

Web-based Writing Assessment or Reward-based Writing Assessment: Which Gives Better Impact on Student Writing Motivation

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Abstract: In the teaching and learning of English writing, learning motivation to write is a central and challenging issue as the writing complexities often discourage students. Slow and unclear teacher assessment feedbacks also frequently made them disappointed. This study tried to provide a web-based and a reward-based writing assessment in the State Polytechnic of Batam Indonesia to see their impact on student writing motivation. Data collection included surveys and students interview. The study found that both treatments have a positive and significant impact on students writing motivation. It also revealed how they might increase motivation to write and which of them is more effective in increasing writing learning motivation. Implication and suggestion due to the study findings are also presented.

1 INTRODUCTION

English writing is an important skill, but its teaching and learning are very challenging as it is considered difficult to master, even for first language (L1) learners (Nacira, 2010). Second language (L2) writing learners have more difficulties since they may find that words are different when spoken and written, and languages differ in grammar. Some international students in Australia were found to have serious difficulties in their study due to their limited writing proficiency (Bayley, Fearnside, Arnol, Misiano, & Rottura, 2002; Bretag, Horrocks, & Smith, 2002; Sawir, 2005). When students finish their study and move to the workforce, writing skills remain one of the determining factors of a successful career. Inadequate writing proficiency has provided serious difficulties for some university graduates, produced strain in doing work related to writing skills, and often caused misunderstanding, and the company's clients had developed negative perceptions of its competence (Blake & Bly, 1991; Bonwell & Eison, 1991; Fraigley & Miller, 1982; Garner, 2012; Greavu, 2019).

Writing is not only difficult for students to learn but also complex for teachers or lecturers to assess. This problem is many times aggravated by the education institution environment. The big size of the

class both which is still common in many developing countries in Asia (Awan & Kamran, 2018; Cotner, Fall, Wick, Walker, & Baepler, 2008; Exley & Dennick, 2004), includes in Indonesia and in the research site, the State Polytechnic of Batam (*Polibatam*). Teachers or lecturers then have to assess so many pieces of students' writings that potentially leads to late and low quality of assessment feedback. This could worsen students motivation to learn writing. There is probably an essential need to improve the writing assessment system to maintain or even increase students' writing motivation.

This study provided a web-based and a reward-based writing assessment and sought whether they could, and if they could, how they increase students writing motivation. The use of the web-based was expected to cut the turnaround time of students' writings assessments that would probably make them keener to learn writing. While the use of the reward system was expected to increase students' enthusiasm to write.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

Learning motition is a central issue in education. In learning complex subjects such as English writing,

the students may potentially lose their motivation. These issues have long become the concern of English educators and researchers. A long series of research has been done in the endeavors to find better ways to increase students' writing motivation includes the effort to improve the writing assessment. It comprises the areas of learning motivation and writing motivation, writing assessment complexities, information technology utilization in writing assessment, and reward use in teaching instruction and in writing instruction.

2.1 Learning Motivation and Writing Motivation

Motivation to learn is a central feature and one of the most challenging issues in education (Filgona, Sakiyo, Gwany, & Okoronka, 2020; Hadfield & Dörnyei, 2013; Hardré, Crowson, Debacker, & White, 2007; Reeve, 1996; Ryan & Connell, 1989). Most of the literature shows that learning motivation correlates positively to learning performance. Some studies conclude that the level of motivation to learn is proportional to the level of academic achievement (Amrai, Motlagh, Zalani, & Parhon, 2011; Tella, 2007; Tokan & Imakulata, 2019). The studies in language learning and teaching area also show the same result. It was found, for example, that in foreign language learning, students who have a stronger desire to learn tend to get a higher language competencies increase (Al-Hazemi, 2000; Bećirović, 2017; Li & Pan, 2009; Solak, 2012). Similarly, Al-Otaibi (2004) observed that students with higher learning motivation tend to learn more effectively and spend more time in the effort to achieve learning goals. These clearly show that motivation is very central in improving students' language competencies (Alizadeh, 2016; Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016; Khansir & Dehkordi, 2017).

