

CÁC HÌNH THỨC CHỮA LỖI SAI GIÁN TIẾP VÀ SỰ TIẾN BỘ TRONG KỸ NĂNG VIẾT CỦA SINH VIÊN NGOẠI NGỮ

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Nghiên cứu này tập trung phân tích những hình thức chữa lỗi hiệu quả mà sinh viên ưa thích nhất ở trình độ sơ trung cấp. Ba nhóm sinh viên được chữa lỗi với các hình thức khác nhau: mã hóa, không mã hóa, và không được chữa lỗi. Sự tiến bộ của các nhóm này được phân tích qua thuật toán SPSS cùng với kết quả từ công cụ nghiên cứu khác chỉ ra rằng chữa lỗi sai dạng mã hóa là hình thức chữa lỗi hiệu quả nhất và cũng được ưa thích nhất. Tuy nhiên, thành công của việc chữa lỗi không đảm bảo bài viết mới không lặp lại các lỗi sai cũ.

Từ khóa: lỗi sai, tự sửa lỗi, kỹ năng viết.

The research aims at identifying the most effective and favorable corrective feedback form among students at pre-intermediate level. Three groups of participants' had their errors treated differently, using coded feedback, non-coded feedback, and no feedback. Their improvements in writing skill were analyzed by SPSS. Besides, results from other research tools showed that coded feedback was the most effective and highly evaluated form. However, success in revision task did not guarantee error-free subsequent writings.

Key words: writing errors, self editing, writing skill.

IMPACTS OF INDIRECT FEEDBACK ON STUDENTS' WRITING IMPROVEMENTS

1. Rationale for the research

Teachers in EFL contexts like Vietnam make a lot of efforts to give corrective feedback with the hope that feedback would help students avoid errors and make improvements in their writing accuracy. However, it has been a center of debate for many years. Truscott (1996) asserted that corrective feedback was useless and should be abandoned, while other researchers claimed that we should

keep providing learners with feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982). No conclusive answers have ever been announced though a large number of researchers have involved in conducting both short-term and long-term studies on this issue. One reason accounting for that may lie in the fact that we have many ways to give feedback and L2 learners of different proficiency levels may need different types of feedback. Therefore, up till now, teachers are still wondering whether feedback should be given or not, and if yes, which type of feedback is the most beneficial to learners.

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In spite of a wide range of research which has been conducted to investigate writing feedback practice in different EFL contexts, to the best knowledge of the researcher, there has been little study ever carried out in Hanoi University in particular and in Vietnam in general. Therefore, the researcher decided to choose the topic “The impacts of indirect feedback students’ writing improvements” to investigate and provide an insightful view into writing feedback practice in Vietnam.

2. Research aims

The purpose of this study is to examine the practices of giving writing feedback in the Foundation Studies Department in Hanoi University. It aims specifically to (1) investigate the impacts of different types of indirect feedback on lower-intermediate students’ self-correction ability and their performance in a new writing task, and (2) identify students’ preferences towards teachers’ feedback.

The research hopes to make a modest contribution to an increasing concern about the relationship between teachers’ feedback and students’ writing accuracy development. The findings of the study are hopefully helpful for teachers in understanding students’ perceptions of feedback, thus enabling them to select the most suitable type of feedback. In addition, the study also provides some new information and advice for feedback practice and future studies.

3. Literature review

3.1. *Feedback on different types of errors*

Errors undeniably had a valid place in second language acquisition, which was mentioned by Schmidt’s (2001) as a conscious process. Unlike L1 which people could absorb unconsciously, during the process of internalization of L2, learners should consciously notice the gap between their interlanguage – the language that they produced (Sinker, 1972, cited in de Bot, Lowie & Verspoor, 2005) and the native-like language. One way to help students fill up the gap was through the provision of corrective feedback which “refers to the responses to a learner’s nontargetlike L2 production” (Li, 2010, p.309).

