

Written corrective feedback strategies and their effects on EFL students' accuracy: A longitudinal small-scale study

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A rich debate about the value and usefulness of written corrective feedback (WCF) has been prominent in recent years, thus placing WCF as the subject of many studies in the field of second language (L2) writing. In order to contribute to such growing body of empirical research, this small-scale exploratory study aims at finding out the extent to which error feedback helps students to improve their accuracy in the short-term as well as in the long-term processes. Furthermore, the effect of different feedback strategies has been explored. Data for this longitudinal study was collected along three months from an EFL course (n=15; L1=Spanish) according to a three-stage design: 1) Pre-tests; 2) Treatment (provision of WCF); and 3) Post-tests. A corpus of 270 texts (45,008 words) was built from sets of letters, stories, and essays that students were required to write at each stage. Three different strategies have been applied along each stage (direct feedback, indirect coded feedback with error location, and indirect coded feedback without error location) over a series of selected error categories. Findings indicate that the provision of WCF helps students to improve accuracy in the short-term process as well as in the long run, which goes in line with previous research. However, it has been found that there is not a linear upward pattern of improvement in the transition process from stages 1 to 3. The most effective strategy was direct feedback, as it has been shown in previous studies. In addition, while coded feedback with error location was more effective than non-located feedback, this difference decreased with the passing of the time. Underpinned by Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theories, results are discussed in relation to the degree of cognitive difficulty of the writing task and the importance of error location issues for the long-term acquisition process.