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English Teacher's Written Corrective Feedback on Students with Intellectual Disabilities' Writing Assignments: A Case Study

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Abstract. Written corrective feedback plays an important role in supporting writing development, yet limited attention has been given to how it is adapted for students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive EFL classrooms. This study aims to examine the types of written corrective feedback provided by an English teacher and to explain how feedback is adapted to meet students' cognitive and emotional needs. Employing a qualitative case study design, data were collected from eighteen writing artifacts produced by three students with intellectual disabilities and one semi-structured interview with the teacher. Document analysis was conducted using Ellis's feedback typology, while interview data were analyzed thematically to interpret pedagogical reasoning. The findings reveal a strong predominance of direct feedback, supported by selective correction, concrete modeling, and affective language. These practices reflect feedback adaptation that regulates cognitive demand, provides clear instructional support, and sustains student motivation. The study concludes that effective written corrective feedback in inclusive EFL contexts prioritizes functional meaning, clarity, and emotional safety to support meaningful participation in writing activities.

Keywords: *Affective support, inclusive EFL, intellectual disabilities, written corrective feedback*

Introduction

Writing is a central skill in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learning because it enables learners to express ideas, develop reasoning, and communicate meaning through written texts. In EFL classrooms, writing involves not only linguistic accuracy but also the ability to construct meaning in a structured and purposeful manner (Harmer, 2004; Hyland, 2003). This process becomes more complex in inclusive education contexts, particularly when students with intellectual disabilities (ID) are involved. According to the American Psychiatric Association (2013), intellectual disability refers to a developmental condition characterized by significant limitations in both intellectual functioning and adaptive behavior across conceptual, social, and practical domains. In educational settings, students with ID often experience challenges related to memory, attention, abstract reasoning, and language processing, which influence how they engage with learning tasks and instructional input (Rodgers & Loveall, 2022). As a result, writing assignments for students with ID commonly emphasize simple and functional meaning rather than complex textual structures, prioritizing participation, comprehensibility, and task completion over length or linguistic sophistication (van Kraayenoord et al., 2009). Within such inclusive contexts, written corrective feedback (WCF) plays an important role in mediating students' access to writing activities by providing concrete guidance through written signs, models, or brief comments that support error

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recognition, revision, and gradual development of written language (Ellis, 2009; Hattie & Timperley, 2007).

A growing body of recent research in EFL writing shows that teachers' written corrective feedback plays a significant role in shaping students' writing accuracy, engagement, and motivation. While earlier studies established the pedagogical value of feedback in general EFL contexts (Carless, 2020; Lee, 2008), more recent work emphasizes how feedback clarity, focus, and affective sensitivity influence learners' engagement with writing tasks. Fryer and Leenknecht (2023) argue that clear and purposeful feedback supports students' self-regulation and sustained involvement in revision. Similarly, Mangrio et al. (2025) report that focused feedback helps learners attend to key language problems without feeling overwhelmed. Research has also begun to examine the emotional dimension of written corrective feedback. Bhuana and Fauziah (2021) demonstrate that poorly framed feedback may cause affective damage, reducing learners' confidence and willingness to revise. From a socio cognitive perspective, Ismail, Nasri, and Salem (2023) show that students' engagement with written feedback depends not only on correction type but also on how feedback is perceived and processed by learners. Along this line, Saeli, Rahmati, and Koltovskaia (2023) highlight that feedback practices which consider learners' linguistic and emotional backgrounds foster more positive affective engagement. Together, these recent studies suggest that effective written corrective feedback involves not only linguistic correction but also careful attention to clarity, emotional impact, and learner engagement.

Despite these advances, important gaps remain in research on written corrective feedback in inclusive EFL classrooms, particularly for students with intellectual disabilities. Recent global scholarship has expanded the scope of WCF research to include feedback literacy, affective engagement, and technology assisted feedback practices (Evmenova et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2025; Zhou, 2025). However, much of this work continues to focus on learners without disabilities or on higher education contexts. Studies involving students with intellectual disabilities in inclusive settings tend to prioritize instructional interventions, assistive technologies, or general teaching strategies rather than examining teachers' written feedback practices in detail (Horn, 2021). Although earlier work has noted the potential of structured support and explicit modeling for this population, empirical attention to written corrective feedback as a situated instructional practice remains limited. In the Indonesian context, recent studies document challenges faced by EFL teachers in inclusive classrooms, especially in managing curriculum demands alongside students' diverse cognitive and emotional needs (Dalilan et al., 2021; Utami et al., 2021). Nevertheless, there is still a lack of empirical research that closely examines how English teachers provide and adapt written corrective feedback on writing assignments specifically designed for students with intellectual disabilities. This gap indicates a need for context-sensitive studies that explore written feedback as an instructional action shaped by teachers' pedagogical reasoning in inclusive EFL classrooms.