Several researchers (Lalande, 1982; Ferris *et al.*, 2000) noted that different linguistic categories should not be treated equally, because each of them represented different aspects of knowledge. As an advocate of this idea, Ferris (1999) proposed a distinction between “treatable” and “untreatable” errors. The former “occur in a patterned, rule – governed way” (p.6), for example verbs, subject and verb agreement, noun endings, articles, pronouns and spelling, while the latter are “idiosyncratic” and students hardly refer to any handbook or set of rules to correct these errors, namely lexical errors, missing words, unnecessary words, word order problems, and sentence structure.

Teachers often treated “untreatable” errors by directly giving correct forms while choosing to mark “treatable” errors and let students self-correct them (Ferris *et al.*, 2000) because the teachers intuitively believed that their students would be unlikely to correct “untreatable” errors if they were marked indirectly, as claimed by Chaney (1999). For “untreatable” errors, we cannot expect students to improve over one night. They really need a lot of time and efforts to enrich their knowledge as well as increase their exposure to the target language in order to select words appropriately and use correct expressions for what they want to express. It is advisable that reading will help students with writing because they can learn a lot from smooth and accurate expressions in academic articles. Also, some rules in writing sentences should be well kept in minds so that they can avoid some simple but stupid mistakes of run-ons or fragments.

3.2. Indirect feedback and different types of indirect feedback

One distinction that has to be made clear is between direct and indirect error feedback. Direct feedback mentions the correct forms of errors for the students, whereas, the indirect feedback refers to the teachers’ indication of errors, leaving the students to self-correct them (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Though there are no conclusive findings about which kind of feedback (direct or indirect) is more helpful, many researchers reported that indirect feedback assisted students to

make accuracy progress in the long run while the direct feedback could only show progress in short time period (Lalande, 1982; Ferris *et al.*, 2000) or at least equally as well (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003). As noted by Lalande (1982), indirect feedback triggered “guided learning and problem solving process” (p.40), which required students to edit errors by themselves, thus enhancing students’ development overtime (Ferris, 2006, as cited in Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Studies on indirect feedback try to further differentiate the indirect feedback with or without codes. Coded feedback means marking the errors at their location and labelling types of errors with codes, e.g. “WF” (signals the error of word form), or VT (signals the error of using wrong verb tense. Non –coded feedback, on the other hand, refers to located errors, leaving the students to figure out the types of errors themselves (Bitchener *et al.*, 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). There are some researchers who evaluate the effectiveness of coded and non-coded feedback (Robb *et al.*, 1986; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003). Chandler (2003) reported that there was a difference between coded group and non-coded group, while the other authors found that there were no significant differences between the group treated with coded feedback and the group given non-coded feedback in students’ development in grammar accuracy.

Lee (1997) stated that the use of codes should be based on students' understanding of concepts represented by the codes and if students were not aware of the codes, then the effectiveness of codes should be questioned. He also warned that teachers should be careful in using error codes, which can be seen by teachers' consistency in using codes when giving feedback on students' writings. It can be widely seen that teachers of EFL classrooms often introduce the writing codes but hardly follow them from the beginning to the end of the writing course. This can be explained by the fact that it is time-consuming for teachers to detect the errors and identify the error types at the same time for a huge number of writings or codes sometimes are too short to convey teachers' comments on students' writings. As such, the effects of coded feedback cannot be fully demonstrated.

3.3. Students' perceptions and preferences on teachers' error feedback

In comparison with a sizable number of studies on writing feedback, there is far less research on students' preferences or opinions on the teachers' feedback. Truscott (1996), when taking students' opinions into account, claimed that learners found error feedback helpful but unpleasant, or even stressed sometimes and it may lead to students' avoidance of using complex structures (1996). Thus, he made a robust statement that error correction in writing should be abolished because of its harmfulness to the improvement in writing accuracy. Ferris

(1995), reversely, proposed that students had positive views about writing feedback and they were really annoyed when no feedback was given (1995). Other previous studies strongly approved Ferris's idea (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hyland, 2001; Lee, 2004; Rahimi, 2004; Diab, 2006; Vokic, 2008). They all agree upon the fact that the students highly evaluate their teacher's feedback and they are really unhappy when they do not receive error feedback.

