RESEARCH ARTICLE

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN TEACHERS' FEEDBACK AND STUDENTS' SELF CORRECTION ABILITY OF GRAMMAR ERROR IN WRITING: THE CASE OF GORE PREPARATORY SCHOOL, SOUTHWEST ETHIOPIA

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ABSTRACT

This study tried to examine the relationship between teachers' feedback and the influence level of its explicitness on students' self-correction ability in writing at Gore Preparatory School. To find out this, one shot experimental research design using quantitative research method was employed. Data were collected from 60 students who were selected by simple random sampling technique using lottery method. Participants were assigned to one control group and two experimental groups randomly. Data collecting instruments were an in-class writing essay test and correction exercise, and grammar knowledge test. The first drafts and the second drafts of essays, which were written by students, were compared by counting number of errors before feedback and by counting number of corrected errors after feedback. The grammar knowledge test was given to measure students' grammar knowledge and to examine whether there was an influence on their self-correction ability. The data from writing essays were normalized using the procedure of Ferris *et al*. (2001) and analyzed using one way ANOVA, Turkey's post hoc t-test and correlation. The finding of this study indicated that teachers' feedback had strong effect on students' self-correction and its level of explicitness had also an influence on students' self-correction ability. The grammar knowledge did not have an influence on students' self-correction among the groups. Based on the finding it was suggested that teachers should help the students revise their own drafts and edit their own grammatical errors by providing more explicit error feedback.

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INTRODUCTION

Errors are natural and inevitable or cannot be avoided for learners when learning second or foreign language.It has been admitted that making mistakes is a part of learning which indicates learners are in a certain stage of their language acquisition development.However,in the past decades,the questions of who, what,when and how to correct learners' have been debated.As Ancker (2000) claims-that error correction remains one of the most contentious and misunderstood issues in the second and foreign language teaching profession. Long (1997) made a useful distinction between error correction and error feedback.According to his definition,error feedback is error detection, and while it is designed to promote correction. It is not correction in itself.Therefore,error feedback is used to encourage self correction.Error feedback is sometimes termed as indirect correction,i.e informing the students the location errors or the nature of errors by means of underlining the errors

or providing some codes (Robb *et al.,* 1986 cited in Lee,1997). As seen from the experience of EFL teachers,they have a tendency to provide exlicit and elaborate grammartical correction to students' compositions.Semke (1984) stated that error feedback may not help students improve their accuracy when composing regardless of the teachers' time and effort.On the other hand,Ferris (2002) indicated that students whose language acquisition is still developing probably need and expect grammar feedback on errors from their teachers as a part of the process of improving their writing. Thus, it will be considered reasonable to investigate the relationship between students' self correction ability and different types of teachers' grammar error feedback seems to be more beneficial to students when it is implemented systematically and consistently at Gore Preparatory School, where many language teachers feel responsibilities to correct all students' errors by themselves , in the accedemic year.

Objectives of the Study

General Objective: The study aims to examine the relationship between teachers' grammar error feedback type

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and EFL students` self correction ability in writing at Gore Preparatory School.

Specific Objectives

The study attempts;

- To explore the relationship between different kinds of teachers' grammar error feedback (coded ,non coded and no feedback) and students' self correction ability.
- To identify the uses of different levels of explicit correction of teachers and indirect grammar error feedback on students' self correction ability.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The Research Design

This study investigated the relationship between teachers' grammar error feedback type and EFL students'self correction ability focusing on the level of explicitness of indirect feedback.In dealing with collecting and analyzing data, different procedures and methods were used and followed.In order to test this,one experimental design was employed. Quantitative research method was employed to collect data from one control group and two experimental groups. The dependent variable of this study was students' self correction ability and the independent variable was teachers'grammar error feedback.There were three feedback conditions;no feedback,coded feedback,and non coded feedback.There were two independent variables which were included for data analysis.One was a base line pretest score,which was the number of errors marked in composition.The other one was grammar knowledge test score.