To address this gap, the present study examines teachers' written corrective feedback as situated instructional practices in inclusive EFL classrooms involving students with intellectual disabilities in Indonesia. Rather than focusing on instructional methods or learning outcomes, the study conceptualizes written feedback as a pedagogical action through which teachers mediate learning and respond to students' cognitive and linguistic needs. Drawing on sociocultural theory, written feedback is understood as mediated support that functions as scaffolding, enabling learners to perform writing tasks with guidance before gradually moving toward greater independence (Vygotsky, 1978). At the same time, Cognitive Load Theory provides a complementary lens by explaining how instructional support must remain cognitively manageable for learners with limited working memory and processing capacity (Sweller, 1988). From this combined perspective, written corrective feedback is viewed as instructional scaffolding that both mediates learning and regulates cognitive demands. The analysis therefore, focuses on adapted writing assignments such as sentence completion, guided sentence writing, copying with modification, and short

functional writing, which produce observable written products and offer concrete contexts for examining how feedback is formulated and adjusted.

Guided by this theoretical framing, the study addresses two research questions: (1) What types of written corrective feedback do English teachers provide on students' writing assignments? and (2) How do teachers adapt their written feedback strategies to meet the specific needs of students with intellectual disabilities? By examining written corrective feedback as mediated and cognitively regulated instruction, this study contributes to EFL writing and inclusive education in several ways. Theoretically, it extends discussions of feedback by positioning written corrective feedback not only as linguistic correction but also as instructional scaffolding that supports students' engagement while regulating cognitive demands in inclusive classrooms (Sweller, 1988; Vygotsky, 1978). Pedagogically, the study demonstrates how teachers adapt written feedback in real classroom conditions, where students with intellectual disabilities work on structured and functional writing assignments such as sentence completion and guided sentence writing. Practically, the findings offer implications for teacher education and professional development by illustrating feedback practices that emphasize clarity, accessibility, and encouragement to support students' participation in writing activities within inclusive EFL settings.

Theoretical Framework

English Writing Assignments for Students with Intellectual Disabilities

In inclusive EFL classrooms, writing assignments for students with intellectual disabilities (ID) are commonly designed as adapted and scaffolded tasks rather than open ended composition activities. From the perspective of functional literacy, writing assignments are intended to support meaningful participation in written communication and everyday language use by prioritizing clarity, familiarity, and task completion (van Kraayenoord et al., 2009). Within this framework, assignments are defined as structured writing tasks that produce visible written output and allow teacher guidance through modeling, prompts, and written feedback. Bakry and Emam (2024) explain that explicit and interactive writing instruction relies on assignments that break down writing into manageable steps, enabling learners to engage with written language through guided practice rather than independent text production. Similarly, Widajati and Mahmudah (2022) emphasize the role of prompt scaffolding in designing assignments for students with intellectual disabilities, where tasks are segmented and supported to match learners' cognitive characteristics. Research on instructional scaffolding further shows that writing assignments can take different forms, such as sentence completion, guided sentence writing, copying with modification, and short functional writing related to familiar contexts, all of which reduce cognitive load while maintaining instructional value (Wu & Alrabah, 2023). In inclusive writing pedagogy, teachers act as facilitators who select and adapt these types of assignments to support meaning construction and participation rather than focusing on linguistic complexity alone (Davidova, 2024). These assignment types provide appropriate instructional contexts for written corrective feedback in inclusive EFL classrooms.

Written Corrective Feedback as an Instructional Scaffolding Strategy

Written corrective feedback (WCF) in EFL writing can be understood as instructional support that operates through both sociocultural mediation and cognitive regulation. From a sociocultural perspective, feedback functions as mediated interaction in which teachers guide learners within their zone of proximal development, providing scaffolding that helps students perform writing tasks with assistance before gradually developing independence (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Vygotsky, 1978). From a cognitive perspective, WCF facilitates noticing of linguistic problems and supports learning through focused attention and reflection (Ellis, 2009). These two lenses are complementary: while sociocultural theory explains the pedagogical function of feedback as mediation, Cognitive Load Theory explains how such support must be designed to remain cognitively manageable for learners with limited working

