THE EFFECTS OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON GRAMMATICAL IMPROVEMENT IN JOURNAL WRITING of GRADE 9 STUDENTS IN A THAI SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

This study was conducted to investigate the effects of Direct Corrective Feedback and Indirect Corrective Feedback on grammatical improvement in journal writing of Grade 9 students at Srisawatwittayakarn School, Nan province, Thailand. The study involved 60 in total school students selected purposively. The age of the participants ranged from 14 to 15, and they were divided into 2 groups. One group was randomly selected to be the group with Direct Corrective Feedback (DF) provided on its journals. The other group was provided a different feedback called Indirect Corrective Feedback (IF). The participants were assigned to write ten weekly journals as an additional task for English class. The instruments used in this study were grammar test and students' English journals. The result showed that although the students in both DF and IF groups improved significantly when the pretest and posttest scores of each group were compared, the posttest score of the IF group was higher than that of the DF group, suggesting that indirect corrective feedback might be more effective in improving grammatical accuracy as measured by both a discrete-point grammatical test and journal writing.

Key words: corrective feedback, grammar, L2 Writing

INTRODUCTION

Although the current approach to teaching English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) is focused on improving the learners' integrated skills, i.e. listening, speaking, reading, and writing, the most challenging skill for EFL learners seems to be the writing skill since this skill requires a lot of other subskills and knowledge from the learners including vocabulary, sentence structure, and grammar. Similarly important is reasoning and logical thinking, which should help the EFL writers to express their opinions or feelings effectively. One factor that can make communication through writing problematic is the distance and time lapse between the writer and the reader. The reader does not share the same context with the writer and cannot make use of context to get the meaning across. Therefore, it is the writer's responsibility to make the text as clear as possible so that the reader gets the message that the writer really wants to convey.

In a writing class, in addition to assigning writing tasks to students, the teacher is expected to read and check those tasks. Checking and providing feedback on the students' writing pieces are especially challenging for teachers who are non-native speakers of English as they need to use their full competence of English, patience, and time (Freedman, 1987). Despite being time-consuming, checking and correcting errors in students' writing tasks are considered essential as they help learners to realize their own errors and discover their own limitation in producing written texts in the target language at both lexis and sentence levels. The students themselves usually expect their teacher to read their written pieces and provide them with corrective grammatical feedback. They may even feel unsatisfied if the teacher ignores these mistakes (Hyland, 1998).

Since writing in English is usually effortful for EFL learners, the teacher plays a very significant role in helping them to write effectively. Written feedback is a tool that the teacher can use to help solve problems regarding errors in the students' writing (Farahman, 2012). Based on the process approach to writing, it may be argued that error correction may not be necessary as long as the students' texts are comprehensible and that the focus should be on content rather than language. However, this approach may not be suitable in a context where language accuracy in writing is expected. ELF writers need to pay attention to both writing fluency and accuracy if they want to meet the expectations of academic discourse community; therefore, feedback on grammatical errors is necessary (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Hyland, 2003).

The issue about the effectiveness of corrective written feedback on improving grammatical accuracy is still a focus of attention by writing researchers and teachers alike. Although there has been increasing evidence about the positive effect of written feedback on improving some aspects of students' written grammatical errors (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2002; Sheen, 2007), it is still not clear which feedback strategy is more effective than another. Much more research deems necessary (Farahman, 2012).

