

EFFECTS OF WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS OF INDEPENDENT UNIVERSITY, BANGLADESH

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ABSTRACT

Being in the spotlight in the field of second language teaching, corrective feedback has generated a lot of arguments and debate regarding how effective it truly is. Using a mixed method design, this study aimed to find out the effects of using corrective feedback on student's writing, specifically in the area of subject-verb agreement. Quantitative analysis was carried out to see the effects corrective feedback had on the students, whether their writing improved or not, and how they perceived corrective feedback itself. The subjects were students of lower-intermediate to intermediate level, their writing and the revisions done along with the quantitative data from the surveys led to the findings that students prefer receiving grammatical corrective feedback and that it seems to have slightly positive effect on students' accuracy. However, any concrete statements cannot be made at this stage as only through delayed testing can the study truly measure students' uptake.

Key Words: Corrective feedback (CF), L2 acquisition, effectiveness, ineffective, treatment

1. Introduction

Corrective feedback (CF) is a practice frequently used in the field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). It refers to the feedback the learners receive on their linguistic errors in the oral or the written production of the second language. This practice is widely used and has gained a lot of attention in L2 acquisition. Although corrective feedback is a central aspect of second language (L2) writing programs around the world, it has been a controversial topic in English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) teaching. Since the publication of Truscott's paper in 1996 arguing against the effectiveness of grammar correction in L2 writing, there has been an ongoing debate on this topic. Truscott (1996) claimed that CF is not only ineffective, but it also has a potentially harmful effect on L2 students' writing. He expressed his concern regarding teachers' ability to provide sufficient and consistent feedback and learners' ability and willingness to use the feedback effectively. Truscott (1996) further suggested that CF is a waste of time and teachers and learners should allocate their time and energy on additional writing practice.

Many researchers, since 1996, have investigated the effectiveness of feedback and defended the use of corrective feedback. Ferris (1999), for example, wrote a response to Truscott's paper and provided evidence in support of error correction in L2 writing. Since then, a number of L2 writing studies investigated the effectiveness of CF in L2 writing.

Accordingly, the first aim of the current research project is to investigate the effectiveness of written corrective feedback (WCF) in L2 writing. In particular, the aim was to investigate the effect of direct selective feedback (i.e. providing feedback on only subject-verb agreement errors) on reducing errors in student revisions of the same essay and in a new piece of writing over time. The second aim was to account for the learners' perspective of different types of feedback. For this part, the study investigated learners' perceptions and attitudes regarding the types of feedback they received, specifically corrections related to grammar.

2. Literature Review

A number of terms have been used to describe the process of identifying errors and providing feedback to students in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) literature. Some of the most popular terms include "corrective feedback", "negative evidence", "treatment", and "repair" (Karim, 2013). For the purpose of this paper, the term we are going to use is 'corrective feedback (CF)'. In this section, the varying definitions of corrective feedback as provided by different researchers, the different types of written CF used by teachers, the debate surrounding the effectiveness or non-effectiveness of CF and the studies in favor of both views, as well as the learners' perceptions regarding this technique will be discussed.

Various definitions have been used by different researchers to describe the concept of corrective feedback. Sheen and Ellis (2011), for instance, define CF as “the feedback that learners receive on the linguistic errors they make in their oral or written production in a second language (L2)”. Li (2010, p.309), on the other hand, defines corrective feedback as ‘responses to a learner’s non target-like L2 production’ (as cited in Karim, 2013). Similarly, Lightbrown and Spada(1999), also believe that CF gives learners the indication that use of their target language is incorrect (as cited in Karim, 2013). On a different note, Long (1996) defines CF by categorizing them into ‘positive evidence’ and ‘negative evidence’. Positive evidence, according to Long, provides learners with examples of what is grammatical and acceptable in the target language, whereas negative evidence provides information (either implicitly or explicitly) about what is ungrammatical.

