

Category	Frequency	Relative Frequency
Excellent	2	7.69 %
Good	20	76.92%
Fair	4	15.38%
Poor	0	0%

From the table it can be inferred that 20 students were at good category. It was the highest percentage of the students' writing category. It means that the students' writing skill improved and reached the target. The mistakes made by the students in writing decreased so that they got good result. Only a few errors found in their writing composition.



**Figure 3. Example of Student's Writing in Cycle 2**

At the end of the second cycle, the students were given 5 questions related to the application of the marking system feedback technique through a questionnaire, namely: 1) whether the marking system feedback technique was useful in writing activities, 2) whether the technique could help them in correcting errors in sentences, 3) whether the technique made them understand grammar better 4) whether the technique made them more careful in arranging sentences, 5) whether the technique motivated them to improve their writing ability or skills.

Based on the results of the questionnaire given to the students, it was found that 23 students or 88.46% thought that the application of the marking system feedback technique was useful in writing activities and could help them in correcting the sentence errors they made while 11.54% or 3 students admitted their doubt.

Regarding grammar understanding, a total of 19 students or 73.08% thought that the marking system feedback technique made them understand English grammar better, but 7 participants or 26.92% expressed doubt.

The questionnaire on questions number 4 and 5 obtained a result of 80.77% (21 students) stating that the marking system feedback technique made them more thorough in writing and motivated them to improve their writing abilities or skills. However, 19.23% (5 students) disagreed. From the results of the questionnaire, it can be concluded that students tend to give positive responses regarding the application of the marking system feedback technique in writing.

## DISCUSSION

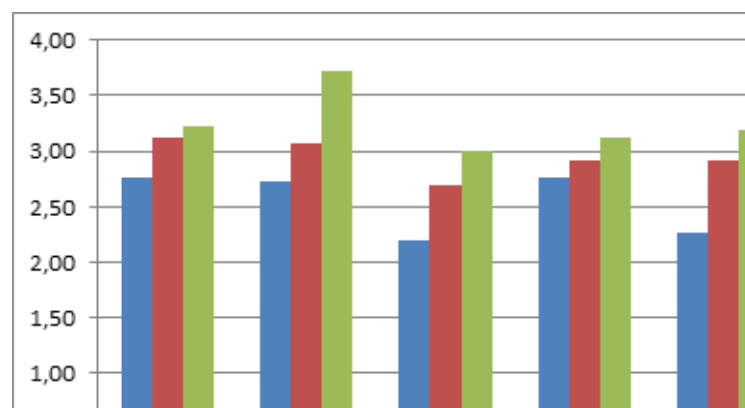
Based on the findings in the previous section, the mean score of the student writing skill in the pre-cycle, cycle 1, and cycle 2 that has been implemented in this action research can presented in the table below.

**Table 5. Mean Score of Students' Writing**

Stage	Mean score
Pre cycle	63.65
Cycle I	73.65
Cycle II	81.35

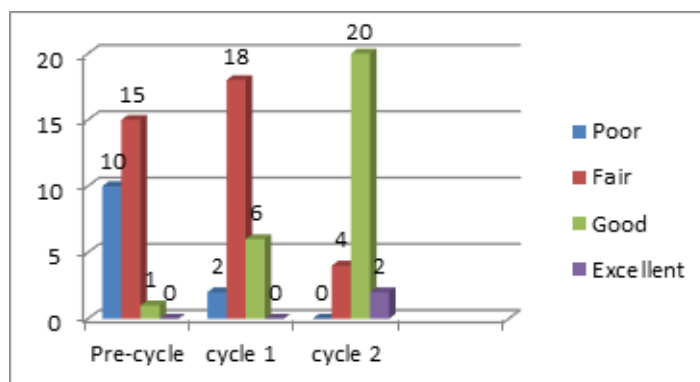
The average of students' writing skills has increased. In the Pre-cycle stage, the average score of 63.65 increased by 10 points in the first cycle to 73.65. Meanwhile, from Cycle 1 to Cycle 2 there was an increase of 7.7 points from an average of 73.65 to 81.35. The total increase in points from pre-cycle to cycle 2 is 17.7 points. This means that the category of the average which was initially included in the poor category (<65) in the pre-cycle, increased to the fair category (65-76) in the first cycle, and in the second cycle it again increased to the good category ( $\geq 77$ ) based on the category of the school benchmark. From these results, it can be said that the application of the marking system feedback technique showed positive results.

