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The Effects of Written Corrective Feedback on Expressing Simple Present Tense

Çiğdem Güneş [a] [1]

[a] *Gazi University, Ankara, Turkey*

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Abstract

The present study compared the effects of direct and indirect written corrective feedback (CF) on the accurate use of Simple Present tense for describing daily routines. Written assignments of secondary school EFL (English as a foreign language) learners, enrolled in the 6th grade of a Turkish secondary school, were investigated throughout a period of two months. The experimental study included pretest, treatment, immediate posttest, and delayed posttest sessions. There were two experimental groups and one control group whose treatments comprised direct, indirect, and no written CF. Results indicated that the group receiving indirect CF outperformed the groups receiving direct CF and no CF on the delayed posttest.

Key Words: Corrective feedback; Direct feedback; English as a foreign language; Error correction; Indirect feedback; Simple Present Tense; Written corrective feedback

[1] Corresponding author.
E-mail address: cigdem.gunes@hotmail.de

Introduction

As expressed by the output hypothesis, producing language is of benefit because it enables language users to experiment with linguistic strategies and forms so that language learners can notice the factors which require further development (Swain, 2000). Errors occurring during production are an important part of the learning process that allow students to experiment with their existing hypotheses about language (Corder, 1973). Thus, it is crucial to give students the chance to produce language. In that way, one can focus on their output and notice if any problems in language use exist (Swain, 2000) that can be dealt with through corrective feedback (CF) which is the focus of most studies both in oral (Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Mennim, 2007) and written form (Bitchener, 2008; Sheen, 2007).

Studies which investigated the role of direct and indirect CF in improving written accuracy revealed varying results so that a consensus could not be reached on which type of CF is more influential in increasing the level of grammatical accuracy. That is why this study set forward to come up with further analysis in this field via focusing on the effects of direct and indirect written CF on the use of Simple Present tense.

Literature Review

Although CF is frequently used in teaching settings, the focus on CF in research shifted after Truscott's claim specifying that CF is ineffective. Van Beuningen, De Jong and Kuiken (2012) report that Truscott (1996, 2007) holds the opinion that the ineffectiveness of CF is based on practical and theoretical issues. While the practical concerns are directed towards teachers' abilities to provide effective CF and to learners' capacities to make use of CF appropriately, his theoretical concerns are based on the fact that second language acquisition theories (e.g., interlanguage development, the necessity for different types of CF for different language domains and structures, the impossibility of providing CF for every individual's level) are not taken into consideration by CF which will hinder the effectiveness of feedback. Another claim of Truscott (1999) is that the correction of errors might be counterproductive in that correction may lead students to avoid complex structures developing a preference for simplified writing with the aim of overcoming errors. He also regards CF as a waste of time as, according to him, it would be more beneficial to perform additional writing practice than to deal with errors (Meihami, 2013). Truscott thinks that CF can be effective in decreasing the number of grammatical errors (not non-grammatical ones), students will not utilize complex structures to avoid errors, and additional writing is more advantageous than focusing on errors (Meihami, 2013).

Despite Truscott's (2007) assertion that CF has just small benefits on students' accuracy in writing, it is frequently used since it is proved by many studies that CF can be effective in promoting grammatical accuracy both in EFL (English as a foreign language) and ESL (English as a second language) contexts (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Sachs & Polio, 2007). Among the many types of CF, direct and indirect types (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Sachs & Polio, 2007; Shintani & Ellis, 2013) are the commonly studied ones.

Corrective Feedback

CF is defined as the response to erroneous learner utterances which may indicate errors and give the correct form of the utterance or provide metalinguistic information on errors (Ellis et al., 2006).