In the question of effectiveness of written corrective feedback, there are divergent views amongst researchers. Before 1996, it was implicitly agreed by teachers, educators, and researchers alike that corrective feedback helps in improving the writing accuracy of learners. Little or no large-scale/empirical research studies were conducted on this topic, and even those which were undertaken had major design flaws in their methodology (Karim, 2013). However, all that changed when John Truscott published his 1996 paper arguing that grammar correction is not only ineffective, but even harmful. Truscott cited many studies to support his claim. He cited Hendrickson (1978), Cohen and Bobbins (1978), Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986), and Kepner (1991) amongst others as evidence that showed that grammar correction is ineffective. Moreover, he highlighted Semke(1984) and Sheppard’s (1992) research studies to argue that grammar correction can be harmful as it can impact fluency. He also mentioned research by Lalande(1982) and Fathman and Whalley (1990) as examples of research often cited in favor of written CF, but points out that none of them directly deal with the issue of effectiveness of CF and hence are invalid. After supplying all the evidence, Truscott concludes that ‘grammar correction has no place in writing classes and should be abandoned’ (p.361). His paper led to a fiery debate in the world of SLA academics, which in turn also led to large scale empirical studies being conducted in this area.

One of the major opponents to Truscott’s views was Dana Ferris, who deemed Truscott’s proposition to abandon grammar correction in the classroom to be “premature and overly strong”(1996, p.2). Furthermore, Ferris noted that some potentially positive research evidence in favor of grammar correction had been overlooked or understated by Truscott and some participants in the studies did benefit from feedback. Ferris also acknowledged that difference types of feedback may have led to different results, and hence more research was required to reach a conclusive answer—“in discussing whether or not grammar correction is ‘effective’, it is important to know what sort of error correction we are discussing” (1999, p.4).

One of the implicit points of agreement between Truscott and Ferris was that the existing data was insufficient and more data was needed to resolve the question of whether error correction can be effective in improving accuracy or not (Chandler, 2003).

Another important study was undertaken by Chandler (2003) who looked into the effects of different kind of error correction on students’ writing. His findings showed that the group that received CF showed significant improvement in term of accuracy as well as fluency in their writings, whereas the control group which did not receive any feedback did not improve in accuracy, though they showed improvement in fluency. His research further illustrated that direct feedback and underlining were more effective compared to other types of feedback. Ferris and Roberts (2001) also investigated the effect of different types of feedback and the difference between feedback and no feedback groups. The findings of this study demonstrated that the two groups who received feedback significantly outperformed the no-feedback group (as cited in Karim, 2013).

Despite the conflicting research with regards to the effectiveness of corrective feedback, the fact remains that learners value and want to receive feedback. Studies done by Cohen & Cavalcanti (1990), Ferris (1995), Hedgecock and Lefkowitz (1994) (all cited in Sheen and Ellis, 2011), showed that students believe feedback helps improve their writing. Specifically, the students prefer comments and suggestions about how they can revise their writing. In this way, we can see how most research points towards selective written corrective feedback to be useful. Moreover, we can also see how learners perceive CF to be valuable and important to their improvement.

3. Research Questions

3.1. Research Questions

1. Does corrective feedback improve learner’s skill on subject-verb agreement?
3. Does corrective feedback harm the control group’s performance in writing?
4. What are the students’ perceptions on written corrective feedback?

3.2 Hypothesis

We expect that corrective feedback will help students to improve the accuracy of their writing, and the number of errors the experimental group (i.e. the group that receives CF) makes will be significantly lower than the control group (i.e. the group that does not receive any CF). Furthermore, we predict that most of the students will prefer receiving corrective feedback and have a generally positive perception regarding written CF for grammar-related errors.

4. Research Methodology

4.1 Research Design

This study employed a mixed method research design. Employing the quantitative method, this study investigated the effects of direct WCF on students' revision accuracy of the same piece of writing as well as its transfer effects on new pieces of writing over time. The qualitative method employed a stimulated recall strategy (stimulated recall is a technique used to collect learners' self-analysis or reflections about the learning process) to explore students' perception and attitude regarding the types of feedback they received. The stimulus in this research was students' original writings or their revisions.