Sampling Technique

To select the samples from the total population,simple random sampling technique was employed.The random samples were chosen using a lottery method. In order to do this the researcher first prepared 150 rolled slips of paper which consisted of numbers 0,1,2 and 3. That means 90 slips of paper with zeros,20 slips of paper with number one,20 slips of paper with number two and 20 slips of paper with number three.Next, he combined all students together and oriented them on how to choose the papers and what they would do if they were included in the sample.Then he put all the slips of paper into a box or acontianer and mixed them thoroughly and let the students drawn. Finally,students who took zero excluded from the study and those who took number one were asigned to group one, students who took number two were assigned to group two and those who took number three were assigned to group three.

The Data Collecting Instruments

In this study, two instruments were utilized:one was an in_class writing test and correction exercise,and the other was a grammar knowledge test to evaluate students' knowledge of grammar.These instruments were designed or prepared based on students' competency level by taking information from the syllabus and using some international books.

In-class Writing Test and Correction Exercise: All the participants from the control and experimental groups were given 30 minutes in_class writing test.The students'

compositions were scored based on the number of grammatical errors they made ,not on content or organization.Two weeks later,the students who were included in the experimental groups got back their first draft with coded and non_coded feedback.No feedback was offered to the control group students.All students were asked to self correct their grammatical errors during an in-class correcting session.

Grammar Knowledge Test

The grammar knowledge test adapted from Ferris *et al*.(2001) and from an article "the mercurial woman" was given to the participants to examine their grammatical knowledge.This test was administered during the same week after diagnostic essays were written.It contained three sections and the error keytype.The first section had six sentences,each including one error of the five types of errors.Students attempted to match the error occurring in each sentence with the correct category.For the second section,a sample essay in which six errors were marked was given.The students identified the types of errors in the sample essay,and in the third section,they suggested corrections for types of errors which they identified.

Description of error categories used for feedback and analysis

Noun ending errors (NE)	Plural or possessive ending incorrect,omitted,or unnecessary
Verb errors(V)	Errors in verb tense or form, including subject_verb agreement
Article errors(ART)	Article or other determiner incorrect,omitted,or unnecessary
Wrong word(WW)	Lexical errors in word chioce or word from including preposition
Sentence structure(SS)	Errors in sentence clause (run ons,fragments,comma,and un necessary words or phrases)

Data Analysis

In this study, the grammatical errors that occured in one essay were analyzed.A comparison was made between the first and second drafts of an essay after feedback had been provided. The number of words in both the first and second drafts was counted. The number of errors per text was counted,and error counts have been normalized by dividing the number of words and multiplying by a standard following the procedure of Ferris *et al.* (2001). The average number of errors of each category i.e.noun ending,verb,article,wrong word,and sentence structure in each of three groups was calculated. Regarding a number of errors marked to decide whether they were few or many,the average number of errors was divided by the average number of words and multiplied by 100%.That means, $Av.N^o.Er/Av.N^o.WoX\ 100\%$. Concerning grammar knowledge test,Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was employed to examine whether students among the three treatment groups had a difference in grammar knowledge test score.Concerning the number of errors corrected, all the steps for counting the number of errors were used, i.e. the number of words in each text was counted and the average number of words after feedback was taken as a standard. The number of errors corrected has been normalized by dividing the number of errors corrected by the number of words and multiplying by a standard like this, $N^o.\ Er\ .Co/T^o.\ N^o.Wo\ X\ 100\%$. To examine whether there was a difference in number of errors that corrected after feedback among the treatment groups, ANOVA was employed.