Based on the role metalinguistic information and directness play, CF can mainly be divided into explicit/direct and implicit/indirect feedback (Yilmaz, 2013). Indirect feedback does not provide any metalinguistic information and indicates that an error occurred (e.g., through underlining, circling, noting the number of written errors in the margin) without giving the correct forms but encouraging learners for self-correction. On the other hand, direct feedback provides metalinguistic information (grammar rules) and/or the correct form of the incorrect structure (e.g., crossing out wrongly used structures, adding omitted words) (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ellis, 2009; Ellis et al., 2006; Ellis et al., 2008; Meihami, 2013; Van Beuningen, De Jong, & Kuiken, 2012). Direct CF can also include oral form-focused instruction which aims to elaborate on written metalinguistic information (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). It is argued that indirect CF is useful as it enables learners to self-correct, which actively engages them in the process of error correction (Ferris, 1999), and leads to long-term acquisition (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010).

Bitchener and Knoch (2010) report that indirect CF allows learners "to engage in guided learning and problem solving and, as a result, promotes the type of reflection on existing knowledge that is more likely to foster long-term acquisition and written accuracy" (p. 209). Despite the support for indirect feedback, arguments about its inefficacy emerged since it was regarded as providing learners with insufficient information to deal with the errors (Van Beuningen et al., 2012).

Conversely, direct CF was found to facilitate learning for those who do not have any wrongly formed grammatical knowledge (Shintani & Ellis, 2013) and that individuals who

receive direct CF can more successfully revise their errors than those who get indirect CF (Van Beuningen et al., 2012). Since direct correction gives learners the opportunity to immediately see what is wrong with their utterances even if the errors are complex ones, it can be viewed as a type of feedback that instantly rectifies errors (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010).

The focus of studies conducted in this field is on several types of CF since different domains require different corrections. Indirect CF is reported to increase the control of learned forms, but it is not easy to judge in what ways it addresses the learning of a new form. Conversely, it is assumed that direct CF affects new forms since it immediately supplies learners with the correct structures (Ellis et al., 2008). Another factor which is in favor of both direct and indirect CF is the positive effect d,irect CF has on grammatical and indirect CF on ungrammatical accuracy (Van Beuningen et al., 2012). From the information above, it can be inferred that the effectiveness of CF is dependent on language learners' grammatical knowledge (Ellis et al., 2008), and that not one type of CF should be regarded as profiting accuracy since each linguistic domain may ask for a different type of CF. Thus, since the results of previous studies could not reach a consensus on which type of CF – direct or indirect – to regard as effective with regard to language learning, studies continue to investigate the effectiveness of direct and indirect CF.

Findings of Studies on Corrective Feedback

Research on direct and indirect CF generated conflicting results so that further studies were considered as necessary to clarify if there are differences between direct and indirect CF in terms of the promotion of accuracy.

Van Beuningen et al. (2012) examined if written CF can be used as an editing tool and if it has a learning effect. For this purpose, the participants were divided into four groups receiving either direct CF or indirect CF, had to self-correct without CF, or practice writing without CF. Results clarified that CF improved learner accuracy. It was the direct CF group who gained more grammatical accuracy in new writings, whereas indirect CF led to non-grammatical accuracy. While this study regarded both types of CF as effective in enhancing the level of different kinds of accuracy, other studies found that direct CF is more effective than indirect CF (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam, 2006; Ellis & Shintani, 2013; Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009; Yilmaz, 2013). Sheen, Wright and Moldawa (2009) examined the effects of direct focused CF, direct

unfocused CF, and writing practice. They specified that direct focused CF was more efficient than unfocused CF.

Yilmaz (2013) compared three different oral negative feedback types: mixed feedback including explicit and implicit feedback, implicit-only CF, and explicit-only CF. Results revealed that the explicit-only feedback and mixed feedback groups outperformed all the other groups on the immediate posttest showing that mixed feedback can be as effective as explicit-only feedback.

Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005) investigated whether direct written CF, direct written CF combined with student-researcher conferences, or no CF led to accuracy gains in four new pieces of writing over 12 weeks. The researchers concluded that the group who received direct written CF combined with student-researcher conferences outperformed the other groups indicating benefits for a combination of oral and written direct feedback.

Ellis and Shintani (2013) generated a study which encapsulated a direct CF group, a metalinguistic explanation group and a control group. They indicated that direct CF had no effects on the accuracy of the target structure, but that metalinguistic explanation increased accuracy in an immediate writing task.