2.2 Writing and Writing Assessment Complexities

Literature shows that the practice of writing assessment was accomplished either directly or indirectly, meaning that a student's writing skills can be measured from either his ability to write an authentic writing or from his capability to perform different language competence separately, such as grammar or vocabulary without having to write an authentic writing (Weigle, 2002). In writing teaching-learning practice, writing performance is assessed in summative and formative ways (Gardner, 2012). Summative assessment is usually done at the end of a

learning period to measure to what extent students able to write. In contrast, formative assessment is done within a learning period to develop students writing. In the formative assessment practice, Hattie and Timperley (2007) highlighted the importance of providing feedback as the heart of the writing process-oriented assessment.

Providing feedback to student writing is also another particular challenge for teachers in the teaching of writing. The complexities of writing assessment can lead to delays in the return of student work. This problem is also aggravated by the challenge of big class sizes, which is still prevalent in many developing countries in Asia (Awan & Kamran, 2018; Cotner et al., 2008; Exley & Dennick, 2004) includes Indonesia. Teachers then should face complex assessments of abundant pieces of students' writing tasks regularly. This problem leads to low-quality feedback, slow feedback, or even no feedback (Chang, 2007). It enhances dissatisfaction, brings discouragement to some students, heads to low writing motivation, and finally leads to low writing performance (Nemati, Alavi, Mohebbi, & Masjedlou, 2017). One of the most current solutions that also attracts researchers is the use of technology in writing assessments.

2.3 Information Technology Utilisation in Writing Assessment

Technology has been used in almost all learning activities, including assessment. In the context of writing assessment, one of the well-known uses of technology is automatic writing assessment. The automatic writing assessment is commonly known to be able to give immediate prompt assessments (Chen & Cheng, 2008; Dikli, 2006; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). When students get immediate feedback on what they have written, they are more willing to revise as it is still fresh in their minds, and it supports their motivation to write (Warschauer & Ware, 2006). To some extent, this could be a solution to the problem of the tendency of giving late feedback to students' writings, especially in big-size classes that often discourage students and leads to low writing performance (Nemati et al., 2017). However, automatic writing assessment was also constantly criticized as being very limited in assessing writing context and content (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Huot, 1996; Warschauer & Grimes, 2008). Considering this deficiency and realizing that writing is never free from context, the current study then tests the utilization of the web-based technology system to

facilitate the lecturer to do not only a more timely but also a more comprehensive writing assessment.

2.4 Reward Use in Teaching Instruction and Writing Instruction

The use of reward in teaching instruction remains controversial, as it may potentially damage students' intrinsic motivation if it is perceived as a control tool (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999; Deci, Ryan, & Koestner, 2001). Neuroscience, on the other hand, suggested that the reward would make people repeat the activities beneficial to them and hence it has the potency to promote learning and approach behavior for the pleasures they result in (Martin-Soelch et al., 2001; Rowe, Eckstein, Braver, & Owen, 2008). The positive impact of reward use in teaching instruction on students learning motivation was also shown in many studies. Some research found that the reward given for each novel performance student made can increase creativity, motivation, and learning performance (Cameron, Pierce, Banko, & Gear, 2005; Eisenberger & Armeli, 1997; Eisenberger & Shanock, 2003). In the Indonesian learning context, credit point system reward was found to increase students' motivation to speak in English and to participate in English speaking classes (Widyatmika, 2009). These support the previous study findings that the use of reward is potential to enhance interest, especially of initially less motivated students in initially boring lessons (Cameron, Banko, & Pierce, 2001; Lepper, 1998).

The reward giving practice in writing instruction was also found to have a positive impact on student writing motivation in both L1 (Burieva, 2020; Hansen & Wills, 2014) and L2 (Bouguerne, 2011; Loi & Uyen, 2016). A study result done in the Indonesian context shows that the use of reward and punishment found to increase students' motivation to learn English as a foreign language (Irawati & Syafei, 2016).

3 METHODOLOGY

This research applied a quantitative method (Creswell, 2012) in a quasi-experiment design since it was done in three intact class groups without full randomization to avoid the learning system disruption in the research site (Creswell, 2012; Vogt, 2005).

3.1 Data Sources

The research site was the State Polytechnic of Batam (*Polibatam*), Indonesia, with 3319 students as the study population. Three classes with the most similar characteristics with eighty six students taking English Writing Course in the semester I of the Business Management Department were purposively chosen to become the samples of the study. The demography of the samples can be seen in the following table.