Unlike other major studies which provided CF treatment only one time, the current study provided treatment four times to identify both the short-term and delayed effects of direct feedback in error reduction on revisions and on new texts. This design is thus unique in that it allowed students in the treatment groups to receive feedback on more than one occasion (four times) on four different new writings, and they also produced one new piece of writing one week after they received their last CF treatment. The feedback treatment in this study was provided by the researchers of the present study outside the classrooms, after the regular school hours.

4.2 Participants and Setting

Twenty-three adult students (ages 18-23) studying at Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) participated voluntarily in this study. Independent University, Bangladesh (IUB) is a reputed private university in Dhaka and was established in 1993. The medium of instruction in IUB is English. Private universities such as IUB follow North-American system of tertiary education closely and usually have comparatively steeper cost of tuitions than public universities in the country. Therefore, the students who are admitted to these universities are from middle-class, or upper-middle class families.

The students who participated in the study are all freshmen studying in different disciplines in IUB having intermediate or lower intermediate level proficiency. This proficiency level was chosen as they were expected to have gained sufficient writing proficiency needed to produce the writings required. Learners' proficiency level was determined based on a placement test learners had received prior to the study. All the students participating in the study had been required by the university to take a placement test to be placed at the appropriate level. The test, which had been designed by the department of English, tested all four proficiency skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking and listening). To measure learners' speaking and listening skills, the placement tests had used structured interview tasks, and to test learners reading and writing skills, the placement tests included several reading comprehension as well as paragraphs and essay writing tasks. Based on the placement test score, students had been placed in the beginning, intermediate, and advanced level English Foundation courses offered by IUB.

Students of this study belonged to level 101 which means their proficiency level varied from lower intermediate to intermediate. English 101 classes are taught following a communicative approach and focus heavily on the development of students' listening and speaking skills by doing authentic and real-life activities and tasks. The students usually meet twice a week for 90 minutes of contact time with the instructor. Each ENG 101 course usually has 35 students per section.

All the participants speak Bengali as their mother-tongue and vary in ages from 18 to 23, with the average age being 20 years. There were 14 male participants (i.e. 65 %) and 9 female participants (i.e. 35%). 61% of the participants studied in Bengali medium schools for their primary and secondary education, whereas 39% studied in English medium schools. To avoid potential effect on students writing development, only the students who were not enrolled in any ESL writing course or program during the span of data collection were considered as participants for the study.

4.3 Treatment Groups

For the purpose of the study, participants were randomly divided into three groups: two experimental feedback groups (A , B) and one control, no feedback group (C). Each of these groups is described below.

- Experimental group A & B: Direct WCF (8 students per group)

Experimental group A and B were a direct CF group. They consisted of 16 participants in total, with 8 participants per group. Participants in this group received direct feedback, i.e., the errors related subject-verb agreement were corrected by the researchers by crossing out the erroneous forms and providing the corresponding target forms above the errors. However, it must be mentioned that although these groups had 16 participants, very few of them completed all 5 tasks due to being absent in the tutorial sessions.

Example 1: Direct CF

My brother **help** me in my studies.

Correction: My brother helps me in my studies.

- Control group C: No CF(7 students)

Group C was a control group. The participants in the control group did not receive any feedback on their errors. They were asked to self-correct their errors in the four revision tasks. There were 7 participants in this group. This group started with 7 students in week 1 and 6 participants completed all the writing tasks.

4.4 Writing Tasks and Prompts

The writing tasks for the present study included writing four narratives from different prompts (3 picture prompts, two descriptive prompts) and the revisions of four of these written narratives (produced during the treatment sessions). Previous research (e.g., Truscott & Hsu, 2010, Van Beuinen et al., 2012, as cited in Karim, 2013) has also used similar tasks as prompts to elicit writing samples (i.e., research data). The picture prompts were selected from ESL textbooks.