Bitchener and Knoch (2010) examined advanced L2 learners with regard to their performance based on written metalinguistic feedback, indirect CF, and written metalinguistic CF together with oral form-focused instruction. They identified that the experimental groups outperformed the control group and that only the direct CF groups outperformed the indirect one. From this study, it can be concluded that indirect feedback is more profitable than no feedback. Further, this study designates that metalinguistic explanation is the most useful type of written CF for long-term accuracy.

Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) reported on the effectiveness of implicit (recasts) and explicit feedback (metalinguistic explanation) on low-intermediate L2 learners' acquisition of the simple past ending –ed. Results demonstrated that explicit feedback was more advantageous than implicit feedback.

Another study investigated CF in an online environment. Yeh, Lo and Chu (2014) developed a web-based error correction practice mechanism where teachers provided direct feedback resulting in positive outcomes in improving students' written accuracy.

With regard to indirect CF, Kahyalar and Okan (2014), who intended to explore the effects of comprehensive coded indirect corrective feedback (CCICF) on three students' writings, discovered that CCICF helped learners to reduce their errors and improve mechanical accuracy in the short run.

Truscott and Hsu (2008) provided indirect CF in form of underlining errors in learners' narrations which had to be revised, while another group of learners had to do the same without any form of CF. Results showed that the group who received indirect CF was more successful than the control group, but when the students had to produce new texts, the indirect CF group did not significantly differ from the control group. Thus, this study failed to display that CF improved accuracy in new writings.

The studies reviewed were conducted in different settings with different participants, different teaching strategies, and instruments which hinder a comparison of the outcomes. Thus, it can be stated that CF has different effects on different groups of participants in different contexts. Based on the existing discrepancies in the reviewed literature, the current study aimed to explore the effects of direct and indirect written CF on A1 level Turkish EFL learners' writings to put forth results for a context that was not considered before. The focus of this study is on the correct application of the Simple Present tense for the purpose of talking about daily routines through internalizing direct written CF and indirect written CF in similar but new pieces of writing.

Indirect feedback in this study stands for implicit correction. The erroneous sentences of the students were marked, but the correct forms were not provided so that the students had to generate the correct forms by themselves. Direct feedback refers to explicit correction. In this form of feedback, the errors were marked by the teacher and the correct forms were provided with some metalinguistic information. The students could immediately notice what was wrong with their sentences. Since previous studies (Bitchener, 2008; Lyster & Ranta, 1997; Sheen, 2007) demonstrated that explicit feedback facilitated accuracy development, it was expected that direct feedback would be more effective in improving the quality of the students' output.

Research Question

This study was designed to investigate the efficacy of written CF on L2 writers' accuracy gains in the use of Simple Present tense to describe daily routines over a period of two months. To this end, the participants were asked to produce three different narrative texts. A pretest-treatment-posttest design was used. It was aimed to find out if direct and indirect written CF would help increase L2 learners' accuracy level in the use of Simple Present tense in the long run. The research question that is drawn upon in this study is:

Which kind of written corrective feedback, direct or indirect, will be more effective in improving the accuracy of the use of Simple Present tense to describe daily routines in the long run?

Methodology

Design

The study followed a pretest-treatment-posttest design with a delayed posttest. Three groups, each comprising ten students, received either direct feedback in form of explicit corrections in which the errors were underlined and the correct forms were provided with metalinguistic information, or indirect feedback in which the errors were indicated through underlining. It is important to specify that the students were instructed on the target structure (using the Simple Present tense to express daily routines) before they had to take the pretest and before they were assigned the writing tasks. This structure was part of the curriculum and due to this, the Simple Present tense was frequently addressed by the teacher who was the researcher at the same time.