Table 1 Demography of the Research Samples

Class (Marking Treatment)	N	Gender		Age			
		male	fe-male	17 yr	18 yr	19 yr	20 yr
Traditional	30	6	24	0	24	5	1
Web-based	27	11	16	5	15	7	0
Reward-based	29	2	27	4	18	7	0
Total	86	19	67	9	57	19	1

The table above shows that most of the participants were females. Two-thirds of them were twenty years old, others were nineteen years (22%), and the rest were seventeen and twenty years old. Before entering the *Polibatam*, they have got English lessons for a couple of years in their Primary and High School.

3.2 Research Scheme and Design

The research provided and analyzed the impact of three different writing marking treatments on student writing motivation, as can be seen in the research scheme diagram 2 below.

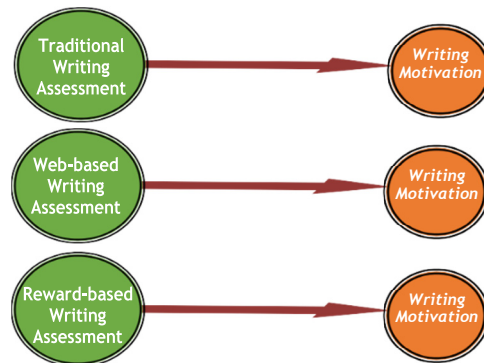


Figure 1> Diagram of The Research Scheme.

The three writing assessment methods above assess students' writing tasks differently. In the Traditional Writing Assessment treatment, student writing is traditionally submitted on paper to lecturers, who read it, write comments on it, assign a grade and then give it back to students. The assessment is accomplished based on the *Polibatam* writing assessment rubric consisting of five elements; content, organization, vocabulary, language use, and mechanics. Then, the second treatment, the Web-based Writing Assessment uses the *Polibatam* e-learning platform, <https://learning.polibatam.ac.id>. Students type their writing tasks in the platform and send them to a lecturer's screen by clicking the upload button. The Lecturer also assesses that tasks on that platform using the same rubric firstly inputted to the platform at the beginning of the Writing Course. In order to grade a student's writing, the lecturer simply needs to click a suitable level column of comment and point from the rubric with the student's submitted writing task appearing above the rubric. The lecturer has to do this for each of the five writing elements. By finishing clicking suitable level of each of the five elements, the web system automatically calculates the score of the student's writing, records the chosen comment for each of the five writing elements and sends it to student's screen on the web. Any particular comment the lecturer wants to make that is not yet covered in the four levels of provided comments, can be typed in the blank box on the very left of the rubric that will be also sent to students screen. The last treatment, the Reward-based Writing Assessment combines the traditional writing marking with a reward system in the form of rank stickers adopted and modified from the Indonesian army ranks order. Each of the weekly writing assignment scores achieved by each student during the English Writing Course was accumulated, and when achieving a certain score total was rewarded with a particular military rank sticker hierarchically from Second Sergeant to General.

The study employed a pretest-posttest design (Creswell, 2012), as can be seen in the table below.

Table 2. Research Design

Pre-test (Before Treatment)	Treatment Groups	Posttest (After Treatment)	Interview
Motivation Survey	Traditional Writing Marking	Motivation Survey	with student representati ves from each treatment group
	Web-based Writing Marking		
	Reward-based Writing Marking		

Student participants taking English Writing Course in each of the three classes were firstly given a motivation survey to map their initial writing motivation level at the beginning of the course before having the treatments. Since the study had to accommodate the real-world design i.e., the class setting in the research site, it purposely chose three classes having the most similar characteristics. The three selected classes then received the three treatments. One class got one treatment, chosen randomly. And by the end of the treatment, the writing motivation of the students was reassessed with a post-test to see their writing motivation scale after following the treatment. The pre-test and the post-test were then analyzed, and the writing motivation increase of each group was calculated and compared, to see how each assessment system impacts the samples' writing motivation. To get measurable deeper more comprehensive data, the pre- and post-test data analysis findings were used to prepare a questions coverage outline of a following one-on-one interview with the student representatives from each of three groups and with the two lecturers teaching in the two classes. One of teachers taught writing in the Traditional and in the Web-based Writing Assessment classes, and the other one in the Web-based Writing Assessment class.