This current study was different from some previous studies in a few aspects. Firstly, this study focused on only a few grammatical points including plural –s, pronouns, and regular and irregular past. A main reason is that the researchers did not want to bombard the students with too many unnecessary error corrections as this could confuse and discourage the students (Ferris, 1999). Secondly, in terms of research methodology, some previous studies counted the number of all erroneous points in students' writing pieces before receiving feedback and compared it with the number of all errors after receiving the feedback. This makes it difficult to decide if the kinds of errors found in later writing pieces are the same errors as those produced by the students in earlier tasks and if they had been corrected by the teacher before. This prevents us from clearly seeing the development of grammatical ability. This study, therefore, concentrated on studying mistakes of a few grammatical categories

only so that it can be ensured that grammatical errors found in the very first writing pieces were in the same categories as the errors found in later pieces. This study might help increase evidence about which kind of feedback, i.e. direct corrective feedback or indirect corrective feedback, could be more effective in helping develop the students' grammatical accuracy in their writing. Finally, the writing task used in this study is journal writing, which is a kind of free writing. In this linguistic context, the students were required to produce a target grammatical feature of this study, i.e. regular and irregular past. In addition, in this study, the journals were not scored according to language accuracy, but the students would receive points for writing journals. These journal writing points were categorized in the affective domain so that the students would feel free and be motivated to write with their full ability. The minimum number of words per journal were set for each journal.

This study was, therefore, aimed at studying the effects of direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback on improving grammatical accuracy in L2 students' writing. The results of this study might be useful for L2 writing teachers and would provide more information for choosing appropriate feedback to improve grammatical accuracy in L2 writing.

SECOND LANGUAGE (L2) WRITING

Writing is a difficult task even in one's native language (Celce-Murcia, 1991) because the language system needs to be acquired first. Besides, unlike speaking and listening skills, writing cannot be acquired naturally but requires instruction, practice, and experience (Johanne, 2002). According to Johanne, writing includes the organization of texts in the way that the writer can transmit information in different text types or genres. Particularly for L2 writing, L2 writers need to be able to master the language as well as knowing writing strategies and techniques. This supports what Silva (1993) has proposed that L1 writing and L2 writing are different in writing strategies, using expressions, and linguistic principles; therefore, L1 and L2 writing instructions are inevitably different.

- To learn English as a foreign language (EFL), learners may have to write different kinds of texts such as paragraphs, essays, reports, articles, for different purposes (e.g. to inform, to explain, to narrate, to persuade, to argue). However, no matter what the purpose is, writing usually involves three elements: the audience, the goal/aim, and the genre.

Concerning the writing approach, two dominant approaches that have been mentioned during the past few decades are the product approach, which emphasizes accuracy of grammar at the sentence level and the final product of the writing piece, and the process approach, which focuses on the steps involved in writing from the very first draft to the final draft (Nunan, 1999). The process approach to writing also pays attention to the revising step, believing that there is, in fact, no perfect writing, but the writers can always improve their writing piece through revising and rewriting multiple drafts. Writing instructors, according to this approach, do not focus only on the final product but also on the development in writing different drafts of the writers. This approach, therefore, encourages the learners to bring their thoughts to writing without having to be too concerned about accuracy at the early stage of writing. The learners usually exchange their work with peers and receive feedback on ideas and content before grammatical mistakes are corrected. The process writing then allows beginning EFL/ESL learners to write freely without having to worry about their errors and to be able to revise their work systematically at each step (Jarvis, 2002).

Important steps in the process writing include planning, drafting, reviewing, editing, rewriting, and writing the final draft. The process writing promotes EFL learners to communicate their message while developing their language literacy until they become competent in other skills including spelling, pronunciation, grammatical structure, and punctuation (Jarvis, 2002). According to this approach, communication of messages is crucial, so while learners are developing their handwriting, spelling, and grammar, though not very well or accurately, these works should be acceptable as they help the learners realize that this writing process gives them a chance to develop these sub-skills. Since multiple drafts are required for this approach, feedback is then essential as it is believed that the learners can make use of feedback they receive to improve their later drafts.

