

How Does Corrective Feedback Benefit Learners: A Case Study of EFL Learners Who Struggle to Write?



Tai-ying Cheng, National Taiwan Normal University
Min-chieh Chou, Chinese Culture University

Introduction

Grammar and Writing

In writing instruction, teacher feedback to learners' written work has always partially connected to marking grammatical errors, giving error correction and error feedback (e.g. Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; Frodesen, 2001; Kroll, 2001; Nation, 2009).

Introduction

For EFL language teachers

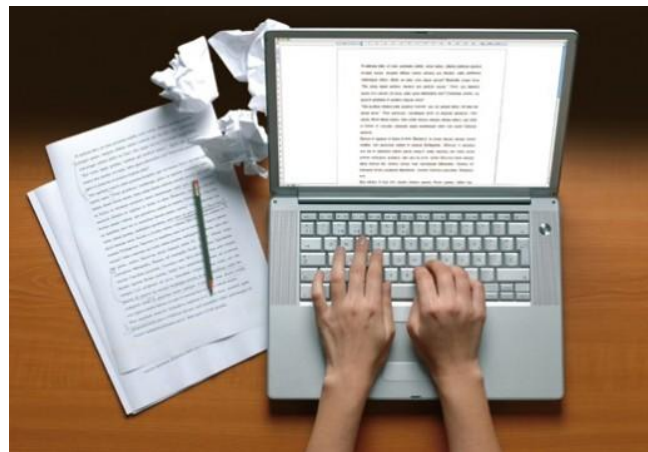
- If corrective feedback works....
- If corrective feedback fails....

The efficacy of corrective feedback matters a lot.

Background of the Study

In EFL language classrooms

- Instructors are used to giving corrective feedback to learners.
- Learners also expect to receive comments and feedback from instructors.



Background of the Study

- EFL learners keep making the same mistakes in writing
- Writing instructors are concerned about students' same old errors
- Few studies focus on in-depth investigation about how EFL lower achievers deal with CF

Research Questions

1. What types of written corrective feedback are considered constructive or effective by writing instructor and their EFL learners?
2. What do EFL writers do in their writing drafts when after receiving written corrective feedback?
3. Do EFL writers perform differently in writing assignments after written corrective feedback is offered?



Literature Review

- **Definition of Error Correction**

*The definition of an error, a word derived from Latin **errare** meaning to wander, roam, stray, depends on its use for a particular purpose or objective. For the purpose of a discussion on error correction, this writer defines an error as an utterance, form or structure that a particular language teacher deems unacceptable because of its inappropriate use or its absence in real life discourse (Corder 1967, p. 163).*



Literature Review

- **Definition of Error Correction**

Corrective feedback (CF) or written corrective feedback (WCF) was considered as grammar correction or corrective feedback (e.g. Ferris, et al; Truscott, 1996, 1999).

Literature Review

- Truscott (1996) claimed that:
 1. Error correction was ineffective.
 2. Theoretically and practically, error correction was not effective.
 3. Instead of helping students' accuracy, error correction damaged it.

Literature Review

- Truscott (1996) stirred up a discussion about the effectiveness of corrective feedback in L2 writing classrooms.
- Researchers examine the usefulness and the applicability of WCF in the writing instruction (e.g. Chandler 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Truscott, 2004; Lee, 1997, 2009, 2011; Tsao, 2011).

Literature Review

- Researchers began to question whether teacher feedback actually led to improvement on students' writing (Hyland and Hyland, 2006).
- A strong debate about the effectiveness and usefulness of corrective feedback in writing in EFL or ESL contexts (e.g. Truscott, 1999, 2004, 2007; Ferris & Hedgcock, 2005; van Beuningen, et al., 2012).

Literature Review

- Lee (1997) suggested that the goal of error correction is to equip students with a variety of strategies so that learners might become “independent editors and better writers” (p. 472).



Literature Review

- Truscott (2007) concluded that “correction has a small harmful effect on students’ ability to write accurately” and “if it actually has any benefits, they are very small” (p.270).



Literature Review

- Ferris (2010) indicated that there exists **a gap among research, theory and real world situations** in regard to corrective feedback because of theoretical disagreements and conflicting research trends in the field.

Research Method

- An In-depth Case study
 - A background questionnaire
 - Student interview
 - Teacher interview
 - Writing drafts
 - Midterm / Final exams

Participants

- One writing instructor
- 10 participants from a private university
 - Major in English
 - Pre-intermediate to intermediate level
 - 5 of them had retrospective interviews



Procedure of the Study

1. Giving out a background questionnaire
2. Conducting follow-up interviews
3. Collecting writing drafts and term exams

- (1) The grades of the assignments and exam compositions were compared
- (2) The major categories in the exams were identified

4. Conducting a teacher interview

Results from the Drafts and the Exams

1. All participants made considerable progress after multiple-draft writing.
2. Among the compositions with multiple drafts (52 in total), the average grade of first drafts and the final drafts is **65.87** and **86.31** respectively.