3.3 Research Instruments

The instrument for measuring the students' writing motivation in this study is the modified Academic Writing Motivation Questionnaire (AWMQ) developed by Payne (2012). It consists of 37 statements with five subscales i.e., enjoyment, self-efficacy, instrumentality, recognition, and effort. This instrument of Payne suits this study as it was specifically designed for measuring writing motivation in Academic Writing Course and for university students (which this research is about). As motivation is not a skill – but rather an attitude, which is not going to progressively improve because of a rehearsal process, the same instrument was used to assess the participants' initial and final motivation level (for pre-test and post-test).

For the interview, a questions coverage outline was prepared based on the pre- and post-test data analysis findings. However, it was varied and extended during the interview to get a further and more detailed information from the interview (Creswell, 2012).

The researcher is a member of staff at *Polibatam* but when the project was underway, he was on full academic leave to complete his PhD that he was neither teaching any of the two classes involved, nor

was familiar with any students participating in the research. However, he was indeed involved in the recruitment process of the participants and did take part in the interview as the interviewer.

3.4 Data Analysis

The student motivation level was scored by totaling the score of each respondent's answer to each of the survey statements divided by the total number of the survey statements. There are four response choices to each statement and are scored as follow: Strongly Disagree = 1, Disagree = 2, Agree = 3, and Strongly Agree = 4. The score data were then analyzed using SPSS to conduct descriptive and inferential statistic tests.

The obtained qualitative data, on the other hand, was analyzed by doing theory data coding. It generated some codes such as assessment time, feedback clarity, and the reward treatment. Some other codes were engendered from the five elements of AWMQ used in this research. Those are enjoyment, recognition, instrumentality, self-efficacy, and effort.

4 DATA FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The study found that each of the three writing marking treatments increases the students writing motivation, as can be seen from the Table 4.3 below.

Table 3 Writing Motivation Increase and Paired Sample Test of Each Group

Group	N	Pre-test Mean	Post-test Mean	Increase	Paired Samples Test		
					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Traditional	30	101.50	103.00	1.50	.969	29	.341
Web-based	27	100.33	106.70	6.37	7.156	26	.000
Reward-based	29	100.07	109.52	9.45	9.164	28	.000

The table 3 above clearly shows the mean of pre- and post-writing motivation in the Traditional writing assessment treatment group are very close to each other. The students writing motivation average increase is only 1.50 points from a possible maximum of 148. It is a 1.01% increase before and after the treatment in the group. The t Sig. value of the Traditional writing marking treatment is 0.341, which is bigger than 0.05. It shows that the difference is not

statistically significant. This indicates that the effect of the Traditional writing marking treatment on students writing motivation is not significant.

The Web-based marking treatment makes a positive significant impact on student writing motivation. There is a clear difference between the mean of the writing motivation pre-test and post-test in the Web-based treatment group, as can be seen in the Table 3 above. The students writing motivation has an average increase of 6.37 points from a possible maximum of 148 (4.30%) before and after the treatment in the group. The Sig. value, as can be seen in the Table 3, is 0.000, which is smaller than 0.05, showing that the difference is statistically significant. This indicates that there is a significant effect of the Web-based writing marking treatment on students writing motivation.

The reward-based marking treatment also results in a positive significant impact on student writing motivation. As can be seen in Table 4.3 above, there is a clear difference between the mean of the pre- and the post-writing motivation in the group. The students writing motivation gets an average increase of 9.45 points from a possible maximum of 148 (6.39%) before and after the treatment in the group. The Sig. value, as can be seen in the table is 0.000, which smaller than 0.05, showing that the difference is statistically significant. This indicates that there is a significant effect of the Reward-based writing marking treatment on students writing motivation.

The study found that the Traditional writing assessment has a positive but not significant impact on student writing motivation. The Web-based and the Reward-based, on the other hand, gives a positive and significant impact on student writing motivation. The comparison of the writing motivation increase in the three writing assessment treatment groups can be more clearly seen in the graph below.