Context and Participants

Data were collected from 30 Turkish students (14 male and 16 female) who were enrolled in the 6th grade of a secondary state school in Turkey in the first semester of 2014- 2015 academic year. Since the Turkish national curriculum states that students have reached A1 level in English in 6th grade (MoNE, 2013), it was assumed that the participants' level of English was A1. The participants ranged between 11 to 14 years of age. All participants had studied English for three years. These students participated in a two-hour English lesson per week (3 lessons each being 40 minutes long). The sample was selected based on convenience sampling (Dörnyei & Csizér, 2012).

According to the EFL teacher's judgements on the participants' performance in the English lessons (high – intermediate – low), the learners were assigned to two experimental groups (direct CF group and indirect CF group) and to a control group. To ensure heterogeneity of the groups, each group consisted of students who performed high in the lessons, who demonstrated low performance, and who were intermediate level learners. Group 1 comprised 10 students and received direct CF. One of the students in this group did not follow the instructions, so she was excluded from the study. Group 2 consisted of 10 students and received indirect CF. Lastly, Group 3 comprised 10 students and did not receive any form of feedback.

In order to satisfy ethical requirements, the participants of the control group received CF at the end of the study.

Target Structure

In contrast to the majority of the studies which were concerned with the correct use of English articles (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Yilmaz, 2013), this study investigated the use of Simple Present tense.

The participants were already familiar with the Simple Present tense forms from the previous schooling year. In accordance with this, it was assumed that the students had a basic knowledge of this structure. In 6th grade, Simple Present tense is also included in the syllabus to revise the structure and recover the topic of daily routines.

The Simple Present tense was chosen as the target structure due to the fact that EFL students made large amounts of errors in subject-verb agreement during the use of Simple Present tense in an analysis conducted by the researcher previous to the current study. From the results of this analysis it was apparent that the students had difficulties in using the Simple Present tense ending –s for the personal pronouns he, she and it. It was observed that the students frequently forgot to use the Simple Present ending –s or that they overused it for the first person singular form of the personal pronouns. Thus, the researcher decided to focus on the use of Simple Present tense in expressing daily routines. Table 1 visualizes the results of the analysis demonstrating the most frequent errors of Turkish sixth-graders.

Table 1

Frequent Errors of 49 Turkish Sixth-Grade EFL Students

Error Type	Frequency
Subject-Verb Agreement	in 40 samples
Numeric Shift	in 38 samples
Semantic	in 17 samples
Sentence Structure	in 4 samples
Mechanical	in 43 samples
Misinformation	in 6 samples
Addition	in 15 samples
Pronoun	in 10 samples

The existence of treatable and untreatable errors was another reason for dealing with Simple Present tense. Treatable errors include errors such as verb tense and form which are easier to correct due to the fact that they are based on certain rules that can be referred to while correcting

errors. In contrast, untreatable errors are harder to cope with since they are more abstract (Ferris, 1999). Due to their treatable character it was assumed that the students would more easily respond to errors in the use of Simple Present tense.

Instruments

The researcher employed a pretest-treatment-posttest design. The pretest was in form of a picture-strip story including 20 pictures and 20 sentences with blanks which the students had to fill in with the Simple Present tense forms of the verbs provided in brackets (see Appendix A). This means that the participants were asked to produce 20 sentences describing someone's daily routine using Simple Present tense.

Moreover, three written production tasks were collected from the participants dealing with the daily routines of (a) one of their friends, (b) one of their teachers, and (c) one of their family members or relatives. Students were expected to work on their own, but they were allowed to use dictionaries or to consult the teacher for some unknown words. During this phase the teacher did not provide any form of feedback with regard to the use of Simple Present tense and sentence structure. The students were not given any word limits, but the teacher asked them to produce at least ten sentences and not to use the same sentences throughout all their tasks.

After each written production, the teacher provided either direct or indirect CF to the experimental groups. The control group did not receive any form of feedback. After the completion of the tasks, the teacher conducted an immediate posttest which was the same as the pretest. Again the students had to complete the 20 sentences in the picture-strip story which were related to daily routines. Lastly, a delayed posttest was conducted which again was the picture-strip story used as the pretest and immediate posttest.