Radecki and Swales (1988) implemented surveys and questionnaire with 59 participants and withdrew a conclusion that the majority preferred both feedback on content and feedback on linguistics errors. Opinions varied when some preferred self-editing and some wanted to have all the errors edited by the teachers. Rather similarly, Leki (1991) reported good writings were error-free, as indicated by students, thus they expected their teachers to correct all the written errors. The reason for students' preferences for direct feedback was that indirect feedback sometimes cannot provide enough information for them to correct syntactic errors (Leki, 1991; Roberts, 2001). On the other hand, studies implemented by Arndt (1993), Saito (1994), and Hyland (2001) indicated that students wanted to receive indirect feedback, which helped them be more active in self-editing the errors that they made.

In short, most of students highly evaluated teachers' feedback. However, their preferences and opinions about

teachers' writing feedback embraced significant differences which may be attributed to their proficiency levels, individual differences, needs, and demands (Hyland, 1998). Therefore, consideration of students' personal requirements and desires has become noticeably important for writing teachers so that their feedback can induce the best results.

4. Methodology

4.1. Participants

30 students (22 females and 8 males) of two classes in the Foundation Studies Department (FSD) in Hanoi University were involved in the study. They had to learn English intensively for nearly 25 class hours per week in three semesters, each of which lasts for three months. They would take the IELTS final test (institutional test) and should get at least 5.5 to move on to their specialization departments. The two classes had studied with the same writing teacher for two semesters already; thus, it can be safely assumed that they were provided with the same course, same teaching materials and same instructions about writing skill.

4.2. Materials

The study took place in the final semester. For the first two weeks, the students were taught about the format of academic paragraph writing with theory and practice about how to write topic sentences, supporting sentences, concluding

sentence, and how to support ideas with examples, explanations, or reasons.

Students were asked to do a grammar test (a Prior Grammatical Knowledge Test), aiming at (1) checking their knowledge of the five target error items namely verb errors, noun ending errors, article errors, wrong word errors, and sentence structure errors; (2) excluding the possibility that they were successful at self-editing their writing errors thanks to superior grammatical knowledge. The 20-minute test consisted of 16 sentences, which required students to identify the errors and correct them.

4.3. Procedure

The study started in the third week of the last semester and lasted for three weeks. Firstly, students were introduced about the aim and the design of the study. They were also informed about the categorization of class into three groups (treated with coded feedback, non-coded feedback, and no feedback), but they only knew which group they belonged to after they finished the first writing.

In the fourth week, they were assigned to produce a paragraph within 30 minutes in class. After the writings were collected, the students were requested to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses in terms of five grammatical items on the first page of their own diaries. A detailed description of five error categories (cited in Ferris & Roberts, 2001) is presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Description of error categories used for feedback
(Ferris & Roberts, 2001)

Verb errors	All errors in verb tense or form, including relevant subject–verb agreement errors.
Noun ending errors	Plural or possessive ending incorrect, omitted, or unnecessary; includes relevant subject – verb agreement errors.
Article errors	Article or other determiner incorrect, omitted, or unnecessary.
Wrong word	All specific lexical errors in word choice or word form, including preposition and pronoun errors. Spelling errors only included if the (apparent) misspelling resulted in an actual English word.
Sentence structure	Errors in sentence/clause boundaries (run-ons, fragments, comma splices), word order, omitted words or phrases, unnecessary words or phrases, other unidiomatic sentence construction.

All writings were randomly divided into three groups, basing on the class list: students numbered 1, 4, 7, 10, etc belonged to “coded” group (CG henceforth), students numbered 2, 5,8,11, etc were assigned in “non-coded” group (NCG henceforth), the rest joined “no feedback” group (NFG henceforth). The CG was given feedback in form of codes as presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Description of errors and error codes used for feedback
(Ferris, 2006)

TYPES of ERRORS				
Verbs	Noun ending	Articles	Wrong word	Sentence
Verb tense: VT Verb form: VF Subject-verb agreement: SV	Singular/plural: S/P	Articles: Art	Word form: WF Word choice: WC Pronouns: Pr Preposition: Prep Spelling: SP	Run on: RO Fragment: FR Sentence structure: SS

Writing errors in the NCG were underlined. For the NFG group, though no in-text corrections were given, there was a general comment on the organization, content or grammar at the bottom of their papers, i.e. “good organization” “a lot of errors are seen” “good grammar”, etc., to

address the ethical issue in teaching, mentioned by Ferris (2004, 2006).