On an average, the picture prompts helped produce 150 words (as targeted) within a span of average 20-30 minutes. Participants were also allowed to take 15 minutes to look at or review the corrections (i.e. the CF) and as much time as needed to do the revision tasks. On average the participants spent 7-10 minutes reviewing the corrections and completed the revision tasks in 20-25 minutes. Based on these findings, the actual time to write and revise the narratives in the present study was kept to 30 minutes each, and participants were allowed to look at or review their errors for 10 minutes.

4.5 Treatment Procedure

The present investigation included six sessions which included Writing 1, revision of Writing 1, Writing 2, revision of Writing 2, Writing 3, revision of Writing 3, Writing 4, revision of Writing 4 and Writing 5 (delayed writing). All these six sessions were completed within the span of four weeks: Writings 1, 2, and 3 and their revisions in week 1, 2, and in week 3, and production of Writing 4 in week 4 (one week after the last treatment in week 3).

The writing tasks and topics were introduced and explained by the researchers of the present study in all the writing sessions. The participants were allowed to use either pen or pencil to write the narratives. The CF treatments were also provided by the researchers of the present study, and the all revision sessions were conducted by the same researchers as well. All CF were provided using red ink. All the writing and revision tasks took place after regular class hours at IUB English Department's Language Resource Centre.

In week one, participants in all four groups produced Writing 1. They were given 30 minutes for this writing task, and were instructed to write at least 15 lines in length or minimum 150 words. Once the participants finished Writing 1, the researchers collected those and provided feedback on subject-verb agreement errors. The writings were returned to the participants the next day (on day 2). Participants in groups A and B received the target feedback, i.e., Direct CF, Underline+correct form. Participants in group C (i.e., No CF group) did not receive any feedback. The feedback was provided the next day, as the tasks were relatively fresh in students' memories. Participants were given ten minutes to look at the corrections and 30 minutes to revise the first draft of the Writing 1. They were asked to revise all the errors corrected by the researcher. To avoid students' revision by simply copying the corrections, the Direct CF groups (group A and B) received corrections on photocopies of their original writings, which were taken away from them after ten minutes. They were provided with their original writings just immediately before starting their revision task. The participants of this group were also asked to produce minimum 15 sentences or 150 words in their writings.

Production of Writing 2 and Writing 3 took place in weeks 2 and 3 respectively. The same procedure for writing and revision were followed with picture prompts for Writing 2 and Writing 3. Target CF was provided on writings 2 and 3 and they were returned to the participants the next day (on day 2) for them to revise all the corrected errors. Similar to Week 1, participants were given ten minutes to look at the corrections and 30 minutes to revise their initial writings (2 and 3). They were instructed to revise all the errors indicated and to produce minimum 15 sentences or 150 words in their writings. Participants in all 2 groups were required to produce one more new writing in week four. There was a week gap between treatments four and writing session five to measure delayed learning effect. Participants were given 30 minutes to produce the narrative (at least 15 lines in length or minimum 150 words).

4.6 Student survey questionnaire

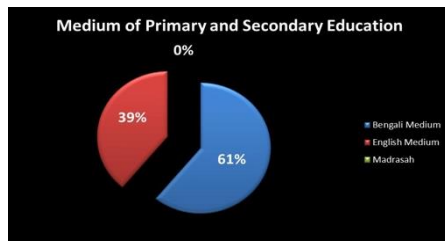
A survey questionnaire was developed to gauge students' perception of written corrective feedback. It had 17 questions in total (See Appendix II) and was distributed amongst all the 23 participants of the survey. The questions were mostly close-ended with a series of possible answers provided, though a few questions also had open ended qualifiers or were completely open-ended in nature. The survey was conducted during Week 3 of the data collection process. It was distributed to the participants after they had completed their writing tasks and revisions. The researchers explained the questions in Bengali to any participants who had difficulty comprehending the meaning of the questions.