Table 3. Average number of errors marked (normalized means)

Group	Noun ending	Verb	Article	Wrong word	Sentence structure	Total	Percentage of errors
Coded	2.27	3.49	0.53	4.88	3.75	14.92	31.7%
Non-coded	3.39	5.13	0.72	4.63	3.69	17.6	37.4%
No feedback	2.46	3.89	1.48	3.78	3.01	14.6	31%
All subjects	8.12	12.51	2.73	13.29	10.45	47.12	___

Table 4. Mean score of grammamar knowledge test

Group	Mean scores	Percentage
Coded	4.15	29.6%
Non-coded	4.90	35%
No feedback	4.95	35.36%
Total	14	100%

Table 5. Grammar knowledge test scores by treatment group

Source of Variation	Sum of Squares	df	Meansquare	F	P value
Between Groups	8.033	2	4.017	0.56	0.572
Within Groups	405.300	57	7.111	__	__
Total	413.333	59		__	__

ANOVA results: p< .01

In order to find where a significant difference lied in number of corrected errors between groups (i.e., coded and non-coded, coded and no feedback, and non-coded and no feedback), Tukey's post hoc t-test was employed.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

A number of errors in the five categories (noun ending, verb, article, wrong word, and sentence structure) occured in a diagnostic essay were counted and normalized for comparison. The average number of words written by the students per text was (138.32). This average number of words was taken as a standard to normalize the errors for comparison. According to the above table, the average number of errors marked in all categories and including the total errors is very few. The average number of errors has been divided by the standard (average number of words) and multiplied by 100% to decide whether the average number of errors was a few or many in relation to the average number of words written per text.When total errors of each group was seen, it seems that non-coded group made more errors (mean=17.6) than coded group (mean=14.92) and no feedback or control group (mean=14.6) respectively. Therefore, it was assumed that the students in the non-coded group were a little bit weaker than those of the two coded, and no feedback or control groups.

Students' Grammar Knowledge Test

Students' grammar knowledge was examined by grammar knowledge test adapted from Ferris *et al.* (2001), from an article "the mercurial woman" and from grade 11 English textbook. The total mean score of grammar knowledge test of each group was (coded feedback group=4.15, non coded feedback group=4.90, and no feedback group= 4.95).This is summarizedas follows;

To test whether this difference is significant or not, one way ANOVA was employed. The ANOVA result is indicated in Table 5.

According to Table 5, there was no significant difference in the grammatical test scores though the groups were formed randomly. Therefore, it is possible to say that the students in all groups had similar level of grammatical knowledge.This is why; there was as no significant difference in grammar errors that students produced in their compositions among their groups. From this, it can be assumed that grammar knowledge does not have any influence on students' self correction ability' among the groups. As it was indicated in Table 6 above, the total mean score of errors corrected was coded group=7.4(67.9%), non-coded group=2.7(24.8%), and the no feedback or control group=0.8(7.3%) respectively. Based on this, it is possible to say that grammar test scores and grammar knowledge do not have any effect on number of errors made and number of errors corrected and also on students self correction ability.

The Relationships of Teachers' Error Feedback and Students Self Correction Ability

The mean scores of each category of treatment groups are shown in Table 7. According to Table 7, the scores indicate that the average number of errors corrected across four error categories in coded feedback group was more than non-coded feedback and no feedback groups. In addition, non-coded group students corrected more errors than no feedback group students except in the article and sentence error categories. The no feedback orcontrol group students could correct fewer errors.

DISCUSSION

Number of Errors Made and Students' Self Correction

In the statistical analysis, when the mean score of each treatment group was seen, there seemed a difference in errors made among groups. Especially, in non- coded feedback group, many errors seem to be made, and it was expected, as there would have better opportunity for students to correct more errors in their compositions. However, when the mean score of each group is seen, all groups made a few errors in all categories in their compositions.