In the fifth week, before the first writings with “coded”, “non-coded”, and “general” feedback were delivered, students were required to do a grammar test (a Prior Grammatical Knowledge

Test). They had 20 minutes to complete the test. Afterwards, in class, the students were required to revise their first writings in 15 minutes and noted down what they learnt and what their problems were on the second reflection page of their personal diaries. The students were encouraged to edit their writing on their own, but if they could not correct their errors, they were allowed to ask their friends or the teacher. The revised writings were collected again to check whether their corrections were accurate or not.

In the sixth week, students had to produce a new paragraph writing task within 30 minutes in class. When the writings were collected, they were asked to write down in their diaries what they improved from the previous writings and what problems still remained. After that, the Questionnaire, which consists of five questions, was delivered to investigate the students' background information and perceptions about the teachers' feedback.

4.4. Design and analyses

The study included a grammar test, writing 1, revision of writing 1, and writing 2 which was produced one week after the revision task, a questionnaire, and a writing diary. The grammar test provided the researcher with information about students' proficiency in five English grammatical items, while the revision task and a new writing task would help clarify the impact of different types of feedback on students' self-correction ability and their performance in an immediately

subsequent writing. A questionnaire helped investigate students' background and perceptions about teachers' feedback, while a writing diary provided more valuable information about learners' awareness of their writing problems and improvement.

To evaluate whether the difference among three groups in grammar test scores was significant or not, one-way ANOVA was used with test scores as a dependent variable and groups as an independent variable. In addition, a repeated measures analysis was done to check the impact of different types of feedback on students' writing self-correction and performance in a new writing assignment.

Error numbers were normalized by the procedure of Biber, Conrad, and Reppen (1998). The procedure was composed of dividing the error counts (for each grammatical error and the total errors) by the number of words in the paragraph and then multiplying them by the average number of words per writing (which is counted by dividing the total number of words in all writings by the number of writings).

5. Results and discussion

5.1. The impact of feedback on pre-intermediate students' self-edition ability

a. Prior Grammatical Knowledge Test

In terms of total score from the grammar test, the CG (M=10.3, SE=1.9) performed better than the NCG (M=8.1, SE=1.5) and the NFG (M=5.6, SE=0.7).

However, the one-way ANOVA analysis revealed that there was no significant difference among three groups ($F(2, 27)=2.7, p>0.05$). In other words, the three groups' performance on the grammatical test did not differ seriously. As can be

seen from Table 3, SD for error recognition and correction ranged from 0.09 to 0.3, which was noticeably small. This proved a little discrepancy within each group in terms of identifying and correcting errors.

Table 3: Means and SD of error recognition and correction in the grammar test

	Recognition of “treatable” Error Type (M/SD)	Recognition of “untreatable” Error Type (M/SD)	Correction of “treatable” Error Type (M/SD)	Correction of “untreatable” Error Type (M/SD)
CG	3.33/1.8	3.0/2.3	2.4/1.4	1.5/0.8
NCG	3.3/2.2	1.6/1.17	2.6/1.8	0.6/0.5
NFG	2.2/1.1	1.2/1.1	1.5/1.0	0.54/0.52

b. Impacts of different types of feedback on students' self-edition ability

A repeated measure analysis was conducted, using SPSS 16. It indicated a significant difference between writing 1 ($M=6.0, SE=0.40$) and the edited version of writing 1 ($M=3.8, SE=0.42$) at $p<0.05$. Put it differently, all participants made significant error repairs in the

edited version of the first writing. Besides, a post-hoc analysis (LDS) revealed that the group which was given coded feedback corrected errors of the first writing significantly better than the no feedback group at $p<0.05$. The group treated with non-coded feedback did not show any significant difference with the other two groups (see table 4).

Table 4: Means of errors in writing 1 and edited version of writing 1.