5. Data Analysis

5.1 Data analysis of student survey

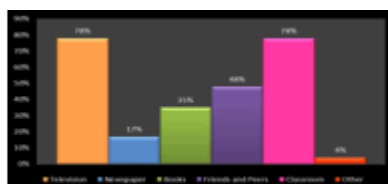
A total of 23 students from IUB participated in the survey, amongst which 14 were male and 9 were female. The age range of the students was 18-23 years of age, with an average age of around 20 years. Furthermore, a majority of the participants (around 61%) came from a Bengali-medium background in terms of their primary and secondary education, whereas 39% of the participants came from an English-medium background. There was no representation of Madrasah-based students in this sample (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Medium of primary and secondary education



Most of the students seem to have an intermediate or lower intermediate level proficiency in English, with more than half of the students (52%) feeling ‘moderately confident’ in terms of their writing skills, 35% feeling ‘slightly confident’, and a further 13% saying that they don’t feel confident at all. Again, major sources of exposure of these students are the classroom, television/movies, and friends and peers (see Figure 2).

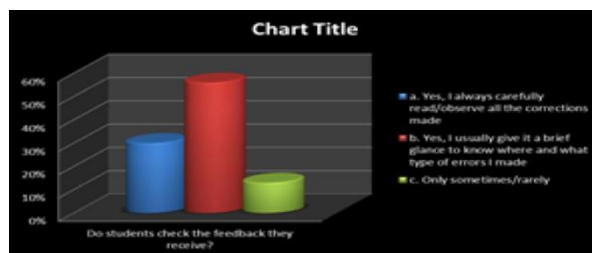
Figure 2: Major source of exposure to English Language



When asked about their perception regarding written corrective feedback, a staggering 98% of the students concurred that they like receiving feedback on their written assignments. Half of the students from this majority said that they look forward to the corrections, whereas the other half indicated that even though corrections make them unhappy, they know it is important for their learning process. Only a very small percentage of the students (4%) said that they feel scared and stressed out when they see that their written assignments had numerous corrections.

About 86% of the participants agreed that they check the corrections given by their teachers, with a 30% of them stating that they carefully go through all the corrections made, whereas 56% said that they at least take a brief glance to know what type of errors they had made. A small percentage, about 13%, said that they take a look only sometimes or rarely. No students indicated that they do not check their corrections.

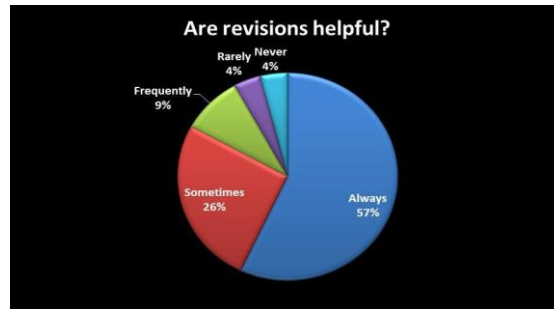
Figure 3: Do students check the feedback they receive?



Again, more than half of the students (around 57%) said that they prefer the teacher to correct all the mistakes the have made (i.e. comprehensive feedback), whereas only 13% of the students said that they prefer selective feedback. Similarly, the students also seem to prefer when teachers not only identify the mistake but also supply the correct rule and write the correct form (52%) or when the teachers identify the mistake and also provide the rule so that the students can figure out the correct form (26%) (see Figure 3).

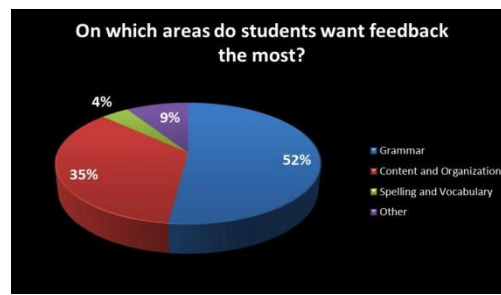
When the topic of doing revisions was broached in question 11, more than half the students believed revisions to be always helpful, whereas 26% of them believed revision to be only sometimes helpful. Only a very small percentage thought that revisions rarely or never help (see figure 4).

Figure 4: Students react to the usefulness of revision



The questions related to grammar revealed expected results. A huge chunk of the students, 87% of the participants agreed grammar is very important. Another 96% said that they prefer it when teachers give them explicit metalinguistic information when correcting grammatical mistakes and also provide the correct form. The data received from Question 14, which was a question related to their preference in terms of the content that they like receive feedback, also highlighted the importance these students place on grammar. More than half of the students wanted to receive corrective feedback on grammar, whereas only 35% liked to receive feedback on content and organization (see Figure 5).