memory and slower processing speed (Sweller, 1988). Ellis (2009) classifies WCF into direct, indirect, and metalinguistic forms, which differ in explicitness and cognitive demand. For students with intellectual disabilities (ID), feedback therefore needs to be explicit, focused, and closely aligned with task demands to avoid overload. Empirical studies show that simplified comments, guided modeling, and limited correction scope enhance engagement and accuracy (Gadd et al., 2019; Park et al., 2017; Rodgers & Datchuk, 2020). Thus, in inclusive classrooms, WCF functions as scaffolding that both mediates learning and regulates cognitive load (Ariyani et al., 2025; Huang et al., 2023).

Teachers' Perceptions and Feedback Adaptation in Inclusive Classrooms

In inclusive EFL classrooms, teachers' written corrective feedback is shaped not only by instructional techniques but also by their internal pedagogical reasoning. Within the teacher cognition framework, instructional decisions are understood as products of teachers' professional knowledge, beliefs, and situated interpretations of classroom conditions rather than as purely technical responses to student error (Borg, 2006; Li, 2020). In this perspective, teachers' perceptions function as a cognitive process through which they interpret learners' abilities, task demands, and instructional value, guiding judgments about what is pedagogically appropriate and cognitively manageable for particular learners. Empirical studies indicate that positive perceptions toward a teaching strategy led to more consistent and purposeful classroom implementation, whereas negative perceptions may constrain instructional choices (Daulay et al., 2025). Shulman's (1987) model further explains how these interpretations are transformed into instructional action through processes of comprehension, transformation, and evaluation. In inclusive settings, research shows that teachers adapt feedback by simplifying language, limiting the scope of correction, and prioritizing encouragement to sustain engagement and task completion (Huang et al., 2023; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). These adaptations reflect pedagogical decisions grounded in teachers' cognitive interpretation of learners' needs rather than isolated preferences.

Material and Method

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative case study design to examine how an English teacher provides and adapts written corrective feedback (WCF) on writing assignments produced by students with intellectual disabilities in an inclusive EFL context. Qualitative case study research is appropriate for investigating instructional practices situated in real classroom settings, as it allows for in depth exploration of how pedagogical actions are shaped by contextual and cognitive factors (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Yin, 2018). Working within an interpretive research paradigm, the study focused on understanding the teacher's pedagogical reasoning and meaning making underlying her written feedback practices. This perspective is consistent with contemporary views of teacher cognition, which conceptualize classroom actions as products of professional knowledge, beliefs, and situated judgment rather than as isolated techniques (Borg, 2006; Li, 2020). To connect observable feedback products with the teacher's explanations of why feedback was provided in particular ways, the research design integrated document analysis and a semi structured interview, a combination widely used in recent qualitative classroom-based studies (Bowen, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2021; Kallio et al., 2016).

Research Site and Participants

The study was conducted in a government-accredited inclusive junior high school in North Sumatra, Indonesia, specifically in two Grade 9 English classrooms (referred to as Class A and Class B) serving students with and without identified learning needs. Class A included one student with intellectual disabilities, while Class B included two students with intellectual disabilities. The site was selected to represent an inclusive EFL context in which teachers are expected to meet curriculum targets while accommodating diverse cognitive profiles within the

same classroom. Participants were selected using criterion-based purposive sampling to ensure alignment with the research focus (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Yin, 2018). One English teacher, referred to as Teacher A, participated as the primary participant. She had more than three years of experience teaching English writing in inclusive classrooms and had regularly worked with students formally identified as having intellectual disabilities. In addition, the three students with intellectual disabilities embedded in these classes, referred to as Student A, Student B, and Student C, were included as sources of writing artifacts. Their identification was based on documented assessment records conducted by certified educational psychologists prior to placement, rather than on teacher judgment alone. Ethical procedures were implemented to protect participants, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the use of pseudonyms, in line with current qualitative research standards (Creswell & Poth, 2023; Yin, 2018). Institutional permission was also obtained to access students' workbooks as instructional artifacts.