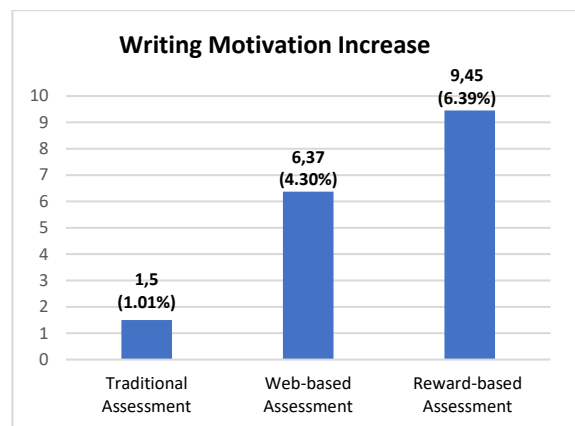


Figure 2: Graph of Student Writing Performance Increase in each of the Writing Assessment Treatment Group.

The graph above clearly shows that the Web-based and the Reward-based writing marking treatment result in a much higher writing motivation increase than the Traditional marking treatment. The Reward-based writing marking treatment, though engenders the highest writing motivation raise of all the three marking treatments.

The study found that the Web-based writing assessment results in a faster assessment turnaround time than the Traditional writing assessment. From the questionnaire and the interview with the student representatives, the assessment turnaround time in the Web-based group averagely took three to four days, while in the Traditional group averagely took a week. This more timely assessment gives a positive impact on students writing motivation as they get satisfied with the assessment promptness and clarity, as can be from a comment uttered by one of the Web-based group interviewees, KUR28, as follows.

In my opinion, my lecture was fast, Sir... Fast, he was fast. For example, I'd ever inputted a wrong one into the web, he then directly made a chat with me personally to remind me and at the same time told me, "this is still wrong, this one, this and this." I was often reminded. I think he was good and always gave a fast respond.

KUR28 clearly expressed her satisfaction with the prompt and clear feedback she got on her writing from her lecturer. As previously explained, the Web-based system is utilized to facilitate the lecturer to do a more effortless and faster assessment. This student contentment with the rapid assessment turnaround time is a typical view among the Web-based class interviewees. Some other said that the feedback they got is clear and sufficient enough to revise their writings. This finding is in line with the results of the previous study, which showed that the use of technology in writing assessment indeed outperform traditional assessment in terms of the speed of providing feedback which can give students pleasure and convenience in managing the sufficient available time to revise their writings (Chen & Cheng, 2008; Dikli, 2006; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). It also supports the previous work of Warschauer and Ware (2006), who observed that students tend to be more enthusiastic with their writing lesson when they get immediate feedback on what they have written. What the students experience in the Traditional class, on the other hand, was different.

The qualitative data finding indicates that the students in the Traditional class are commonly displeased by the lateness and the inadequacy of the feedback given by their lecturer. It can be seen, for

example, from a comment expressed by BAL25, one of the interviewees from the Traditional group, as follows.

In my opinion, firstly, because of this late assessment, not to mention the unclearness of the assessment, the meaning of such a given score why it was far less from expectation, we became lazy. It made us less motivated to write. The following assignments were just written perfunctorily with no more enthusiasm.

It can be seen how the long turnaround time and inadequacy of the assessment demotivates BAL25. This dissatisfaction, with the students losing their writing motivation, is a common view among the Traditional group interviewees. This aligns with the previous study finding that the failure to give prompt feedback to help students with their writing difficulties leads to low writing motivation (Nemati et al., 2017).

The qualitative data findings expose that the reward treatment generates pleasure and enthusiasm to learn writing also gives the students pride and prestige. The provided chance to get double ranks at once by making extra high scores at two or more writing assignments consecutively gives the students greater satisfaction and proudness as expressed by NET09, one of the interviewees from the Reward treatment group below.

Those stickers reward such as the General, Sir... Yes, but in my opinion, it is motivating enough to write the essay assignments, to have better scores, that kind of stuff, Sir... Because...waohh, if, for example, when we got high scores, we could directly jump to get two ranks at once. It's cool when you could jump straight away, right? You could then reach the General faster than the others. Like that, Sir.