Figure 5: Areas where students want the feedback



The issue of self-correction was dealt with in Question 15, the data analysis of which shows that majority of students are in favor of self-correction (61%), whereas only 39% said that self-correction is not a good technique. The options had additional open-ended qualifiers attached to them, a quick look into these reveal the reasons behind the participants choices. Some of the reasons which lead the students to believe that self-correction is helpful are:

- It helps students to understand their errors
- It helps students to identify careless mistakes and correct them
- Teachers do not usually correct all the errors made by the students

Again, some of the reasons students provided for believing that self-correction is not useful are:

- Students don't have as much knowledge as the teacher, so the teacher can rectify and explain the errors more easily
- Teachers can provide more accurate or native-like forms
- Students lack the knowledge to identify/rectify their errors
- The students can make further errors while doing self-correction
- Students have a tendency to overlook their own errors

Majority of the students did not deem it harmful if students receive too many corrections. 78% of them said that receiving corrections on all mistakes are required because:

- It's necessary for students to know all about their errors
- Without corrections, students' writing will not improve

- It is necessary to gain accuracy or ‘perfect’ writing, i.e. error-free writing.

Only 22% of the participants deemed that receiving too many corrections may be harmful for the following reasons:

- Students may feel nervous/get demotivated/frustrated or discouraged if too many corrections are made
- It may lower the students’ confidence

Question 17, which was an open-ended hypothetical question trying to gauge the students reaction to a teacher who decides to only give extensive notes/feedback for content and organization but no feedback on grammar, revealed that such type of instruction would make the students ‘unhappy’, ‘irritated’, or even ‘bored’:

“It would make me feel a little bit irritated because to know a language, one should know both the grammar and how to organize the words and structures to have a beautiful flow[sic]”

“I don’t want such kind of teacher. Personally, I’ll feel bored in his/her class [sic]”

In this way, we can see how the students valued feedback related to grammar the most.

5.2 Error Analysis of student writings

Three different groups were tested with subject-verb agreement errors made in four writing tasks and the final writing task. The total errors made pre and post revision errors were counted. The controlled group’s errors were compared with the other two groups’ errors.

Quantitative analysis was carried out to measure and compare the differential outcomes of feedback treatment. To examine the effect of CF on new writings, a comparison was made between the groups on their rates of accuracy gains from Writing 1 to Writing 2, Writing 2 to Writing 3, Writing 3 to Writing 4 and finally to Writing 5 (Delayed Writing). To examine the effect of error feedback on students’ subsequent revisions, a comparison was made between the two groups on their accuracy gains in the four revision tasks (see Table 1-3).

Table 1: Error Chart (Subject-Verb Agreement)

Treatment Group A: CF/Revision (Researcher: Lameya)

Name	#	Writing 1		Writing 2		Writing 3	Writing 4	Writing 5	Total	
		error/s		error/s		error/s	error/s	error/s		
		O	R	O	R	R	R	l		
Adithya	1	3	0	1	a	a	0	a		
Fuad	2	2	1	0	1	0	1	1		
Hasin	3	3	0	1	0	0	1	0		
Ashraf	4	2	0	0	0	0	0	0		
Taslina	5	1	0	0	0	0	a	0		
Anika	6	0	1	0	0	0	1	1		
Diganta	7	1	1	0	0	0	0	1		
Akhteruzzaman	8	a	a	2	0	0	1	0		
Total number of errors		Total number of errors in originals texts: 23				Total number of errors in revised texts: 8				
Total number of Texts		Total number of original texts: 29				Total number of Revised texts: 28				
Error per		Error per text-Originals: 0.79				Error per text- Revisions: 0.29				

text	Writing 1	Writing 2	Writing 3	Writing 4	Writing 5	All
Total errors (Original +Revision)	15	5	2	9	4	35
Total number of texts (Original +Revision)	14	15	14	14	8	65
Error per text	1.07	0.33	0.14	0.64	0.5	0.54