Data Collection

This study drew on two primary data sources, including students' writing artifacts and a semi-structured interview. The writing data consisted of English workbooks produced by three students with intellectual disabilities (Student A, Student B, and Student C) over one academic year, from the odd semester of 2025 to the even semester of 2026. These workbooks were treated as authentic instructional artifacts (Martínez et al., 2012) and examined using document analysis techniques (Bowen, 2009). From each workbook, six comparable tasks were selected, resulting in eighteen writing artifacts that included sentence completion, guided sentence writing, copying with modification, and short functional writing. The indicators used in the analysis focused on the form and function of feedback following Ellis's (2009) typology. This included the presence of direct correction, indirect indication of error, and metalinguistic explanation, which were demonstrated through teacher annotations such as rewritten forms, error markings, brief comments, or guiding questions. Data collection proceeded in two stages. First, the artifacts were collected to identify feedback patterns. Second, a semi-structured interview lasting 45 to 60 minutes was conducted in Bahasa Indonesia using stimulated recall to explore the teacher's pedagogical reasoning (Kallio et al., 2016; Miles et al., 2014; Yin, 2018).

Data Analysis

The collected data were analyzed using a qualitative thematic approach based on the interactive model by Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña (2014). To reflect current practice, thematic analysis was applied as a flexible method to identify patterns across the data sources (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The analysis combined deductive and inductive procedures to address the two research questions. For the first question, the written corrective feedback in the eighteen writing artifacts was analyzed deductively using Ellis's (2009) typology. This process classified the feedback into direct, indirect, and metalinguistic forms. For the second question, the interview transcript was analyzed inductively to generate themes regarding the teacher's pedagogical reasoning. This analysis utilized a teacher cognition framework to explain how professional knowledge is transformed into instructional decisions (Borg, 2006; Li, 2020; Shulman, 1987). Following Miles et al. (2014), the process proceeded through data condensation, data display, and conclusion drawing. Matrices were created to relate feedback types to pedagogical considerations. Finally, conclusions were verified through iterative comparison and triangulation between the writing artifacts and interview data to strengthen analytical credibility (Bowen, 2009; Braun & Clarke, 2021; Yin, 2018).

Results and Discussion

Results

Types of Written Corrective Feedback Provided

This section reports the types of written corrective feedback identified in students' writing assignments. The analysis is based on eighteen writing artifacts produced by three students with intellectual disabilities, referred to as Student A, Student B, and Student C. All writing artifacts were examined deductively using Ellis's (2009) typology, which classifies written corrective feedback into direct feedback, indirect feedback, and metalinguistic feedback. Across the selected assignments, a total of 44 feedback instances were identified. Table 1 presents the frequency and distribution of each feedback type across the three students and provides an overall picture of the feedback patterns observed. The table shows that feedback was not evenly distributed across types, indicating a clear preference in the teacher's written responses. This overview serves as an entry point for understanding how written corrective feedback was structured and prioritized in the classroom context before examining how these patterns appeared in the students' actual writing products.

Table 1.
Frequency of Written Corrective Feedback Types

Feedback Type	Student A	Student B	Student C	Total
Direct Feedback	11	8	10	29
Metalinguistic Feedback	4	4	5	13
Indirect Feedback	2	0	0	2
Total	**17**	**12**	**15**	**44**

The data in Table 1 reveal a strong dominance of direct feedback in the teacher's written corrective practices. Out of 44 feedback instances, 29 are categorized as direct feedback, representing approximately two thirds of all feedback provided. This pattern appears consistently across all three students, although the total number of corrections varies slightly among them. Student A received the highest number of direct feedback instances, followed by Student C and Student B. Metalinguistic feedback represents the second most frequent category, with 13 instances distributed relatively evenly across the three students. In contrast, indirect feedback occurs only twice in the entire dataset and is found exclusively in Student A's writing. No instances of indirect feedback were identified in the assignments of Student B or Student C. Overall, this distribution indicates that the teacher relied primarily on explicit correction, while indirect signaling of errors was rarely used. The consistency of this pattern across students suggests that the choice of feedback type was guided by instructional preference rather than individual learner differences.

The dominance of direct feedback is also evident in the students' writing artifacts, where corrections are presented in a clear and concrete manner. This pattern can be observed in Student B's writing shown in Figure 1, where the teacher corrected spelling errors by directly replacing the incorrect forms with the correct ones within the students' sentences. For example, the student wrote *byutiful* instead of *beautiful*, and the teacher crossed out the incorrect spelling and wrote the correct word directly above it. A similar correction appears when the student wrote *fells* and the teacher replaced it with *feels* using the same technique. These corrections are positioned immediately on the student's original writing, allowing the student to see both the error and the correct form at the same time. This form of feedback provides an explicit model without requiring the student to interpret symbols or infer the correction independently. The use of such direct correction reflects a feedback practice that prioritizes clarity and immediate comprehensibility, which aligns with the teacher's explanation during the interview that students with intellectual disabilities need concrete and visible guidance to complete writing tasks successfully.