Concerning writing tasks in an L2 classroom, Raimes (1983) divides writing activities into three types: controlled writing, guided writing, and free composition. For controlled writing, the content and the writing form are determined by the instructor. The sentence or writing models are provided so that students can imitate or make just a few changes such as from singular nouns to plural nous or from present tenses to past tenses. Guided writing is developed from controlled writing, but the instructor provides some parts of content or language models to the students to practice writing. The instructor may give the first sentence, the last sentence, questions, or necessary information that can help the students to write. The students may participate in a discussion, take notes, exchange findings, and determine the writing form by themselves. Information from other media such as pictures, cartoons, pamphlets about tourist attractions, newspaper ads, maps, or tables, may be used. Finally, in free composition, the learners need to learn procedures in collecting and organizing ideas for their writing. The learners must be guided to realize the significance of notes, outline, and drafts because these steps are essential for organizing ideas before actually writing on the topic assigned. Free writing can then be considered another form of practicing the thinking process.

FEEDBACK IN L2 WRITING

Larsen Freeman (2003) defines feedback as evaluative information given to learners as related to the results of language learning. According to Larsen Freeman, feedback can be explicit or implicit. Based on their observation in a communicative second language classroom, Lyster and Ranta (1997) categorize feedback into six different types: explicit correction, recast, clarification request, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition. Feedback can be positive, when it signals to learners that their language output is comprehensible to the interlocutor or reader, or negative, when it alerts learners that there may be something wrong in their output. Some scholars in Second Language Acquisition believe that negative feedback is facilitating in, or even helpful for, L2 learning.

Providing feedback to learners' writing tasks is one of many important responsibilities of writing teachers as this shows that the teacher pays attention to writing tasks of individual learners. In general, learners often want their writing to be read, and receiving response from a reader allows student writers to know and correct their own mistakes. According to Ferris and Hedgcock (1998), although approaches to L2 writing have changed a great deal, one area that does not change is that both teachers and students still realize the significance of teacher feedback on student writing. By providing feedback to learners' writing, the teacher can play the role as an expert who provides guidance to the student writers, and then the students internalize the ways to solve writing problems which should help them to write better in the following tasks. This practice is in compliance with Vygotsky's concept of Zone of Proximal Development or ZPD, which emphasizes the role of an expert's guidance on the development of learners' skills (Hyland, 2003; Richards & Schmidt, 2002).

Although L2 writing teachers may use different strategies or techniques to provide feedback to learners and may give feedback on language or content, a controversial issue regarding feedback is whether feedback on grammatical errors is helpful in improving accuracy in further writing. Truscott (1996) argues strongly against this kind of feedback; however, Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) state that the students may feel frustrated and lack motivation and confidence if they do not receive any form of grammar feedback from the teacher.

Another controversial issue is who should provide feedback. Brumfit (1980) proposes that there are many benefits of peer feedback. For example, by reading other students' work, the students will find errors in their own work easily. Moreover, if group or pair discussion is applied for peer feedback activity, the students will have a chance to improve their conversation skills. In addition, students may find peer feedback more creative and more interesting than judgements from the teacher. However, Leki (1990) notes that teacher feedback is more preferred by most students as the teacher can point out errors in their writing, and then they can use this corrective feedback to improve their subsequent drafts.

Although teacher feedback is a usual practice of writing teachers and is expected by a number of students, one issue remains, i.e. how effective feedback should be given (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998). The impact of teacher feedback on helping to improve grammatical accuracy has been the issue of investigation in L2 writing, but the findings are still inconclusive. Some studies (e.g. Muth'im and Latief, 2014; Padgate, 1999; Robb et al, 1986) show that teacher corrective feedback did not help much with grammatical accuracy, while others (e.g. van Beuningen, 2011; Chandler, 2003; Sarigul, 2005) revealed positive effect of teacher corrective feedback. Still, some studies (e.g. Shintani and Ellis, 2013) showed different results of different feedback strategies. In addition, some studies investigated the explicitness or directness of feedback in order to see if this factor had any impact on improvement in grammatical accuracy. For example, Lalande's study (1982) showed that indirect feedback had advantages over direct feedback as it might draw learners' attention to the errors and help learners to learn to correct errors by themselves. Robb et al (1986) compared four types of feedback with different levels of salience or explicitness on writing of EFL students. The results of the study showed that, concerning improvement in linguistic accuracy, even though the students in these four groups were not significantly different, Robb et al noted that learners might benefit more from indirect feedback as it encouraged the learners to learn from their reflections and helped draw learners' attention to the erroneous points. Besides, it is quite easy and convenient for teachers to give incorrect feedback because they can just underline or circle around an erroneous point without having to correct the errors for the students. A number of studies reviewed in Ferris & Hedgcock (1998) which examined the effectiveness of direct and indirect corrective feedback seemed to yield results in favor of indirect feedback. Recently, Tang and Liu (2018) reported positive effects of indirect coded corrective feedback in helping the learners to improve their overall writing. However, the studies of van Beuningen (2008, 2012) seemed to indicate that direct corrective feedback was more effective for grammatical improvement.