Table 2: Error Chart (Subject-Verb agreement)

Treatment Group B: CF/Revision (Researcher: Tamoha)

Name	#	Writing 1 error/s		Writing 2 error/s		Writing 3 error/s		Writing 4 error/s		Writing 5 error/s	Total
		O	R	O	R	O	R	O	R		
Saiful	1	2	a	7	a	2	0	3	0	a	
Azmayen	2	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	a	a	
Sayem	3	0	1	a	a	2	1	a	a	3	
Rizvi	4	1	1	a	a	0	0	4	0	2	
Jahid	5	0	a	a	a	0	0	a	a	a	
Sanjit	6	2	1	7	5	2	2	2	a	0	
Ali Hossen	7	2	a	1	a	3	2	3	4	a	
Brishti	8	0	0	a	a	a	a	a	a	a	
Total number of errors		Total number of errors in originals texts: 45				Total number of errors in revised texts: 17					
Total number of Texts		Total number of original texts: 24				Total number of Revised texts: 17					
Error per text		Errors per text- Originals: 1.88				Errors per text - Revisions: 1.00					
	Writing 1	Writing 2	Writing 3	Writing 4	Writing 5	All					
Total errors (Original+ Revision)	11	20	15	16	5	67					
Total number of	13	6	14	8	3	44					

texts (Original +Revision)						
Error per text	0.85	3.33	1.07	2.00	1.67	1.52

Table 3: Error Chart (Subject-Verb Agreement)

Treatment group C: No WCF (Researcher: Sameera)

Name	#	Writing 1 error/s	Writing 2 error/s	Writing 3 error/s	Writing 4 error/s	Writing 5 error/s	Total
Farheen	1	0	0	1	a	a	
Turak	2	4	2	2	4	1	
Tabassum	3	2	4	3	3	2	
Meherab	4	2	5	0	1	1	
Saima	5	1	2	0	0	0	
Deeyab	6	3	2	2	0	3	
Shahin	7	3	4	0	1	1	
		Writing 1	Writing 2	Writing 3	Writing 4	Writing 5	All
Total errors	15	19	8	9	8	59	
Total number of texts	7	7	7	6	6	33	
Error per text	2.14	2.74	1.14	1.5	1.33	1.79	

Contrary to what Truscott suggests, in this study it is found that there is a slightly positive effect of revision in the participants' writings. For example, in group A, the original error per text was 0.79 which comes down significantly to 0.29 in revision works. In Group B, the original error per text was 1.88 which reduces to 1.00 in the revised versions of writings. Similarly, overall error per text (of both original and revised writings) of Group A and B are 0.54 and 1.52, which is slightly lower than the overall error per text of Group C, which has a value of 1.79.

6. Findings

6.1 Findings (Survey)

The data analysis of the survey questionnaires revealed that majority of the students like receiving corrective feedback on their written assignments. It was also found that students put great emphasis on the value of grammar, and hence prefer their teachers providing them with CF related to grammar the most. It must be mentioned that a large percentage of the students said that they think revisions are almost always helpful.

Almost half of the participants said that they actually look forward to the CF given by teachers, whereas the other half believe that although they feel unhappy when they see the corrections, they know that it is an important part of the learning process. Most of the students also admitted to being diligent in checking the CF provided by their teachers—almost 86% of the students

concluded that they either carefully observe all the corrections made by the teacher or at least briefly glance over the errors identified.

It was also found that most students preferred if they did not have to take an active part in error correction, but instead want the teachers to provide the correct forms and rules in the margin. Almost half of the participants said that they want the teachers to not only identify the error, but also supply the correct rule and form. They also prefer if the teachers give them explicit metalinguistic information when correcting their grammar. Again, this emphasis on grammar is highlighted when 52% of the students said that receiving feedback on grammar is the most important rather than other aspects such as content and organization.