Treatment

The students were not given any information on the study. They were expected to write three different texts in which they had to narrate the daily routine of one of their (a) friends, (b) teachers, and (c) family members or relatives which formed part of their English lessons.

The first experimental group was the direct CF group. The errors of this group were directly replaced by the correct forms. Metalinguistic information reminding the rules of the use of Simple Present tense was provided. Further, praise (e.g., Well done!, Good!) was also given if the students improved.

Example of Direct CF (with metalinguistic information)

He listen to music.

listens

Do not forget to add *–s* after the verbs following the personal pronouns *he, she*, and *it* when you are using Simple Present tense.

The second experimental group received indirect CF through underlined errors. No further indications such as error codes for the different error types were given. The researcher just reminded the students that the underlined parts of their texts are incorrect in order to focus their attention on the errors.

Example of Indirect CF

She go to school.

The third group did not receive any feedback on the texts produced since it served as the control group. A control group was included in the study to demonstrate the effectiveness of CF.

Due to their proficiency level, the students had limited knowledge of English structures and did not make use of forms they had not acquired. This facilitated the process of giving feedback in which a focus on certain error types was not necessary meaning that the error correction procedure was unfocused. Further, the unfocused type was preferred to avoid the assumption that the uncorrected parts were error-free, and to improve general accuracy which is not the aim of focused feedback (Van Beuningen et al., 2012).

Procedure

One week before the first written assignment, the students took the pretest. Five days later the teacher assigned the first written task. Two days later the tasks were collected and on the same day, the researcher provided feedback to the

groups and assigned their second task. Five days later, the second task was collected, and on the same day, students received feedback and were assigned their last written task. Two days later, the researcher collected this task. After a week, the third task with some written CF was handed back to the students so that they could examine their work. The students could always have a look at their previous tasks as these were attached to the preceding tasks. Thus, they were able to follow their own progress or delay. After the participants got feedback III, they had to complete the immediate posttest. Finally, they were asked to participate in the delayed posttest three weeks later in which they also had to provide background information such as gender, age, and time of English study. The delayed posttest was administered seven weeks after the pretest.

PRETEST (1 week before the treatment → 26th – 28th November)			
Time	DIRECT CF GROUP	INDIRECT CF GROUP	CONTROL GROUP (NO CF)
December, 3rd	Task I was assigned	Task I was assigned	Task I was assigned
December, 5th	Task I was collected and CF I was provided	Task I was collected and CF I was provided	Task I was collected
December, 5th	Task II was assigned	Task II was assigned	Task II was assigned
December, 10th	Task II was collected and CF II was provided	Task II was collected and CF II was provided	Task II was collected
December 10th	Task III was assigned	Task III was assigned	Task III was assigned
December, 12th	Task III was collected	Task III was collected	Task III was collected
December, 17th-19th	CF III was provided	CF III was provided	No CF
IMMEDIATE POSTTEST (immediately after the third feedback session → 17th – 19th December)			
DELAYED POSTTEST (14th – 15th January)			

Figure 1. Research Procedure

Analysis

After the errors were marked, each piece of writing and each test was assigned an error rate which was calculated by dividing the total number of errors in the use of Simple Present

tense by the total number of verbs that had to be in Simple Present tense. Initially, for each written assignment the frequency of the target form was counted. Then, the number of errors was detected, and lastly, the error ratio was calculated as previously mentioned. The bigger the error ratio was, the more errors the students made, and vice versa.

Results

Table 2 visualizes the participants' scores on the three written tasks. When these scores are scrutinized, it can be stated that all of the students receiving direct CF (DCF), six of the students receiving indirect CF (IDCF), and four of the students in the control group (CG) managed to reduce their errors throughout the treatment. This finding indicates that students' improvement is independent of the type of CF they receive. When the averages of errors are examined, the most apparent increase of accuracy is observed in the DCF group, followed by the IDCF group.