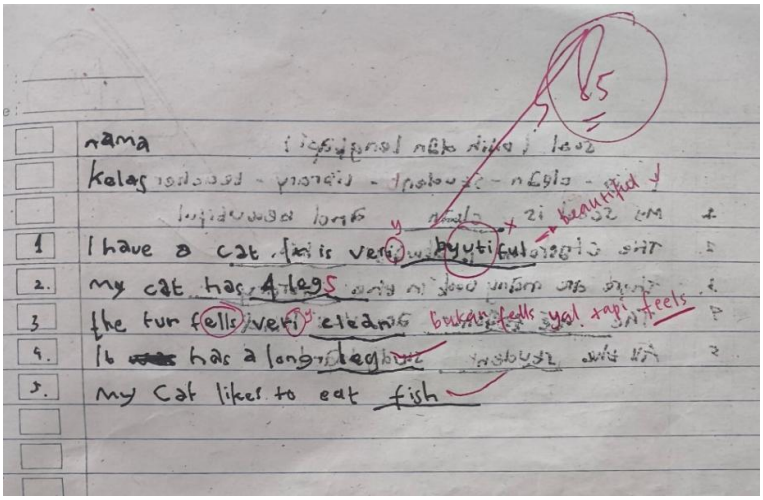

Figure 1.
Example of direct written corrective feedback on spelling (Student B, Task 1)

Adaptation of Feedback to Students with Intellectual Disabilities

Reducing Cognitive Load through Selectivity

The findings show that the teacher deliberately limits the amount of written corrective feedback provided to students with intellectual disabilities. This selective approach reflects her awareness of the students' limited processing capacity and their tendency to become overwhelmed when too many corrections appear on a single page. Rather than correcting every error, the teacher prioritizes clarity and manageability in her written responses. During the interview, she explained that excessive correction may discourage students from continuing their work because it creates visual overload and reduces confidence. This explanation indicates that selectivity functions as an intentional instructional strategy rather than a lack of attention to students' errors. By limiting the amount of written input, the teacher aims to help students remain focused on the task and sustain their willingness to engage in writing activities.

> *"If I correct everything, they will get tired looking at their book. They will feel like they cannot do anything right."*
> (**Teacher A – Interview #1**)

This principle of selectivity is evident in the students' writing artifacts, where the teacher consistently prioritizes key errors that affect sentence meaning or task completion while avoiding excessive markings. In Student A's writing shown in Figure 2, the teacher focused on a limited number of errors instead of correcting all inaccuracies on the page. For example, when the student misspelled the word *soft*, the teacher circled the word and added a short metalinguistic comment, "*jangan lupa satu huruf dibelakang ya!*", reminding the student to add the missing letter. This correction is specific and concise, addressing only the most relevant issue. In contrast, although the student used *Is* incorrectly in another sentence, the teacher did not mark every possible error. By correcting only selected elements, the teacher reduced the amount of visual input on the page and helped the student concentrate on manageable aspects of the task rather than feeling overwhelmed.

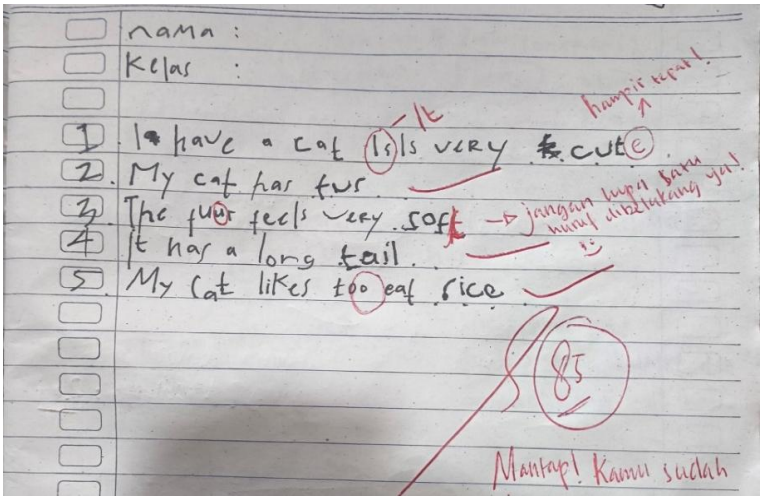

Figure 2.
Selective written corrective feedback focusing on key errors (Student A, Task 1)