Composition Grades & Exam Scores

First Semester						
Name (pseudo nyms)	Essay		Illustration		Cause & Effect	
	1 st draft	Final draft	1 st draft	Final draft	1 st draft	Final draft
Nina	80	92	76	-	74	90
Cherry	80	90	76	-	72	86
Helen	56	90	52	90	48	88
Teresa	80	90	64	80	64	80
Wilson	48	88	52	88	52	88
Gavin	72	92	74	-	80	94
Cindy	60	90	76	84	72	-
Stanley	68	70	-	-	60	-
Zara	64	86	68	86	76	84
Ricky	-	-	-	-	-	-

Composition Grades & Exam Scores

	Second Semester								Exams	
Name (pseudonyms)	Comparison & Contrast		Classification		Definition		Argumentation		1 st semester	2 nd semester
	1 st draft	Final draft	1 st draft	Final draft	1 st draft	Final draft	1 st draft	Final draft	Midterm Exam	Final Exam
Nina	76	88	72	88	78	88	56	78	75	79(+)
Cherry	72	88	64	88	72	88	64	88	82	68
Helen	64	86	64	88	64	88	56	84	62	47
Teresa	76	88	76	88	74	84	64	-	74	68
Wilson	72	88	60	88	60	82	64	88	70	74(+)
Gavin	-	-	76	-	60	88	39	82	71	82(+)
Cindy	72	88	-	-	60	88	60	-	63	65(+)
Stanley	56	74	-	-	68	78	80	88	76	84(+)
Zara	64	84	72	88	58	-	64	-	58	58
Ricky	60	84	60	86	64	88	56	-	41	44(+)

Six out of ten made progresses on the exams.

Number of Error Types in the Exam Compositions

Name Error Category	Nina		Cherry		Helen		Teresa		Wilson	
	Midterm	Final	Midterm	Final	Midterm	Final	Midterm	Final	Midterm	Final
Forms	1	0	1	3	1	6	1	3	2	3
Articles	3	7	2	1	1	2	2	2	2	1
Comma Splices	2	2	0	0	4	1	0	0	2	0
Subject Verb agreement	1	3	1	2	0	6	1	1	1	1
Plurals	1	0	0	1	2	3	4	5	3	0
Two verbs	1	0	1	0	5	0	0	0	0	2
Tenses	1	4	3	1	14	0	0	0	2	0
No verbs	0	2	0	1	2	0	3	2	1	0
Total errors	10	18	8	9	29	18	11	13	13	7
T-units	33	29	19	25	37	26	21	33	27	12
Error/T-units	33%	62%	42%	36%	78%	69%	52%	39%	48%	58%

1 Linguistically, T-unit is defined by Kellogg Hunt (1965) as the "shortest grammatically allowable sentences into which (writing can be split) or minimally terminable unit." A T-unit is often, but not always, a sentence. Technically, a T-unit is a dominant clause and its dependent clauses; it is "one main clause with all subordinate clauses attached to it" (Hunt 1965, p. 20).

Summary Findings from Questionnaires

- The results from the questionnaire and interview showed that students' responses toward corrective feedback on their writing assignments shared similar patterns.

I really focus on grammar because the teacher said poor grammar will interrupt the reader and feel really confused.

Nina

I am not a good writer because I have many grammatical problems. My grammar is very bad.

Wilson

Summary Findings from Questionnaires

- They also thought that they improved because of their instructor's comments as can be seen from the following quotes.

I think the instructor's comments help me to improve my writing because sometime(s) my writing would be colloquial and I'll forget the grammatical problems.

Cindy

I love to receive (comments about) grammatical problems in my essay from my instructor.

Wilson

Summary Findings from Questionnaires

- After these EFL writers received corrective feedback, they tended to check them carefully. However, some learners admitted that sometimes they might still make the same mistakes.

*I would try to remember my own mistakes and next time I would review and see whether I make the same ones. However, I often didn't notice my own mistakes.
(Cherry's response, translated by the researcher)*

Summary Findings from Questionnaires

- After these EFL writers received corrective feedback, they tended to check them carefully. However, some learners admitted that sometimes they might still make the same mistakes.

I do improve my writing because of my instructor. It is really tiring to correct essays; it's impossible to read one once. It always takes time. I can really know (understand) my errors.

Nina

I think I improved a lot in my composition especially in grammar because my instructor would clearly point out my grammatical errors.

(Teresa's response, translated by the researcher)



Summary Findings from Interviews

1. Learners were aware that corrective feedback was valuable.

2. In general, learners had a strong belief that they benefited a great deal from receiving corrective feedback on their writing work.

3. EFL learners focused on checking their grammatical errors after receiving corrective feedback.

Teacher Interview

- It was the sense of achievement that supported her doing exhaustive job.
- The instructor indicated that the biggest problem learner had in this writing class was grammar problems.
- The instructor could feel helpless but she also realized that learning would take place after all.

Conclusion and Implication

- This study demonstrated the efficacy of written corrective feedback in an EFL writing classroom.
- The findings suggested that the students as well as the instructor valued written corrective feedback and deemed it as necessary.
- The data showed that learners were positive about receiving corrective feedback and were able to incorporate it into their subsequent revisions.

Conclusion and Implication

- Overall, the students' performance improved to a considerable extent with the teacher's comments and feedback.
- The study might be encouraging for some writing instructors who hesitate to put energy and time providing corrective feedback.
- Nevertheless, the study was a small scale study which would be impossible to be generalized to other classroom settings.

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Thank you!