Varying results of research about the effect of feedback on improving grammatical accuracy in writing so far may be due to many factors, such as whether the feedback is implicit (indirect) or explicit (direct), who provides feedback (teachers or peers), what target grammatical features are, how the feedback is given (coded or non-coded). Besides, classroom contexts where these studies were conducted are different, such as, ESL or EFL classrooms, writing tasks (casual writing e.g. log or journal writing or formal writing e.g. paragraph or essay writing, the number of drafts that students have to write, the duration when the feedback is applied. Although these factors make it too difficult or even impossible to come up with one absolute conclusion, this area of research can still shed more light on the effect of corrective feedback so that writing teachers may apply one of these feedback strategies to serve the purpose and classroom context.

RESEARCH METHODS

PARTICIPANTS

The population of this study was 321 Grade 9 students at a secondary school in Nan Province, Thailand. Two classes, consisting of 30 students each, out of the overall ten were selected through purposive sampling for a convenience reason. One group was assigned as the direct feedback group (DF Group), while the other was assigned as the indirect feedback (IF Group). Therefore, the design of this study was quasi-experimental in nature. An Independent t-test analysis of the pre-test scores on the target grammatical features showed that the two groups were not significantly different as shown in Table 1. This could be assumed that these two groups of students had the same level of proficiency in the target grammatical features at the outset of the study.

Table 1: Comparison of students' grammatical proficiency before the experiment

Group	n	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	%	t
Direct Corrective Feedback	30	33.1	9.9	55.2	0.23
Indirect Corrective Feedback	30	32.5	9.5	54.2	

$p > .05$

VARIABLES OF THE STUDY

The independent variables of this study were direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback given on the students' journals. The dependent variables were the students' scores on accuracy of the target grammatical points: plural –s, pronouns, and simple past of regular and irregular verbs.

RESEARCH TOOLS

Students' improvement on the target grammatical features was measured by two tools. The first one was a discrete-point test consisting of 60 items, and this test was used as a pre-test and a post-test. Before being used with the sample, the test items were reviewed by three experts for its validity, and then the test was tried out with 30 students who were not the subjects of this study but had similar characteristics to the subjects of this study. After the try-out, the test was analyzed for difficulty level and discrimination power. Only the items with the difficulty level of 0.20–0.80 and the discrimination power of not less than 0.20 were selected for the real test. The internal reliability of the test was assured by Cronbach Alpha, and the coefficient was acceptable ($r = .70$).

The other tool used to measure students' grammatical improvement was journal writing. The students were assigned to keep 10 weekly journals. Each journal had to contain at least 50 words. Accuracy scores in using the target features of Journal 2 and Journal 10 were compared to see if there was any improvement within each group, and the accuracy scores of Journal 10 of the DF and IF groups were compared to see if the two groups scored differently after receiving feedback for a period of time.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The data collection covered a period of 10 weeks during May-July 2016, and one of the researchers taught the two classes which were the subjects of this study. One group received direct feedback, while the other received indirect feedback. In the English Reading-Writing class, the teacher assigned the students of both groups to write a weekly journal consisting of at least 50 words for 10 weeks. The students were informed that the journal writing task would account for 10 per cent of the overall course evaluation, and they would receive the whole 10 per cent if they submitted all 10 journals. The journals would not be graded according to grammatical accuracy. The journals were collected each week so that the teacher could provide feedback on the journals within the same week and the students would have a chance to read the feedback before submitting the next journal. How each kind of feedback was given is demonstrated in Table 2 and Table 3.

