



ASSESSING THE IMPACT OF ERROR CORRECTION TECHNIQUES ON
WRITING PROFICIENCY OF BS EFL LEARNERS AT QURTUBA UNIVERSITY
OF SCIENCE AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY, PESHAWAR

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Abstract

The present study explores the effectiveness of various error correction methods, in improving the writing proficiency of BS EFL students studying at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar. A mixed-methods approach (qualitative and quantitative) was employed, analyzing data from 80 students divided into three experimental groups (direct, indirect, and peer feedback) and one control group. the mean achievement scores of the study participants in both the experimental and control groups were the same in the pre-test assessment. However, there was a significant difference between study participant groups in the post-test assessment score. Substantial improvements were observed in the direct feedback group, followed by the indirect feedback and then the peer feedback group with almost no change in the score as compared to the pre-test. In response to a question on preferred feedback techniques, 45% of respondents said they preferred direct correction since it was clear and quick. Followed by Indirect Corrective Feedback, which was favoured by 30% and only 20% of respondents liked peer review. However, according to the results of the study, the participants who had received written corrective feedback (WCF) significantly improved their writing proficiency. As a result, it is deduced that corrective feedback among other pedagogical strategies is essential in enhancing the writing proficiency of Learners even though direct WCF was still the most effective strategy among EFL university entrants in improving their writing skills.

Keywords: Error Correction, Writing Proficiency, EFL, Direct Feedback, Indirect Feedback, Peer Review

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INTRODUCTION

The demographics of people and communities that speak English have rapidly changed in recent years, and the number of English users and learners has increased at an unprecedented rate. Most of these users and learners would normally have been classified as "non-native" (Farzad Sharifian, 2008). The non-native English users face numerous challenges in mastering writing proficiency. They lack the necessary academic writing experience and are unable to adequately synthesize detailed information from reading materials (Fitria, 2022). Writing proficiency plays a crucial part in educational and professional settings in a second language (L2). However, the significance of English writing skills in academic setting can be linked to the fact that there are more L2 English users than L1 users, which is unprecedented (Nazar & Nordin 2024).

People are increasingly learning English writing skills both in academic and professional settings so that they can correspond with one another. The teaching of writing is not regarded, as is commonly the case, as only a means of language learning in relation to the mother tongue in so far as learning sentence structures and uses in the foreign language takes place (Ghafar & Mohamedamin, 2022). Both the educational and professional scenarios are requiring English writing proficiency due to its importance (Rahman, 1990). However, our students lack the skills essential in today's environment. This may be attributed to the fact that the basic education system is "not up to the mark and that is why the students feel difficult to talk through English at the postgraduate level" (Akram & Nosheen, 2013). Error correction is viewed as a way to provide learners with feedback on how they use language. Correcting learners' mistakes when they write or speak is one of the most challenging aspects of language acquisition. Wu and Garza (2014) emphasized the significance of error analysis in the learning process, as it provides educators with insights into the specific areas that require attention.

These deficiencies may stem from ineffective teaching methods or gaps in the students' proficiency in English. Chaudhary and Alzahrani (2020) further elaborated on the necessity of writing error analysis, asserting that it has become essential for identifying the areas of difficulty in students' English writing learning journey. Once these weaknesses are identified, teachers can collaborate with students to address these challenges, thereby preventing them from becoming passive participants in the classroom due to fear of making mistakes. According to Candling (2001), error analysis involves exploring and monitoring students' language use.

The type of feedback teachers use to handle and correct language errors will help students to have better written production (Salteh & Sadeghi, 2012). Immediate feedback occurs when the correct format of the answer appears on a student's paper. For the errors in spoken and written language, other methodologies such as anecdotal correction enable students to feel less restricted to experiment with new forms of language or, at the very least, with what they perceive to be correct. In contrast, there is the indirect type of feedback, which can be given in the form of highlighting, underlining or circling errors without the correct form provided (Lee, 2004). Similarly in peer feedback, students are correcting other students. This helps create a positive class environment because students understand that the teacher is not the single point of correction and students have a lot to learn from each other. As a means of error identification, employing these error correction approaches has many benefits for learners of EFL.