The interaction between types of feedback and self-edition ability turned out to be significant ($F(2,27) = 5.3, p<0.05$)

Writings	Marginal means of errors		
	Coded feedback	Non - coded feedback	No feedback
First writing	5.4	6.1	6.5
Edited version of first writings	2.1	4.1	5.2

This result supported the superior role of coded feedback, which was different from the previous study done by other researchers, namely Ferris & Roberts (2001), Chandler (2003) who reported that errors just needed to be underlined by teachers would suffice. One possible reason for this may result from the participants' frequency in exposure to English in their surroundings. The learners involved in previous research were all ESL students who came from Asia but studied in the US, while participants of the current research were EFL students (i.e. Vietnamese students) who were studying in a non- English speaking environment (i.e. Vietnam). The participants in the previous studies could be supposed to have more acute sensitiveness to errors recognition than the international students whose target language use was just confined in 30-hour classroom learning per week. Thus, a conclusion which is likely to be withdrawn here is that students who are frequently exposed to English could correct their writings well even with underlining errors, while students with little exposure to English need more explicit error feedback, i.e. coded feedback so that they could accomplish writing self-correction with high success level.

5.2. The impact of feedback on students' self-correction ability of different types of errors ("treatable" and "untreatable")

Firstly, students of all three groups made significantly more "untreatable"

errors ($M=6.7$, $SE=0.58$ for the first writing; $M=4.6$, $SE=0.5$ for the edited version of the first writing) than "treatable" errors ($M=5.2$, $SE=0.52$ for the first writing; $M=3.1$, $SE=0.4$ for the edited version of the first writing). This can be explained by the fact that EFL learners are "eye-based" learners who are familiar with grammatical rules but do not have sufficient intuition to convey their ideas in appropriate and native-like expressions (Reid, 1998a, p.6). That is the reason why EFL learners often find it hard to select words and expressions to convey their ideas most suitably. This is different from ESL learners who are so-called "ear-based" learners because they already immerse into the target language society and know how to express their ideas naturally (Reid, 1998, p.6).

Besides, the interaction between types of feedback and treatability was insignificant ($F(2, 27)=0.08$, $p>0.05$), which meant learners can edit "treatable" and "untreatable" errors equally well regardless of different types of feedback they were given. It seems that even without feedback, students could manage to correct their writing. This went against the researcher's expectation that feedback would be more effective in helping learners to correct their errors, which was proved by a number of researchers, for example Frantzen & Rissel (1987), Fathman & Whalley (1990), Ferris (1997), Komura (1999), Ashwell (2000), Ferris *et al.* (2000), Ferris & Roberts (2001).

When consulting the writing teacher who taught the participants in the two previous semesters about this result, it was found out that students were extremely familiar with direct correction, i.e. teachers wrote down correct forms for their errors. When the study took place, the researcher did clearly talk about the application of indirect feedback with codes and underlining, but the students may not be used to a swift change in such a short period of time. It was a drawback of this study as the researcher had not taken the prior feedback giving practice into account. However, this result helps claim the fact that teachers should be consistent in using feedback (Guenette, 2007), and students really need time to get used to the feedback practice.

5.3. The impact of feedback on students' performance in a new writing assignment

A repeated measure analysis was used again with within-subject variables as writings (two levels: writing 1 and writing 2), treatability ("treatable" and "untreatable") and between-subject variables as types of feedback (coded, non-coded, and no feedback). The first impression was that students made significantly more errors in the second writing ($M=6.0$, $SE=0.4$) than the first writing ($M=8.0$, $SE=0.6$). The analysis revealed the interaction between the types of feedback and writings was insignificant ($F(1,27) = 9.3$; $p>0.05$). This meant types of feedback given in the first writing did not seem to influence their performance in

the subsequent writing task. In other words, success of any group in revision task did not surely reflect their betterment in a new writing task. The current study was reminiscent of what Truscott and Hsu (2008) found out in their study on the group with errors underlined and the control group without feedback, i.e. "revision is not a predictor, even a very weak predictor, of learning" (p.299). Both studies could not point out the impact of error feedback on students' accuracy development, which may be accounted for a too-short-time interval which lasted for only one week between the first writing correction and the new writing. Future researchers, therefore, should bear mind that writing revision was not "relevant evidence [...] on the value of error correction as a teaching device" (Truscott & Hsu, 2008, p.299), therefore more independent subsequent writing tasks should be included in a new study design.