The selective feedback practices illustrated in Figure 2 align closely with the teacher's explanation that written comments for students with intellectual disabilities should remain simple and limited. She emphasized that feedback should consist of one or two words that directly indicate the problem so that students can process the information more easily. Similar patterns of selective correction were observed in the workbooks of Student B and Student C, indicating that this approach was applied consistently across students rather than selectively for individual cases. Across the analyzed tasks, the teacher regulated the amount of written input by focusing on essential errors and leaving minor mistakes uncorrected when necessary. These findings suggest that selective written corrective feedback functions as an adaptive strategy to manage cognitive demand while maintaining students' engagement and supporting continued participation in writing tasks.

Scaffolding through Concrete Modeling

The findings indicate that the teacher relies primarily on concrete modeling to support students' writing development. She explained that indirect hints, symbols, or correction codes are often too abstract for students with intellectual disabilities to understand independently. Rather than expecting students to infer the correct form on their own, the teacher provides explicit examples that can be directly seen and copied. During the interview, she emphasized that students need visible and concrete input in order to continue working on their writing tasks. According to her explanation, abstract feedback may cause students to stop progressing because they often lack the linguistic resources to self-correct based on codes alone. By offering the correct answer immediately, the teacher helps them move forward step by step without breaking their focus. This perspective shows that concrete modeling is used intentionally as an instructional scaffold that reduces uncertainty and supports students' ability to complete writing tasks with confidence.

> *"These children need something concrete. If it is too abstract, they will not move forward. With direct examples, they can see, copy, and proceed."*
>
> **(Teacher A – Interview #2)**

Providing the correct form directly on students' writing functions as instructional support that clarifies task expectations and minimizes confusion. This practice is clearly illustrated in Student B's writing shown in Figure 3, where the teacher corrected spelling errors by replacing the incorrect forms within the student's own sentences. For instance, the student

wrote *My Scool*, attempting to spell the word phonetically, and the teacher crossed out the incorrect spelling and wrote *school* directly above it. A similar pattern appears in the second sentence, where the student wrote *Classrom* and the teacher replaced it with the correct spelling *Classroom* using the same method. In both cases, the accurate word is embedded in the original sentence, allowing the student to immediately see what needs to be changed. By presenting corrections in this concrete and visible way, the teacher removed the need for abstract explanation and enabled the student to rely on direct visual models to revise and continue the task.

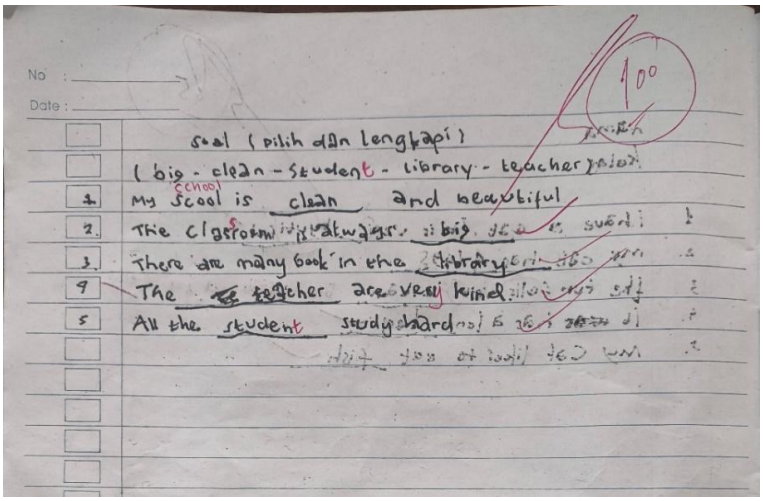

Figure 3.
Direct modeling through explicit correction in students' writing (Student B, Task 2)

The consistent application of concrete modeling in this task demonstrates a pedagogical priority on visual reinforcement over grammatical testing. As seen in the artifact, the student tends to write words based on how they sound, such as *Scool* for *school*, which indicates a gap between their phonetic awareness and orthographic knowledge. The teacher bridges this gap not by marking the answer as wrong, but by superimposing the correct visual form directly over the error. This technique allows the student to compare their phonetic attempt with the standard English spelling instantly. Furthermore, this direct intervention serves a dual purpose: it corrects the immediate error and creates a correct visual record that the student can review later. By ensuring that the final written product is legible and accurate through her handwriting, the teacher transforms the student's workbook into a reliable learning resource rather than just a collection of marked mistakes.