However, the students at Quaruba University Peshawar lack expertise in English writing skills. This is a gap that we planned to fill by attempting to evaluate the impact of Error Correction Techniques on Writing Proficiency in BS EFL Learners at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar and to identify the best method for correction technique that impede students' writing efficiency. It also focuses on recommending the corrective feedback method that could prove effective in enhancing writing skills.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is based on relevant theoretical linguistic and psychological explanations concerning the role and effectiveness of error correction in second language learning. An influential framework is Richard Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis (NH), which claims that language learners must actively notice linguistic forms that are part of their language to be able to acquire them. Schmidt makes a distinction between noticing and awareness, and argues that noticing the errors in written corrective feedback (WCF) is an important condition for the development of the language.

This is consistent with the research emphasis on even different types of corrective feedback, where adequate correction should heighten the EFL learners' self-monitoring to their errors. Earlier, Ellis's *Typology of Corrective Feedback* (2009) differentiated explicit from implicit feedback as well, acknowledging different levels of cognitive involvement of learners. This framework forms the basis of the study, which investigates the effects of direct, indirect, peer feedback on the development of writing proficiency and how the different types of feedback support second language (L2) learners in self-correcting while trying to internalize linguistic structures.

The other significant theoretical underpinning was Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000) which focuses on motivation in learning. Three psychological needs, competence, relatedness and autonomy are considered basic to the development of self-regulated learning behavior in the SDT. As regards WCF, this study investigates the impact of different feedback modes on learners' motivation and engagement with writing. Immediate error correction, for example, can exaggerate learners' sense of competence by offering instant correction whereas delayed feedback nurtures autonomy by promoting a process of self-discovery of errors. Peer critique, based on the collaborative learning theory, is congruent to Vygotsky's Sociocultural Theory, which highlights the influence of social interaction on cognitive development. Through an examination of learners' responses to these feedback approaches, this study makes a further contribution in extending our knowledge of the role of accuracy and cognitive / motivational dimensions in second language writing development. While using these perspectives, this study investigates whether specific forms of error correction i.e. direct, indirect and peer feedback, boost BS EFL learners writing abilities.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Correction strategies have also been widely recognized as a part of L1 and L2 writing process (Srichanyachon, 2011). The study of the effectiveness of peer editing on feedback quality in the L1 and response orientation in the L2 has not been so clearcut. L2 students favour feedback provided by teachers over peer-editing (2011). Likewise, Zhang (1995) discovered that students favoured feedback from teacher to that from peer. Students at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar are not competent enough to write English in order to communicate. Negative past experiences and a lack of emphasis on error correction in BS English courses impede progress despite its significance.

Research on successful tactics is required to explore the best error corrective method in our part of the region in BS EFL learners.

RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

1. To identify which error correction technique is most effective in improving writing proficiency.
2. To examine how these techniques influence short-term and long-term writing proficiency across varying levels of language proficiency.
3. To assess and evaluate the impact of different error correction techniques (direct, indirect, peer feedback) on the writing proficiency of BS EFL learners at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To fulfill the above-mentioned objectives, this study has addressed the following research questions.

1. What types of error correction techniques are most commonly applied to improve the writing proficiency of BS EFL learners at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar?
2. How do different error correction techniques impact the short-term and long-term writing proficiency of BS EFL learners at varying proficiency levels?
3. Why do BS EFL learners at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar prefer certain error correction methods over others, and how do these preferences affect their learning outcomes?