5.4. Students' preferences towards teachers' feedback

When answering the questionnaire about preferences for effective teachers' feedback, most noticeably, no respondents opposed to be treated with feedback. 44% of the respondents claimed that error labeling was the most helpful, which was closely followed by direct correction which meant teachers directly provided correct forms to students' errors with 40%. Only 10% and 6% preferred error underlining and just general comments on ideas or organization (see Figure 1).

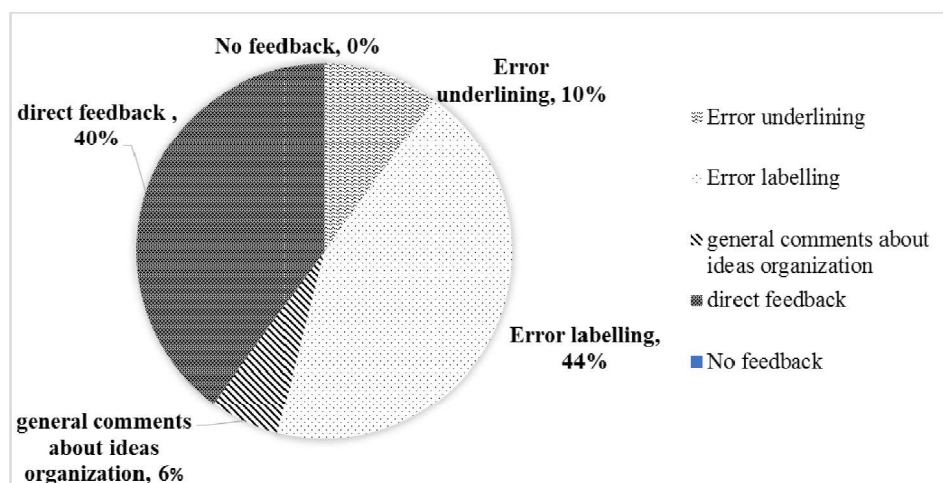


Figure 1: Effective writing feedback

These figures well matched with result from the diary which was used to triangulate the data validity. The majority of comments from the diary welcomed labeling feedback (52%) and overt feedback (46%). These findings coincided with the result in Ferris and Roberts' study (2001), which found out that students were keen on errors labeled with codes and errors all corrected by teachers. In their study, the participants differed in their L1, while in the current study students were homogenous group with the same L1. Thus, it can be seen the difference in learners' L1 did not affect their evaluation of teachers' feedback in language learning classrooms. The reasons that students provided for their choice of error labeling feedback were that "the labels address errors clearly". This clarified Ferris (2004)'s claim that labeling can "give adequate input to produce the reflection and cognitive engagement that helps students to acquire linguistic structure and reduce errors over

time" (p.21). Overall, the current study found out that more salient indirect feedback (with codes) might have to be provided for students with low proficiency level, which was in agreement with the findings of with Lee (1997) and Makino (1993).

Also, in the diary, the NFG expressed their disappointment when they were only given the general feedback, without in-text feedback: "teacher should give me more feedback as I don't know which errors I have made even when I read my writing twice", "I don't think if I can make progress when I am just given very general comments". These comments seemed contradictory to what Truscott (1996) stated in his study: learners found feedback useful but unpleasant or even stressed sometimes, thus feedback should be abolished. Indeed, findings from the current study encouraged teachers to continue with their work of giving feedback as students definitely appreciated it.

Besides, nearly 85% of the respondents held positive views about keeping a writing diary while the rest (17%) claimed that it was ineffective to write reflections after doing the writing task.