Affective Support and Motivation

The findings indicate that affective support is a central component of the teacher's written corrective feedback. The teacher places strong emphasis on maintaining students' confidence and willingness to participate in writing activities. Rather than treating feedback solely as a tool for correcting linguistic errors, she views it as assistance that helps students continue working on their tasks. During the interview, she explained that for students with intellectual disabilities, the emotional impact of correction is as important as the correction itself. Feedback that is perceived as harsh or judgmental may discourage students and lead them to stop engaging with the task. This perspective shows that the teacher intentionally considers students' emotional responses when providing written feedback, aiming to create a supportive environment that encourages persistence rather than fear of making mistakes.

> *"Feedback for them is assistance, not punishment. If they feel judged, they will close their books. I want them to feel that I am helping them build the sentence, not blaming them for the mistake."*
>
> **(Teacher A – Interview #3)**

This emphasis on emotional support is clearly reflected in the tone and wording of the written comments found in the students' workbooks. In Student A's writing shown in Figure 4, the teacher responded to an incomplete sentence with supportive language rather than direct rejection. When the student wrote "*My Book is buk*" without adding an adjective, the teacher did not mark the sentence as wrong. Instead, she wrote a guiding question directly on the page, "*bukunya warna apa sayang? Misalnya: Red*", which prompts the student to continue the sentence. The use of the word *sayang* creates a gentle and caring tone, while the example *Red* provides concrete guidance on what to add. This combination of a question, an example, and affectionate language invites the student to continue writing and frames correction as help rather than failure.

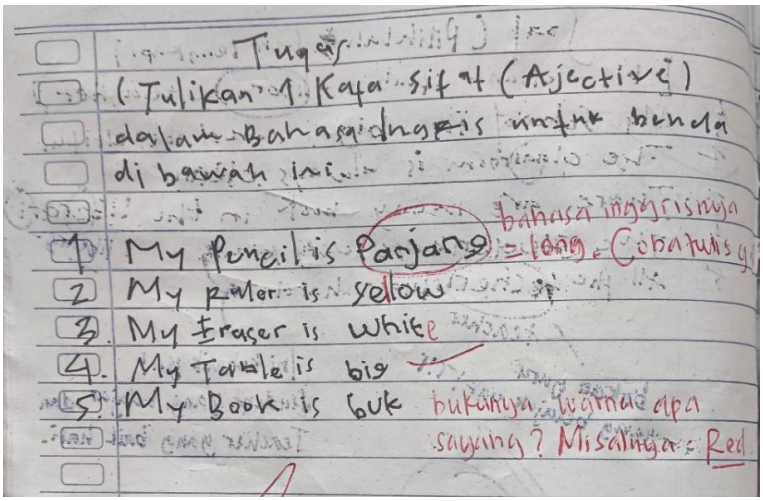

Figure 4.
Affective written feedback using supportive language in a writing task (Student A, Task 3)

Similar patterns of affective support were observed across the writing tasks of Student B and Student C, indicating that this approach was applied consistently rather than selectively. The teacher frequently used soft expressions and encouraging wording to reduce students' anxiety when responding to errors. Through this approach, correction is reframed as guidance instead of criticism, allowing students to feel safe when making mistakes. These findings suggest that written corrective feedback in this classroom serves not only to address errors but also to sustain students' motivation and emotional comfort during the writing process. By maintaining a supportive tone, the teacher helps students remain engaged with writing tasks and continue participating despite their difficulties.

Discussion

The findings of this study provide insight into how written corrective feedback is enacted and adapted in an inclusive EFL classroom for students with intellectual disabilities. With regard to the first research question, the findings demonstrate a clear predominance of direct written corrective feedback over indirect and metalinguistic forms in the inclusive EFL classroom studied. This result contrasts with recommendations commonly found in general EFL writing literature, where indirect feedback is often encouraged to promote learner

autonomy and self correction (Ellis, 2009; Lee, 2008). However, in the context of students with intellectual disabilities, the dominance of direct feedback appears pedagogically appropriate rather than problematic. Previous studies have noted that learners with intellectual disabilities often require explicit instructional support to engage successfully with writing tasks (Gadd et al., 2019; Rodgers & Datchuk, 2020). The present findings therefore confirm that feedback practices effective in mainstream EFL contexts may not be directly transferable to inclusive settings. Instead of fostering independence through inference, direct feedback in this context functions as a necessary form of support that enables students to participate meaningfully in writing activities.