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

This study has important implications for English language teaching, second language acquisition, and educational practices in EFL settings. This study intends to fill the gap in this regard through investigating the effectiveness of three types of error correction techniques i-e direct, indirect and peer feedback on the writing skill of BS level EFL students at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar. In the same study, learners' preferences and attitudes towards error correction types shed light how feedback may be modified to suit a variety of learners in multilingual classroom settings. This study contributes to global knowledge by describing the best error correction strategy in BS EFL learners. The findings of this study may have an impact on curriculum planning and the implementation of new regulations on this topic.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The concept of error is neither new nor unknown. Ellis (1994) defined "an error as a deviation from the norms of target language" (p. 51) in reference to the idea of "error" in language learning. Error occurs when a student's language performance deviate from the target language due to a lack of knowledge; this shows a lack of competence on the part of the learner (Corders, 1967).

Error correction, according to Li, S. (2014), refers to the replies or responses of peers or language teachers to learners' incorrect performances in second or foreign languages. Mostly used in second or foreign language classes, error correction is a basic and significant component of language teaching and learning. The studies cited the discouraging effects on learners' motivation and self-confidence as the main reason why learners' mistakes frequently have consequences (Ha & Murray, 2021; Lyster et al., 2013 & Gul.N et al., 2022).

It is consistently observed that the expectations and attitudes of teachers and learners on the handling of mistakes in the classroom are different and evolving. Though a few error

correction feedback types are used in different contexts, this study explores only the uses of direct, indirect and peers error correction feedback.

TYPES OF ERROR CORRECTION TECHNIQUES

DIRECT ERROR CORRECTION:

This approach was in line with the treatment of Lalande (1982) and Robb et al. (1986), immediate feedback that is given by teacher who gives students the correct form of error correction. The following is one benefit of providing direct corrective feedback: students receive explicit guidance with what they need to do to correct the errors they have made (Lightbown & Spada, 1990). Ferris and Roberts (2001) claim that direct feedback is probably more beneficial than indirect feedback, just as it seems to be the case with weaker writers. Maisa noticed that if students are provided with direct correction, they will become dependent and indifferent to their errors. The disparities in the backgrounds of the teachers may also be connected to the variances in their opinions.

INDIRECT ERROR CORRECTION:

Indirect corrective feedback is when the teachers notice the errors, but does not provide forms, and expects the students to find and correct the errors themselves (Lee, 2004). In immediate correction the teacher supplies the accurate form (Ellis, 2009A). The students are asked to locate and rectify their errors (Zaman & Azad, 2012).

Indirect feedback is in fact more successful in helping students fix their mistakes (Lanlande,1982). The teacher points out the mistakes by highlighting, underlining, or coding them, and then lets the students fix them (Guenette, 2007). Lee also makes a distinction between indirect feedback systems that have a code and those that do not.

Furthermore, it is still undeniable that indirect feedback requires less time and effort from the teacher than direct feedback. Teachers can use this kind of feedback to help students learn by having them self-edit their own writing with little time and effort. Indirect feedback provides a more challenging task for learners to correct the error according to their learning.

PEER FEEDBACK

Peer feedback, also called peer review, peer response, or peer revision, is the collaborative actions in which students actively communicate in an academic field to offer feedback on their own written or oral drafts (Liu and Edwards, 2018). Peer feedback has been utilized extensively in L1 writing classes since the 1970s to enable students to assess their peers' drafts and apply text revisions to address a variety of problems (Bruffee, 1984; Gere, 1987; Spear, 1988). Students benefit from peer input in a variety of ways. In particular, peer feedback boosts learners' autonomy and gives them the opportunity to practice and improve collaborative writing (Nunan, 1993). Due to its positive effects on boosting writing skills, critical thinking abilities, teamwork, higher order skills, and self-reliance in learning, peer evaluation has become popular in higher education.