Table 2

Error Ratios in the Tasks

Participants	Task I	Task II	Task III
DCF1	15/15 (1)	1/15 (0.06)	3/15 (0.2)
DCF2	12/12 (1)	4/11 (0.36)	4/8 (0.5)
DCF3	15/15 (1)	0/11 (0)	1/12 (0.083)
DCF4	10/10 (1)	9/9 (1)	0/10 (0)
DCF5	9/9 (1)	1/8 (0.125)	4/9 (0.4)
DCF6	15/15 (1)	6/12 (0.5)	2/11 (0.18)
DCF7	14/15 (0.93)	0/11 (0)	2/13 (0.15)
DCF8	7/14 (0.5)	0/22 (0)	0/15 (0)
DCF9	14/15 (0.93)	3/14 (0.21)	6/15 (0.4)
Average of Errors	(0.93)	(0.25)	(0.21)
IDCF1	15/15 (1)	8/8 (1)	6/6 (1)
IDCF2	12/12 (1)	8/8 (1)	8/8 (1)
IDCF3	6/11 (0.54)	10/11 (0.91)	2/12 (0.16)
IDCF4	10/10 (1)	10/10 (1)	3/10 (0.3)
IDCF5	16/16 (1)	8/13 (0.62)	6/11 (0.55)
IDCF6	17/17 (1)	11/11 (1)	12/12 (1)
IDCF7	13/13 (1)	9/9 (1)	2/3 (0.6)
IDCF8	11/11 (1)	7/7 (1)	4/9 (0.4)
IDCF9	15/15 (1)	4/10 (0.4)	0/10 (0)
IDCF10	16/16 (1)	8/9 (0.8)	9/9 (1)
Average of Errors	(0.954)	(0.873)	(0.601)
CG1	7/7 (1)	7/7 (1)	4/4 (1)
CG2	9/9 (1)	6/11 (0.54)	5/10 (0.5)

CG3	14/14 (1)	11/11 (1)	-
CG4	10/14 (0.71)	5/14 (0.36)	7/15 (0.46)
CG5	10/10 (1)	7/7 (1)	11/11 (1)
CG6	16/16 (1)	10/10 (1)	15/15 (1)
CG7	12/18 (0.6)	8/16 (0.5)	2/16 (0.125)
CG8	6/13 (0.46)	9/17 (0.53)	9/13 (0.69)
CG9	8/9 (0.8)	10/10 (1)	10/10 (1)
CG10	6/22 (0.27)	1/14 (0.07)	3/18 (0.16)
Average of Errors	(0.784)	(0.7)	(0.66)

Table 3 demonstrates the errors students made on the pretest and the two posttests.

The averages of errors suggest that the IDCF group and the CG produced more accurate forms of the Simple Present tense than the DCF group.

When the students' test scores are examined individually, the following can be concluded: From the DCF group, three students improved from the pretest to the immediate posttest. From the IDCF group, three students decreased their number of errors, and five students from the CG demonstrated improvement. Next, the results of the delayed posttest indicate that all students who received DCF increased the number of their errors. Students who received IDCF showed a similar trend, but two students demonstrated greater accuracy. Students in the CG either had the same scores on both posttests or slightly decreased their number of errors.

Table 3

Error Ratios in the Pretest and Posttests (DCF, IDCF, CG)

Participants	Pretest	Immediate Posttest	Delayed Posttest
DCF1	16/20 (0.8)	18/20 (0.9)	20/20 (1)
DCF2	18/20 (0.9)	9/20 (0.45)	18/20 (0.9)
DCF3	19/20 (0.95)	11/20 (0.55)	20/20 (1)
DCF4	20/20 (1)	-	20/20 (1)
DCF5	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
DCF6	19/20 (0.95)	-	20/20 (1)
DCF7	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
DCF8	15/20 (0.75)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
DCF9	10/20 (0.5)	5/20 (0.25)	20/20 (1)
Average of Errors	17.4 (0.87)	14.71 (0.735)	19.7 (0.98)
IDCF1	20/20 (1)	18/20 (0.9)	18/20 (0.9)
IDCF2	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	8/20 (0.4)
IDCF3	20/20 (1)	7/20 (0.35)	6/20 (0.3)
IDCF4	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)