The predominance of direct feedback can be explained through the lens of Cognitive Load Theory. Students with intellectual disabilities commonly experience limitations in working memory, attention, and abstract reasoning, which affect their ability to process complex instructional input (American Psychiatric Association, 2013; Sweller, 1988). When feedback requires learners to infer correct forms from symbols, codes, or unmarked errors, it may increase extraneous cognitive load and hinder engagement with the task. The findings suggest that by providing the correct form explicitly, the teacher reduces unnecessary processing demands and allows students to focus on meaning construction and pattern recognition. This interpretation supports earlier research emphasizing that explicit modelling and reduced cognitive demand are crucial for writing instruction among learners with intellectual disabilities (Rodgers & Loveall, 2022). Thus, direct written corrective feedback operates not as overcorrection, but as cognitive regulation that makes writing tasks accessible and manageable.

Addressing the second research question, the findings show that written corrective feedback functions as instructional scaffolding that is continuously adapted to students' cognitive and emotional needs. From a sociocultural perspective, feedback serves as mediated support that enables learners to perform tasks beyond their independent ability (Vygotsky, 1978). In many mainstream EFL classrooms, scaffolding is expected to fade as learners gain autonomy. However, the present study suggests that for students with intellectual disabilities, scaffolding tends to remain stable rather than gradually withdrawn. Concrete modelling through direct feedback provides a consistent visual reference that supports task completion and retention. At the same time, the teacher occasionally introduced limited guiding questions to encourage meaning construction, but only when she judged that students were ready to process additional input. This selective adjustment reflects pedagogical judgment rather than routine practice, showing how scaffolding operates as a flexible mechanism rather than a fixed technique.

Beyond answering the research questions, this study offers a conceptual contribution by extending existing understandings of written corrective feedback in inclusive EFL contexts. This study extends existing theories by proposing that effective written corrective feedback for students with intellectual disabilities is guided by the integration of three interrelated principles. First, cognitive regulation requires feedback to minimize extraneous load through selectivity and explicitness, explaining the dominance of direct correction (Sweller, 1988). Second, instructional scaffolding prioritizes concrete modelling over abstract prompting, clarifying when explicit correction is pedagogically necessary and when limited prompting can be introduced (Vygotsky, 1978). Third, affective mediation positions emotional safety as a condition for cognitive engagement, highlighting the role of supportive language in sustaining participation. Unlike previous studies that focus primarily on feedback types or learner outcomes, this framework emphasizes teachers situated decision making as the mechanism through which feedback is adapted in inclusive classrooms (Borg, 2006; Shulman, 1987).

Finally, the findings underscore the continued relevance of human mediated feedback in current debates on writing instruction. While recent research increasingly explores technology assisted feedback and artificial intelligence in EFL writing (Evmenova et al., 2024; Yao et al., 2025; Zhou, 2025), this study highlights that effective feedback for

students with intellectual disabilities depends on teachers' contextual judgment and relational practices. The use of gentle address terms and encouraging comments illustrates how emotional safety influences learners' willingness to engage with correction, supporting Hattie and Timperley's (2007) argument that feedback is effective only when it is accepted by learners and directed toward the task rather than the self. In inclusive EFL contexts, where cognitive and emotional vulnerabilities intersect, written corrective feedback emerges not as a technical procedure but as a relational pedagogical practice that integrates cognitive regulation, instructional scaffolding, and affective support to promote functional literacy.

Conclusion

This study concludes that written corrective feedback in inclusive EFL classrooms operates as adaptive instructional mediation shaped by teachers' pedagogical reasoning rather than as a purely technical response to student error. The findings indicate that feedback adaptation for students with intellectual disabilities is realized through the selective use of direct correction, concrete modeling, and affective support, which together regulate cognitive demand and sustain students' engagement in writing tasks. These practices suggest that effective feedback in inclusive contexts prioritizes functional meaning, clarity, and emotional safety to support meaningful participation in written communication. Pedagogically, the study implies that English teachers in inclusive settings should align feedback strategies with learners' processing capacities and treat encouragement as an essential component of instructional support. However, this study is limited by its focus on a single teacher in one inclusive school context, which restricts broader analytic generalization. In addition, the analysis reflects teachers' perspectives rather than students' interpretations of feedback. Future research is therefore recommended to examine written corrective feedback across diverse inclusive contexts, involve multiple teachers, and explore students' responses to adapted feedback in order to better understand its long-term impact on writing development in inclusive EFL classrooms.

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