It was obvious that students' writing skills have increased gradually. Students' writing results are assessed based on 5 aspects, namely *content*, *organization*, *grammar*, *vocabulary*, and *spelling and punctuation*. The five aspects are assessed using a grading rubric on a scale of 1-4.



**Figure 4. Students' Improvement on Writing Aspect**

In addition to increasing the mean score, the application of the marking system feedback technique in writing also affects the number of the students who could be at the good category.



**Figure 5. The Achievement of Students' Writing**

On the pre-cycle, the majority of students' scores were included in the fair category (57.69%) which was in the range of scores of 65-76, the poor category with a mark of <65 was in second place with a percentage of 38.46%, the good category (3.85%) with a score of 77-88.

Then, on the first cycle the score of students increased, namely 7.69% in the poor category where only 2 students scored <65. A total of 18 students or 69.23% scored in the fair category, and 23.08% or 6 students scored in the good category. On this cycle, no one belonged to excellent category who scored  $\geq 89$ .

After the second cycle was carried out, the percentage of students' scores increased. There were no more students who got poor marks. A total of 15.38% are included in the category of fair, 76.92% or a number of 20 students get a good category, and a number of 2 students or 7.69% get a score in the excellent category. This means that the success indicator of 75% of students getting grades at good categories has been achieved in cycle 2.

From the table and figures presented above, it can be said that the application of the marking system feedback technique has succeeded in improving students' writing skills. The implementation of the two cycles in this research brought a better change toward the students' writing skill. It is line with the statement of Arikunto as cited in Widiastuti and Endahati (2020) saying that the purpose of classroom action research is to evaluate and change something to improve educational practice.

Based on the observation conducted during the activities on each cycle, the students felt enthusiastic when they learn materials that was related to their world. The choosing of the right topic could motivate them to produce writing work. As Fatimah and Madya (2020) viewed in the similar research, interesting or familiar topic/suitable materials can increase motivation and interest the students to write.

Furthermore, after the research was completed in two cycles, students were also asked for their responses regarding the implementation of writing activities using the marking system feedback technique by filling out the questionnaire provided. They argued that 1) the marking system feedback technique is useful in writing activities, 2) the technique can help them in

correcting errors in sentences, 3) the technique makes them better understand grammar in English, 4) the technique makes them more careful in composing sentences, and 5) the technique motivates them to improve their writing abilities or skills.

## CONCLUSION

The two cycles action research on the effort to improve the students' writing skill using the *marking system feedback* technique shows positive results. The technique of marking system feedback in writing can improve students' writing ability. The students' works were scored based on the five aspects namely content, organization, grammar, vocabulary, and spelling and punctuation. The students' improvement on those writing aspect clearly shown by the mean score that rose from 63.65 at the poor category, 73.65 at the fair category, to 81.35 at the good category.

In addition, based on the results of the questionnaire, it was found that students gave positive responses to the application of these techniques in writing. students tended to think that the use of the marking system feedback technique could help them correct errors in their writing, make them more thorough in writing sentences, and could motivate them to improve their writing skills.

By referring to the results and conclusions in this study, the researcher suggests that English teachers apply the *marking system feedback* technique to improve the students' writing skills. Feedback from the teacher is very necessary for the improvement of students' writing results. The choice of the suitable materials and the various activities carried out in the teaching and learning of writing skill will interest and motivate the students to write.

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