IDCF5	20/20 (1)	18/20 (0.9)	20/20 (1)
IDCF6	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
IDCF7	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
IDCF8	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
IDCF9	17/20 (0.85)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
IDCF10	19/20 (0.95)	19/20 (0.95)	19/20 (0.95)
Average of Errors	19.6 (0.98)	18.2 (0.91)	17.1 (0.855)
CG1	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
CG2	15/20 (0.75)	17/20 (0.85)	17/20 (0.85)
CG3	20/20 (1)	12/20 (0.6)	20/20 (1)
CG4	9/20 (0.45)	7/20 (0.35)	8/20 (0.4)
CG5	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)	16/20 (0.8)
CG6	19/20 (0.95)	20/20 (1)	20/20 (1)
CG7	8/20 (0.4)	0/20 (0)	3/20 (0.15)
CG8	20/20 (1)	8/20 (0.4)	8/20 (0.4)
CG9	12/20 (0.6)	16/20 (0.8)	14/20 (0.7)
CG10	20/20 (1)	0/20 (0)	0/20 (0)
Average of Errors	16.3 (0.815)	12 (0.6)	12.6 (0.63)

The current study found that students, independent of the type of CF they received, improved their accuracy throughout the written tasks. Further, the groups did not differ significantly in their initial proficiency on the pretest (average of errors: DCF = 17.4, IDCF = 19.6, CG = 16.3), but they showed differences on the immediate posttest (average of errors: DCF = 14.71, IDCF = 18.2, CG = 12). The immediate posttest indicated an improvement for all groups. The CG and the group that received DCF could correct more errors than the group receiving IDCF. Further, the delayed posttest presented that the CG (average of errors = 12.6) had fewer errors than the IDCF group (average of errors = 17.1) and the DCF group (average of errors = 19.7). The scores of the delayed posttest demonstrated an increase in the number of errors in the group receiving DCF, while a decrease in the number of errors was observed for the IDCF group and the CG.

Discussion

The research question investigated aimed to shed light on the type of written CF that would help learners to improve their accuracy in the use of Simple Present tense.

While all three groups profited from CF and decreased the amount of their errors on the immediate posttest, the results of the delayed posttest portrayed a decline of errors for the IDCF group and the CG, and an increase of errors for the DCF group. When individual students were examined, it was apparent that half of the participants (N = 15) had the same scores on the

immediate and delayed posttests, while only two students demonstrated improvement in the delayed posttest.

The corrections some students received seemed not to affect them in any way since these (e.g., IDCF1, IDCF 2, IDCF6, IDCF7) did not make use of the corrections in subsequent writings, so that it can be concluded that some students did not show any signs of progress. Truscott and Hsu (2008) reported the same finding in their study. Their participants did not profit from indirect CF for their second narratives in which they made more errors than in their first narratives. Thus, it can be argued that similar to the findings of Truscott and Hsu (2008), for some students in the current study, especially the ones receiving DCF (e.g., DCF1, DCF3, DCF4), there was no relation between CF and improvement in the long run.

Since there was not much difference between the three groups and since the delayed posttest did not show significant gains with regard to accuracy, one can agree with Truscott (2007) who claimed that correction has small benefits. Nevertheless, due to the fact that the students showed progress during the tasks, it can be stated that CF gave them the possibility to correct grammatical errors.

The fact that some students (e.g., DCF1, DCF2, IDCF6, IDCF7) could not profit from feedback on the delayed posttest may be related to the low level of attention they paid to the corrections or to some problems with noticing the feedback provided which, according to Schmidt (1990, 1993), are necessary components for learning to take place. Furthermore, it is not rational to expect that feedback will immediately lead to learning. Hyland and Hyland (2006) stated that for feedback to become constructive "it needs time and repetition before it can help learners to notice correct forms, compare these with their own interlanguage and test their hypotheses about the target language" (p. 85).