In most of the previous research, the opinions of students regarding the advantages of peer evaluation have been investigated and have been found to be positive (Gencha, 2018). Yet lack of credibility for feedbacks from peers, and the scarcity of positive peer feedback, are the pivotal points on which the influence of peer feedback would depend.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON ERROR CORRECTION TECHNIQUES: COMPARISON OF DIRECT AND INDIRECT FEEDBACK

The effects of direct versus indirect corrective feedback on written accuracy in an EFL context has been explored in various studies. Indirect coded feedback, has been found to increase the level of correctness of written texts among Turkish EFL students as reported

by Erel and Bulut (2007), where the 16 participants who received direct feedback (outside of face-to-face interaction) and the 21 participants who received indirect feedback showed fewer number of errors in the latter. Tang and Liu (2018) also observed that error-coders in the essay editing task had a significantly higher performance than their error-maker peers did, from a data of 56 participants in multiple writing tasks. Another study on the lasting effects of written corrective feedback carried out by Rahimi (2009) found that the Iranian EFL students who had received indirect feedback performed better than those in the control group receiving general feedback. The lack of specific feedback demotivated the latter group. Various scholars, such as Bitchener (2012) and Polio (2012), have suggested that factors like learning context and metacognitive knowledge may affect feedback responses.

EFFECTIVENESS OF PEER FEEDBACK

Peer feedback is recognized as an effective strategy to enhance L2 writing, bolstering students' self-esteem, critical thinking, and social interaction skills (Ferris, 1995; Koka & Hein, 2006).

Peer feedback fosters self-awareness of students' learning strengths and shortcomings, promoting autonomy in education (Morgan, 2002). Students benefit from both giving and receiving feedback, enhancing communicative skills, critical thinking, and acceptance of diverse viewpoints (White & Caminero, 1995, in Farrah, 2012). Peer feedback is an effective strategy to improve L2 writing, increasing motivation, self-esteem, and social interaction (Ferris, 1995; Koka & Hein, 2006). However, research on its impact on writing self-efficacy shows mixed results; while some studies indicate an increase in self-efficacy due to peer feedback (Chaudron, 1984; Tsui and Ng, 2000; Lee and Evans, 2019), other findings suggest a decrease (Ruegg, 2018).

LEARNER PREFERENCES FOR FEEDBACK METHODS

Hyland and Hyland's (2006) review highlights unresolved issues in feedback research, showing that students value teacher input but also respect peer evaluation, with varying preferences for corrective feedback across EFL/ESL contexts.

Katayama's (2007) research highlighted elicitation as the most favored error correction technique among students. This approach alleviates cognitive load during self-correction, directing learners' attention to specific grammatical metalanguage.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is a mixed method study to investigate the influence of the error correction techniques and its effect on the writing ability of BS EFL students, studying at Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar. Combination of quantitative and qualitative methods allow the reader to develop a broader understanding of the effectiveness of learners' preferences, and long-term impact of various error correction strategies. Quota sampling was adopted in the selection of the sample population to obtain a balanced representation on certain predetermined strata (including age, class, and gender). This sampling method was required because of the conservative nature of the community when some students were not willing to be involved in the study for fear of breaking confidentiality. Graduate participants were selected based on their close proximity to real-world job opportunities. Statistical analysis was done through tabulation and the results were described in percentages.

The effectiveness of error correction procedures was investigated in a true classroom setting using a quasi-experimental pre-test post-test design. A quasi-experimental design was chosen because it best replicates real-world educational contexts.



Quasi-experimental investigations are useful because they are able to duplicate real life scenarios and at the same time maintain regulated intervention/s (Rogers and Revesz, 2019). The experimental and comparison groups were not randomly selected, the design employed was a non-equivalent control group design (Sari et al., 2022). Participants of the study included were Eighty BS-EFL Students of Business and Management Sciences, Qurtuba University of Science & Information Technology Peshawar. They were divided in to four groups, three were experimental and one was control group. The treatment given to the experimental classes was delivered in three forms: Group 1 (direct error correction), Group 2 (indirect error correction) and Group 3 (peer feedback). No explicit error correction was provided to the control group as a base-line control.