Contradictorily, 61% of the students said that they think self-correction is a good technique. It seems that even though the students realize the importance of taking an active role in the error correction process, they are still more comfortable if the teacher takes the active role and provides the forms, rules, and metalinguistic information.

Majority of the students also find comprehensive feedback rather than selective feedback to be more useful—almost 57% said that they want the teachers to correct all the errors that they make in their written assignments. Similarly, majority of the participants do not believe that too many corrections are not likely to be harmful for them. However, around 22% of the students identified some affective issues which can arise from too many corrections, such as lack of motivation, frustration, losing confidence etc.

Overall, the data illustrates that students belonging to this tertiary level private university are willing to receive extensive comprehensive corrective feedback, especially those related to grammar. Moreover, they seem to find revisions helpful and necessary. Although Truscott (1996) states that teachers have an obligation to “not use whatever form of instruction the students think is best, but to help them learn” (p. 359), if we take students’ affective factors into the equation, we can see the grammar correction is very necessary to help students remain motivated.

6.2 Error Analysis

Overall, error analysis of the students’ written work presents us with erratic and inconclusive findings. On one hand, we see erratic values when we analyze the error per text values of each individual written work. These values are erratic as they do not show any clear progression or regression of the students in terms of the SVA errors that they made in their written work.

However, overall values of errors per text seem to give a clearer picture. They seem to indicate that on average, students made less number of errors on the revisions. Similarly, the overall errors per text (for both original and revised texts) also show that the experimental groups had less number of errors compared to the control group. However, whether there has been actual uptake or not cannot be determined at this stage. Only through delayed post-tests can we confirm if the CF has had any long-term positive effect on the accuracy of the writing of the students.

7. Limitations

Although, the present research study has its strengths, it still has some flaws with regard to the research design and research instruments used. One of the major challenges of this study was convincing the students to attend all the tutorials and participate in the written work. Many of the participants were absent during some of the tutorials and hence only a few of the participants were present during all 6 sessions and could complete all the 4 writings with revisions and write the final written work. Also, the students often seemed bored or disinterested when they had to conduct revision work on the same topic. Another challenge related to students was that they often fell back to writing in past or continuous tenses instead of present tense, so it became difficult to identify errors related to SVA.

Moreover, due to the limited time period of the research itself, the data had to be collected within a very short span of time. Therefore, this study cannot provide any concrete or conclusive remarks regarding the findings, and most of the data remains erratic. To find more clear, concrete data, the study has to be conducted in the long term with delayed post-tests.

Again, in terms of the setting of the current study, the study did not take place in a real-world classroom context. CF treatments were provided after the regular class hours, therefore it cannot be concluded that the findings of the present research would be reflective of real-world classroom situations. Therefore, a replication study using the same design in a real-world classroom setting would draw more authentic results and could be generalized.

The error rate in the initial writing task demonstrated that the learners who participated in the present study were not equal in terms of their level of L2 proficiency. This unequal English proficiency of participants might have affected the findings of the present study.

Furthermore, as there were three different researchers working with the three different groups, and as each researcher might have had their own varying criteria for identifying errors, this might have had an impact on the research findings.

Some of the limitations related to the survey must be mentioned here as well. One major gap highlighted by the survey was that there was no representation of Madrasah students in this study or in the survey. Moreover, the survey questionnaire was written

in intermediate level English. Many of the students had difficulty understanding certain words and phrases since they possess low intermediate level proficiency. The researchers had to translate the questions into Bengali in such cases.

8. Conclusion

The findings of the present study seem to suggest that CF in the forms of underlining and providing correct forms can improve grammatical accuracy in the revised versions. The findings also demonstrate that Direct CF has the slight potential to promote grammatical accuracy in new writings, at least, of intermediate level learners, and thus refutes Truscott's (1996) claim that CF has no place in L2 classrooms because grammar correction would be more likely to hamper accuracy development. However, although the average errors made by the experimental groups were slightly lower than the control groups, they do not clearly indicate that actual uptake has taken place. To make such claims, the study will need to conduct delayed tests on the participants after a considerable length of time.

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