It can be seen how enthusiastic and delighted NET09 is with the reward she got, especially when she is successful in getting double ranks after probably striving to continuously write two or more excellent high scored essays. Receiving double ranks, which she calls as "jump rank," seems to generate double satisfaction and pride. Some other interviewees also had the same experience and gave similar responses. This finding is in line with the result of L2 previous studies that found the reward treatment has a positive impact on student motivation to learn English (Irawati & Syaifei, 2016; Loi & Uyen, 2016) includes English writing (Bouguerne, 2011). It also aligns with the previous inquiry finding by

Lepper (1983) that when the participants may see the learning benefits and their competence increase, the external reward may generate subsequent motivation increase. The pride of the students is much greater when they can get double ranks provided in the reward treatment scheme. This finding is in line with previous studies finding that when reward is given for novel performance, it has a positive impact on the intrinsic motivation and creativity (Eisenberger & Armeli, 1997; Eisenberger & Shanock, 2003). This does not happen in the non-reward classes, as being explained in the following part. This seems not to occur in the Traditional writing assessment.

In the Traditional writing assessment group, the students were commonly felt less motivated to write and gave little or less effort in their writing learning process. They seemed to get much trouble and demotivated with the high difficulty of the English writing. When asked about the number and the difficulty level of their writing assignments, HAF15, one of the interviewees from the group, for example, said as follows.

If there're many, that's not a problem, Sir,
but when they're difficult if it's tough...

Yes, I become lazy to do it.

HAF15 did not object to having many writing assignments but cannot stand facing difficult ones. Instead of continuing to give more effort, he ended up in being lazy and worked on them perfunctorily. This is a typical comment among the interviewees from the Traditional writing assessment group. They talked about some varieties of difficulties in following the writing tasks, such as grammar, vocabulary, finding and organizing the ideas, and so forth. While the late and less clear feedback they got from their lecture, as previously mentioned, was not sufficient and helpful enough for them to deal with those difficulties. It made them more discouraged with their writing learning. Some of the students from the Web-based assessment group indeed also talked about the same kinds of difficulties. However, as previously mentioned, clear, and immediate feedback they got, helped them to deal with those difficulties with which they were satisfied. This seems to make the Web-based writing assessment increase students writing motivation higher than the Traditional writing assessment. This finding supports the previous finding that providing more timely writing feedback will make students more motivated and more willing revise when the assessed writing is still fresh in their mind (Warschauer & Ware, 2006).

While in the Reward-based group, the students did not have prompt and clear feedback as those in the Web-based group. However, as they got enthusiastic

with the reward, they kept doing the writing assignments and learning its difficulties by asking friends or leaning from any other sources. The eagerness to get higher rewards seems to play a role in giving them the endurance to keep making their better effort to be able to write better essays to get a higher scores for higher ranks rewards. The Traditional and the Web-based writing assessment, on the other hand, do not generate this kind of enthusiasm and endurance that some students in the groups could end up in laziness and apathy to the writing learning. This seems to make the Reward-based marking treatment increase students' writing motivation higher than the Web-based and the Traditional writing marking treatment. This finding is in line with the previous studies results, seeing the reward potencial to enhance learning motivation on initially low-interest students (Cameron et al., 2001; Lepper, 1998).

5 CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS, AND SUGGESTIONS

The study finding shows the importance of giving prompt and clear feedback to students' writings to maintain and increase their writing motivation. It is probably necessary to enforce a policy that obliges lecturers to give prompt and clear feedback to students writing, for example, at least three days after the writing is submitted. Currently, in most of the teaching writing in Indonesia, it seems there is almost no such policy that regulates the turnaround time limit for student writing assessments. It can be done by applying web-based writing assessment as being demonstrated in this study. For those educational institutions that have limitations, such as in financial or in supporting facilities, to use a web-based writing assessment, more senior students can be involved to help the lecturer to assess student writing.

This inquiry finding that reward generates student learning pride, prestige, enthusiasm, and endurance may show that providing reward is essential in improving student learning motivation. It is then probably important to continue using this reward system in the research site, in *Polibatam*, and in other education institutions having similar contexts. However, some education institutions may have limited financial capacity to provide such external rewards. Therefore, the kind of external rewards should be adjusted to the institution's financial capacity, such as giving money, chocolates, candies,

stickers, or even symbolic rewards. The reward may also work to increase student motivation and performance in teaching other subjects or in different levels of education.

As the research found that the Web-based writing marking system may increase student writing motivation by providing more timely clearer feedback, and the Reward-based marking treatment by generating enthusiasm and endurance to learn writing, it is probably essential to do a further research by combining both treatments. It will be interesting whether such combination could consolidate the strengths of each marking treatment and hence results in higher writing motivation increase.

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