The sample was drawn by stratified random sampling to maintain representation across three different levels of proficiency namely beginners, intermediate and advanced. The ultimate sample size of 80 students was deemed large enough for reliable statistical and thematic analysis, this exceeding the minimum of 46 students needed for English language testing. To divide the subjects into experimental and control groups, the stratified random sampling technique based on T-Yamani's sampling model was utilized. Students were included in the study based on their informed consent, while those with prior exposure to similar research or experience in teaching error correction were excluded.

Participants initially wrote a 250-300 word essay on "How Can We Improve the Quality of Education in Pakistan?" as a pre-test. Over four weeks, the experimental groups received error correction feedback focusing on grammar, vocabulary, coherence, and structure. After 2-3 weeks, a post-test writing assessment was conducted to evaluate progress. Data on students' attitudes towards the feedback methods was gathered, analyzed using descriptive statistics. Qualitative data were obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions with students and teachers and was analysed thematically. Before conducting the investigation, prior consent was obtained from (Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Peshawar's) Research Ethics Committee.

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The descriptive statistics provide an overview of the mean scores and standard deviations for the pre-test and post-test results of participants across four groups: direct correction, indirect correction, peer feedback, and control group.

TABLE 1. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS SHOWING MEAN SCORE WRITING ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

Group	Pre-test Writing Achievement Score Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Direct	49.11	7.4	20
Indirect	48.81	8.3	20
Peers Feedback	49.60	7.9	20
Control Group	48.9	8.1	20

Descriptive statistics of the pre-test can be seen in Table 1. Comparison between the Writing Means Achievement scores in the Writing of the Participants: The comparison between the writing means achievement scores in the writing of the participants in the study in the experimental groups and the counter-parts in the control group at the pretest, indicated that, the writing means achievement scores of the study participants in the experimental and control groups were the same.

Table 2 Average writing achievement scores by study group at pre-test. In Table 2, there was no such a difference in the average of the preliminary writing scores across study groups.

For example, the mean score achieved in the pretest ranged from the mean score of 49.60 to 48.81. This result also shows that the baseline writing proficiency of all the participant groups were similar as well.

TABLE 2. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS SHOWING MEAN SCORE WRITING ACHIEVEMENT RESULTS

Group	Post-test Writing Achievement Score Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Direct	69.75	6.2	20
Indirect	62.28	6.7	20
Peers Feedback	59.90	6.9	20
Control Group	49.60	7.4	20

As is evident from the table above the scores of the study participants in direct group who were administered with direct written corrective feedback (WCF) had mean writing achievement score (69.75, 6.2) is better than those who were administered indirect WCF (62.28, 6.7) and students who were given peers feedback also improved their score but it was even less than the experimental group with a mean score 59.9 and a standard deviation 6.9. In the no feedback group, the differences between pre-test scores and post-test scores were essentially zero. This, in addition, indicates that writing among the learners who participated in the study varied. So, after controlling the covariate effect, there was something of significant difference for the mean of writing learner achievement and participants of the study (posttest), this means that participants for all groups are different base on the t-test in the posttest. As an example, by comparing the writing performance of the learning study participants for the direct group (i.e., they did not receive direct error correction) with the control group (i.e., they do not receive corrective feedback), one finds that the direct group improved almost by 20%. Study participants' performance improved after receiving indirect writing corrective feedback as well, compared to their peers and the control group, yet it seemed to be less effective than the direct corrective feedback. Also, those participants who received from peers human feedback improved their scores more than those of the control group.

COMPARISON OF LEARNER PREFERENCES

When asked about their preferred feedback methods, learners expressed varying preferences based on their individual learning styles and emotional responses to feedback. The following breakdown emerged:

45% preferred making direct corrections, noting the ease, the immediacy, and the confidence the method offered for their writing. These students did appreciate having their errors corrected, however, because it allowed them to swiftly correct and keep on going.