Table 2: Examples of direct corrective feedback

Types of direct corrective Feedback	Example
Substitution	*was* *took* When I ~~am~~ a child, my father ~~take~~ me to school by his car.
Insertion	*s* *es* I have many book^ at home. I like to read the story about hero^like Superman, Batman, and Spiderman
Deletion	Yesterday I went to Makro with my mother. I saw many people**s** because Makro is a new shopping mall of Nan.

Table 3: Examples of indirect corrective feedback

Examples indirect corrective feedback
When I (am) a child, my father take me to school by his car.
I have many (book) at home. I like to read the story about (hero) like Superman, Batman, and Spiderman.
I usually play computer games with my brother. I really like to play games with (he)

Since the students' journals contained different numbers of words, percentage scores were used for data analysis. Accuracy scores of the students' second and last journals were calculated using the formula below and then compared.

% of accuracy for each grammatical point $= \dfrac{instances\ of\ accurate\ use\ of\ the\ target\ features}{instances of\ all\ target\ features\ appearing} \times 100$

% of accuracy for all grammatical points $= \dfrac{instances\ of\ accurate\ use\ of all\ grammatical\ features}{instances of\ all\ grammatical\ features\ appearing} \times 100$

The consistency in judging the students' grammatical errors was assured by using an intra-rater reliability measure. Twenty-five per cent of the journals each week from both experimental groups, a total of 144 journals, were randomly selected. Then they were rechecked one week after the first checking. The average percentage of internal consistency between the first and the second checking was shown in Table 4.

Table 4: Intra-rater reliability in judging the students' grammatical errors

Types of Errors	No. of errors of both groups		Percentage of Congruency
	1st checking	2nd checking	
Plural –s	49	48	97.96
Pronoun	37	37	100
Regular and Irregular Verbs	84	79	94.05
Average total	56.57	54.67	97.34

In addition, inter-rater reliability was applied to check the consistency of error checking. An independent rater, an American English-speaking teacher, was asked to check the errors in the students' journals. 135 journals already checked by the teacher were selected and rechecked by this external rater. The percentage of congruency between the teacher and the external rater was 94.09.

In the week after they completed their Journal 10, the students of both DF and IF groups sat for a post-test, which was the same one used for the pre-test

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

After 10 weeks, the students' grammatical proficiency regarding the target grammatical features (plural –s, pronoun, regular and irregular verbs) was assessed using two instruments. The first instrument was a discrete-point grammatical test, and the results show that the indirect feedback (IF) group received a significantly higher score than the direct feedback (DF) group as seen in Table 5.

Table 5: Students' post-test scores received from a discrete-point grammatical test

Group	n	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	%	t
Direct Feedback	30	37.03	9.33	61.72	7.22*
Indirect Feedback	30	51.27	5.45	85.44	

*p ≤ .05

When considering the pre-test and post test scores of each group, it was found that for the DF group the post-test scores for pronoun and regular/ irregular past were significantly higher than the pre-test scores. For plural –s, although the post-test score was slightly higher than the pre-test score, the difference was not significant. However, the total post-test score of all grammatical features was higher than the total pre-test score. The figures are displayed in Table 6.

For the IF group, the comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores shows that the post-test scores are significantly higher than the pre-test scores in all grammatical categories as seen in Table 7.