Table 6. The summary of mean score of errors made,errors corrected and grammar knowledge test

	Scores and Percentage					
	Grammar knowledge test		Errors made		Errors corrected	
	Mean scores	(%)	Mean scores	(%)	Mean scores	(%)
Coded	4.15	29.6	14.92	31.7	7.4	67.9
Non coded	4.90	35	17.6	37.4	2.7	24.8
No feedback	4.95	35.36	14.6	31	0.8	7.3
All subjects	14	100	47.12	100	10.9	100

Table 7. Average number of errors corrected by students (normalized means)

Group	Noun nding	Verb	Article	Wrong word	Sentence structure	Total	Percentage of errors corrected
Coded	1.0	2.4	0.2	2.0	1.8	7.4	67.9
Non-coded	1.0	1.0	0.2	0.5	0.0	2.7	24.8
No feedback	0.0	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.0	0.8	7.3
All subjects(sum)	2	3.7	0.6	2.8	1.8	10.9	___

All corrected error counts have been normalized.

A non-coded group that seems with more mean score did not correct better than those groups, which made less errors comparatively. This indicates that number of errors made did not have an influence on students' self-correction.

Grammar Test Scores and Self Correction

Regarding the relation between the grammar test scores and number of errors marked as well as number of errors corrected, correlation analysis were conducted. As the result showed, there was no significant correlation between the grammar test scores and the number of errors made by students as well as the number of errors corrected. Based on this, students' grammatical knowledge had no influence on self-correction. It did not either affect grammatical errors, which were made by students. Therefore, the grammar test score was not statistically a significant factor in determining the students' self-correction ability. The finding of this study indicated that students from the experimental groups could correct errors better than control group students though the difference between non coded group students and control group students was not statistically significant at p<.01. From this, it was possible to say that teachers' error feedback had a positive influence on Gore Preparatory School students in the accedamic year.

The Type of Error Feedback and Self Correction

Regarding the type of teacher's error feedback that is coded and non-coded, there was a significant difference in self-correction between coded and non-coded feedback groups. From five categories, noun endings and articles appeared to have a different tendency from the other types of errors. In the case of noun ending, the difference between experimental groups and no feedback or control group was not significant at p<0.01.Although it is not statistically significant at p<0.01, experimental group students corrected better than control group students (the difference was significant at p <0.05). This indicates that teacher's error feedback had an effect on students' noun ending correction. As the result of this study showed, concerning the total errors corrected, there was a significant difference between coded and non-coded experimental groups. Based on this, it is possible to say that coded or explicit teacher's error feedback helped students correct their grammatical errors by themselves better than students do from non-coded experimental group.

Conclusions

Some researchers like Truscott (1996) argue that error feedback does not help students improve their written work in the short term experimental design. But the result of this study indicates that students who received teachers' error feedback in the experimental groups could correct grammatical errors better than control group students though the difference between non coded feedback group and control group is not statistically significant at p< .01. Based on this finding, it is possible to conclude that, teachers' grammar error feedback helps students self-correct their errors, and error feedback seems to have the strongest effect in editing or revising phase.In other word ,there is strong positive relationship between the teachers'grammar error feedback and students self correction ability ,especially, when the feedback is explicit or coded.Therefore, based on this finding, one can say that the level of explicitness of teachers' error feedback influences the students' self-correction ability in writing

Recommendations

Based on the above conclusions and results the researcher would like to forward the following recommendations:

- As we know practically from our experience, most of the time many EFL teachers take all responsibilities to correct all grammatical errors directly. However, many researchers argue against thisbecause it does not give students the opportunity to identify and correct their own errors. According to, Semke (1984), direct correction hinders the development of fluent writing. Inaddition, the result of this study shows, students could better correct errors by using teachers' grammatical error feedback. Therefore, teachers should help students revise their drafts and edit their own errors by providing appropriate feedback.
- The result of this study reveals that students who received more explicit error feedback were more effective in correcting their grammatical errors than students who received less explicit grammarerror feedback. For this reason, teachers should give students more explicit error feedback for their grammatical errors in writing though some researchers like Ferris *et al*. (2001) claimed that less explicit error feedback (non-coded feedback) might also be as equally effective as more explicit error feedback (coded feedback).

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