30% favoured indirect feedback, liking the fact they had been given the opportunity for self-correction but finding it difficult to spot and correct mistakes without guidance. These participants appreciated the independence and the critical thinking abilities indirect correction developed; however, some of them admitted it to be frustrating when they were not sure the self-corrections were right.

20% appreciated peer feedback, particularly in the context of collaborative learning and peer interaction. Although they valued the input of their classmates, they were skeptical of the reliability of the advice, and questioned at times the precision of peer corrections.

5% showed no significant preference which may be a mix of preferences or dissatisfaction about all mentioned methods. These students might have disliked that neither of the feedback method options suited their needs entirely or that they preferred a more hybrid approach, making use of aspects of both feedback methods.

Taken together, the qualitative data suggests that students tended to find value in well-justified corrective feedback, but that their attitudes were conditioned by their learning preferences, emotional responses to feedback, and comfort with the feedback process.

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS

The direct correction improved the writing proficiency more and the students' post-test writing achievement scores are corresponding. This result is also supported by qualitative data, in which students overwhelmingly favoured direct correction because of its clarity and immediacy. These students indicated that immediate feedback helped them to identify and correct their mistakes promptly, improved their confidence and writing ability. Indirect feedback, although found to be effective, did not lead to substantially better-quality writing. It is consistent with the qualitative findings in which some students reported that indirect correction promoted self-correction and independence but that they had difficulty with it at times. A lot of students mentioned that they had difficulty figuring out what they did wrong, became frustrated and lost confidence. However, there were some learners who liked the chance of self monitoring and being independent in what the indirect correction offered.

While there was not a direct assessment of peer review in the quantitative data, peer review clearly contributed to collaborative learning. A high level of value for peer feedback as a support to develop critical thinking, encourage learner's self-reflection and discussion was also evident from qualitative responses. However, reservations about the validity of peer review were also voiced, indicating peer feedback might be most powerful in the presence of other feedback types.

Combining these quantitative and qualitative results creates a more complete picture of how varying feedback method sanctions are associated with writing ability. Direct correction is found to be the most effective, followed by indirect correction, which is beneficial but may be more difficult for some students. Peer feedback is not as trustworthy a single source of technique, even though it is useful.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to test the influence of three types of error correction (direct, indirect and peer feedback) on the writing ability of the BS students studying English as second language (EFL) in the Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology, Peshawar. Findings suggest that although all feedback modes brought about a degree of improvement, immediate corrective feedback proved to be the most effective for students' writing development.

The post-test writing scores showing the highest increase in the direct feedback group, and the indirect feedback group was found respectively. Even with the benefit of peer feedback, however, this method, despite its rich collaborative potential, emerged not as effective as the rest. This is consistent with the quantitative results in which the direct feedback group improved their writing significantly, the peer feedback group improved

moderately, not significantly, and the control group fared least well in terms of writing performance.

The study identified potential limitations despite good outcomes. According to the majority of students, they preferred DCF as being clearer and immediately focused, while some students perceived ICF was more self-corrective and independent, but it also resulted in frustration for many students. Peer feedback provided students with a sense of collaborative learning, but it was not highly reliable as a single means of developing writing performance since students lacked confidence in its reliability.

Nevertheless, there are some limitations in this study that should be pointed out. There is a possibility of bias due to lack of random assignment to groups, which might be present in the results. Moreover, the short-term monitoring of writing skills gives rise to the issue of whether the gains we observed can be sustained. The sample could have been larger to improve the generalisability of the results.

In short, whereas direct corrective feedback appears to be the most powerful for enhancing writing ability, the combination of other feedback types for the purpose of learning of a foreign language should be further explored. The role of learner preference and how this might impact efficacy of feedback methods also should be considered. This research adds to this by providing information about error correction strategies, but further research should be done to overcome the weaknesses of this research by deepening the methodological approach and validation to the long-term effect.

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