As claimed by students, they did not have the habit of collecting and keeping their writings over a month or a semester. Even worse, some of them may throw their writings away after only one day receiving teachers' feedback. As such, teachers' effort becomes useless as students do not refer back to their writings again after skimming through the feedback or making revision (if any). Therefore, students definitely keep making the same errors over time. Then, the writing diary, on which students have to reflect about their writings and their revision tasks, seems to be effective as it helps keep record of errors and correction of errors students have made. Therefore, it can be said that the diary helps collect error logs which are useful for students in monitoring their errors and keeping track of their progress (Ferris, 2002). Moreover, it also provides students with a chance to reflect what they have written or corrected so that they could make avoidance of errors for the next assignment. The writing diary can be seen as the record of students' self evaluation of their own writing, which is a long term measure to help students become "independent correctors" (Ferris, 1995b, p.18) if it is done seriously.

6. Pedagogical implications

Importance of self-correction: Lalande (1982) concluded that error correction is

the most effective when error awareness and problem-solving techniques were combined. Thus, teachers should help students to shape the habit of automatically correcting their errors after receiving feedback from teachers. As Makino (1993) discussed, a self-correction task would be beneficial to students as it calls for students' responsibility for their own writing. That would be the ultimate goal of EFL writing course which trains students to become "skillful independent correctors" (Ferris, 1995b, p.18).

Implication from students' preferences: Regarding students' expectation to get all their errors corrected by teachers to strive for error – free writing, teachers should show the students that it is an unrealistic expectation (Polio et al., 1998) because even the native speakers cannot avoid making grammatical errors when they write. Moreover, direct feedback may be dangerous as teachers can wrongly interpret students' opinions and impose their words on students' expressions (Ferris, 2002). Moreover, as mentioned by de Bot (1996, cited in Yang, 2010), being pushed to "make the right correction on one's own" (p. 549) would benefit learners more than being provided with the correct structures. Additionally, students' favor of coded feedback over non-coded or no feedback may imply that they feel more secure when they obviously know what kind of grammatical errors they made. Indirect feedback with codes would be likely to gain prevalence in correcting students' writings.

However, direct feedback is said to be appropriate for students at the low level or for treating the “untreatable” errors (Ferris, 2002). Therefore, for errors regarding wrong words and sentence structures, teachers can consider to give direct correction if students cannot correct them by themselves.

Moreover, as can be seen, different learners have different preferences towards teachers’ feedback, which may be accounted for dissimilar learning styles, proficiency levels, or personal differences, which strongly supports suggestions of Vokic (2008) and Hyland (1998). Thus, ideally speaking, teachers should take these factors into consideration to select the most proper feedback type for each student.

Generally speaking, a specific type of feedback may be effective to a specific group of students of certain proficient level at certain period of time. There is no absolute answer to what type of feedback is the most beneficial as learners would develop over time, thus teachers should adapt their feedback-giving practice to learners’ development, needs, and demands.

7. Conclusion and limitations of the study

In conclusion, the current study has touched upon the heavily debated topic of corrective feedback, which still would require more thorough studies. The results from students’ preferences towards teachers’ feedback suggest that teachers

should continue giving feedback as all participants highly appreciate it, which is opposite to what Truscott mentioned in 1996, i.e. feedback should be stopped being given to learners. In addition, error labeling is the most favorite, followed by direct feedback. Different students have different preferences towards teachers’ feedback, thus teachers should bear in minds discrepancies among learners in terms of learning styles, L2 proficiency, or personal differences to select the most appropriate type of feedback for an individual student. It would be the ideal situation.

Writing a diary, which has never been included in any previous studies in the field of corrective feedback, is welcomed by most of the participants. It gives learners a chance to reflect their work and keep the error logs (Ferris, 2002) for future references, thus it should be widely used in EFL writing classes.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

Though a lot of effort was made, the researcher was well aware of the study’s limitations which cannot be fully addressed in the current study. First, the number of participants was relatively small, which in some cases led to marginally significant results. Second, the study was carried out on the first-year students in the Foundation Studies Department in Hanoi University, who acquired very low proficiency level. Therefore, the findings cannot be

generalized to all kinds of students, especially students of higher levels. Lastly, the duration of time for the study was rather short, which cannot investigate the effectiveness of feedback thoroughly.

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