A classroom-based study on the effects of feedback on accuracy in pen and paper versus computer mediated writing

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From a Writing-to-Learn-Language perspective (Manchón, 2011), the short- and longer-term benefits of written corrective feedback (WCF) for L2 development have been substantively investigated. However, most of this research consists of laboratory-approach studies in which the writing tasks and the WCF are not implemented as part of the learners' L2 curriculum.

The current study aims at analysing learners' uptake of unfocused direct error correction in texts written and rewritten collaboratively in two different writing environments (pen-and-paper and digital writing) within a real classroom setting using an under-researched study population. The participants were 32 low L2 proficiency students from two different secondary schools who wrote collaboratively a descriptive text either in pen-and paper (7 pairs) or digitally (9 pairs).

After composing their texts with or without having access to Internet resources (digital vs pen-and paper groups, respectively), they received in-class training in error-identification. Both groups were provided with unfocused direct corrections on the linguistic errors of their collaborative texts, which they were made to process by means of an error log. Finally, learners in both groups were required to rewrite their texts collaboratively bearing in mind the feedback given using their original written texts without corrections. The digital group did not have access to the Internet in this stage.

Written accuracy was measured computing the overall percentage of errors, error types, and the percentage of incorporation of corrections in rewritten texts. Non-parametric statistics were conducted. The results indicate that having access to Internet resources in the case of the digital group helps learners to write initially their texts more accurately. However, the decrease of errors in rewritten texts was significantly higher in the pen-and-paper group compared to the digital group. The implications of these findings will be discussed.