Table 6: Comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores of the direct feedback group

Target grammatical features	Pre-test		Post-test		t
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	
Pronoun	13.70	4.22	15.90	3.80	3.10*
Regular/Irregular verb	9.50	3.81	10.97	3.54	2.28*
Plural –s	9.87	3.45	10.17	3.79	0.46
Total	33.07	9.98	37.07	9.33	2.74*

*p ≤ .05

Table 7: Comparison of the pre-test and post-test scores of the indirect feedback group

Target grammatical features	Pre-test		Post-test		t
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	
Pronoun	13.17	3.85	18.83	0.99	8.25*
Regular/Irregular Verb	9.67	3.85	16.20	3.12	9.64*
Plural -s	9.67	3.25	16.23	2.60	11.50*
Total	32.51	9.47	51.26	5.45	11.51*

*p ≤ .05

The other instrument used to investigate the effect of direct and indirect feedback on the improvement of students' accuracy in using the target grammatical features was journal writing, and the percentages of accuracy in using the target grammatical features in journal writing were used. As can be seen in Table 8, the percentage of accuracy in using the target grammatical features in Journal 10 of the IF group is significantly higher than that of the DF group, indicating that at the end of the study session, the IF group could write with significantly more accuracy than the DF group.

The percentages of accuracy in using the target grammatical feature before and after receiving corrective feedback of each group were also compared, and the results shown in Table 9 indicate that for the DF group, although the percentages of all three grammatical features in Journal 10 seemed to be higher than those in Journal 2, the significant difference was found only in one feature, i.e. pronoun, though the total percentage of accuracy in Journal 10 was significantly higher than that in Journal 2.

Table 8: Students' scores received from percentage of accuracy in using the target grammatical features in Journal 10 between groups

Group	n	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	%	t
Direct Feedback	30	63.92	7.18	63.92	10.14*
Indirect Feedback	30	84.44	8.45	84.44	

*p ≤ .05

Table 9: Comparison of the percentages of accuracy in journal writing of the direct feedback group before and after receiving feedback

Target grammatical features	Journal 2		Journal 10		t
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	
Pronoun	57.54	16.24	69.31	17.23	3.70*
Regular/Irregular Verb	59.65	14.75	60.79	10.31	0.32
Plural -s	61.89	20.73	61.92	17.15	0.01
Total	59.91	6.52	63.92	7.18	2.56*

*p ≤ .05

Table 10 : Comparison of the percentages of accuracy in journal writing of the indirect feedback group before and after receiving feedback

Target grammatical features	Journal 2		Journal 10		t
	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	$\bar{x}$	S.D.	
Pronoun	56.94	10.18	84.87	12.31	8.40*
Regular/Irregular Verb	59.85	20.27	88.39	10.85	6.47*
Plural -s	62.25	17.69	82.01	16.03	5.45*
Total	60.28	4.63	84.44	8.45	14.10*

*p ≤ .05

In contrast, Table 10 shows that the percentages of accuracy in Journal 10 of the IF group are higher than those of Journal 2, indicating that for all three grammatical features the IF group could write their Journal 10 with significantly more accuracy than they did in Journal 2 in all three grammatical features. Moreover, the total accuracy score of Journal 10 was significantly higher than that of Journal 2.

Based on the findings above, when measured by a grammatical discrete-point test, the IF group received a significantly higher score than the DF group. This indicates that the former could develop their grammatical accuracy better than the latter. When considering the results within groups, it is obvious that the IF group developed average scores in all grammatical categories. In other words, indirect corrective feedback through underlining or circling the errors could lead to improvement in grammatical accuracy. These results agree with some previous studies that reveal advantages of implicit or indirect corrective feedback (Lalande, 1982; Robb et al, 1986). The results are also in accordance with those of the studies reviewed by Ferris & Hedgcock (1998). An important reason might be that this kind of feedback encouraged the learners to pay more attention to their mistakes because the teacher did not correct their errors explicitly. They might have to spend more time and effort trying to figure out or discover what was wrong with their writing and then to find solutions by themselves. This "minimal marking" is "more effective in stimulating student response … and also perhaps in developing self-editing strategies (Hyland, 2003, p. 181). The students then internalized these solutions, which assists in improving grammatical accuracy in their subsequent journals.

The findings also show that direct corrective feedback did not help the students in the DF group to improve their grammatical accuracy in using plural –s after receiving the feedback for a period of time, as measured either by a discrete-point test or by journal writing. This may be because this kind of feedback does not encourage the students to figure out the causes of their errors. If they are required to rewrite their work or if the linguistic context in their writing task requires them to produce the same grammatical point again, they will just copy what the teacher has corrected for them without knowing why or when –s is needed (Shintani & Ellis, 2013). The students' failure to improve accuracy in using plural –s may be due to the lack of understanding about English countable and uncountable nouns, and despite a simple and straightforward rule, this needs explanation and understanding.

When the average percentages of accuracy in using the target grammatical features in Journal 10, the last journal, were considered, it was found that the IF group scored significantly higher than the DF group. This shows that the students who received indirect corrective feedback were able to improve their grammatical accuracy in journal writing as well. In addition, when considering the score of each group, it is clearly seen that the average percentages of the IF group increased in all grammatical categories. In contrast, for the DF group, the scores of some grammatical categories, i.e. simple past of regular and irregular verbs and plural –s, did not increase significantly. In other words, direct corrective feedback did not seem to help the students to improve the use these grammatical features in their last journal. This may be because the students did not pay enough attention to the points that the teacher corrected, even though these two grammatical points are categorized as "treatable," that is, their format, use, and rules are clear (Ferris, 1999). It can then be said that indirect corrective feedback may be more suitable to deal with these grammatical points, while direct corrective feedback may be more suitable for untreatable grammatical errors. The rules or principles of using these linguistic features, e.g. word choice, idioms, sentence structure, are not clear or may not appear in textbooks where students can search and study by themselves.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In spite of existing debates about the effectiveness of corrective feedback, teacher written feedback is still considered crucial in L2 writing class (Hyland, 1998) as many students still prefer to get feedback which they believe can help them correct grammatical errors in their writing (Leki, 1990). Writing with grammatical accuracy is still important in some contexts, e.g. in a higher education context. Some educators believe that feedback promotes learners to learn from responding to the feedback they receive by trying to find ways to correct their errors and to develop their following writing (Ferris, 1999). Hyland (2003) and Hyland and Hyland (2006) also suggest that learners can benefit from teacher feedback because the errors indicated by the teacher can serve as a stepping stone for the learners to find errors by themselves and eventually to avoid the same kinds of errors, leading to more accuracy in their following writing pieces.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are proposed for further research.

1. Researchers who are interested in the feedback issue may also consider if the learners discuss the feedback they receive from the teacher with their peers in the same classroom. Researchers may study the effect of feedback together with

cooperative learning or knowledge sharing. The learners may also be encouraged to work together to correct their writing errors. In addition, peer assessment may occur naturally since students may want to express their opinions or share what they receive with their peers in a real classroom context. It might be interesting to see if or how these activities, when applied together with feedback, will lead to any effects in L2 learning. This concept is in accordance with Bitchener et al's study (2005), which yields a conclusion that direct written feedback, when used with student-teacher conferencing feedback, can considerably promote writing accuracy. The study of the effects of indirect corrective feedback used together with other feedback strategies might also yield interesting findings. In their study, Tang and Liu (2018) added affective teacher comments into indirect coded corrective feedback.

2. In a real classroom context, learners are different in many aspects. They have different learning styles. Learners' differences may result from socialization, cultural background, and their experiences (Hyland, 1998). However, if the teacher realizes and is sensitive to their learners' individual differences, he may make use of these differences to promote L2 learning. Therefore, either direct corrective feedback or indirect corrective feedback may not serve all learners as one size is not supposed to fit all (Ferris, 2012), and, for this reason, it may also be interesting to investigate the connection between learners' learning styles and effectiveness of different feedback types.

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