Another factor to discuss in this context is the finding of Van Beuningen et al. (2012) who specify that direct correction is especially useful for grammatical accuracy, while indirect CF benefits non-grammatical accuracy. The current study focused on grammatical errors only and applied both direct and indirect CF. It was evident that students benefited from both direct and indirect CF in the corrections of their grammatical errors in their writings. Although it is supposed that "explicit forms of feedback (including more explicit recasts) result in higher levels of uptake and repair" (Ellis, 2005, p. 21), the present study clarified that both forms of CF were useful for the students during the treatment process but that indirect CF was more effective in the increase of accuracy in the long run.

Based on the results, it could be denoted that indirect CF is the type of feedback that learners profited most from. Further, when the students who improved were examined

individually, it was apparent that these were students who were autonomous and proficient in English (e.g., DCF4, IDCF4, CG7), and were not affected by the type of CF they received.

The specific influence of linguistic proficiency on the effectiveness of written CF is not exactly known (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010), but it can be assumed that metalinguistic competence is necessary to profit from indirect CF (Sheen, 2007). Reducing the amount of their errors, independent of the type of CF they received, the higher-level students outperformed the lower-level students, which was also observed in the study of Van Beuningen et al. (2012). It can be concluded that the effectiveness of CF is dependent on students' knowledge. Since this study did not embrace the implementation of a proficiency test and an aptitude test, it is recommended for future research to do so.

Conclusion

The present study indicated that both direct and indirect CF led to a decline of the number of errors in new writings. Further, no significant differences between direct, indirect and no CF could be detected in helping students decrease the number of errors they made in the written assignments. The posttests reflected that indirect CF was more beneficial than direct CF and no CF. Being exposed to indirect written CF helped participants to gain accuracy in the use of Simple Present tense whose effects were durable. In the long term, indirect CF seemed more effective than direct CF and no CF. Thus, it can be recommended to use indirect CF if the aim is to make students retain the forms and structures learned. For pedagogical purposes, indirect CF seems to be the most effective one since it arouses the potential for retention.

Although the present study came up with helpful insights into CF, it is limited from some perspectives. Firstly, because of the fact that the students had to complete the written assignments out-of-class, it was impossible to check if they completed the tasks without any support. Next, the teacher herself decided on the students' proficiency levels. That is why a proficiency test is asked for. In addition to this, the study investigated if the use of Simple Present tense could be enhanced by CF, so that the findings cannot be generalized to other linguistic forms. Thus, further research is required in the field of CF that can come up with results that investigate the effects of direct and indirect CF on the use of Simple Present tense to verify the results of the present study.

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Appendix

Instrument (Pretest, Immediate Posttest, Delayed Posttest)

DAILY ROUTINES

Describe what the person on the pictures does. Write a sentence for each picture. Use the words in parentheses.
(Resimdeki kişinin ne yaptığını anlatınız. Her resim için bir cümle yazınız. Parantez içindeki kelimeleri kullanınız.)

This is Sally. She is 12 years old.
She lives in London with her family.
Let's see what her daily routines are.

(WAKE UP)

She_____early in the mornings.

(WASH HER HANDS)

She_____every morning.

(GET DRESSED)

She_____.

(GO TO SCHOOL)

She_____on weekdays.

(HAVE A DRINK)

She_____.

(DO HOMEWORK)

She_____.

(SWIM)

She_____.

(WALK THE DOG)

She_____.

(READ A BOOK)

She_____.

(SLEEP)

She_____at 8 o'clock.

DAILY ROUTINES

Describe what the person on the pictures does. Write a sentence for each picture. Use the words in parentheses.
(Resimdeki kişinin ne yaptığını anlatınız. Her resim için bir cümle yazınız. Parantez içindeki kelimeleri kullanınız.)

This is Joe. He is 11 years old.
He lives with his family in Washington.
Let's see what his daily routines are.

(BRUSH HIS TEETH)

He_____every morning.

(COMB HIS HAIR)

He_____.

(GO TO SCHOOL)

He_____on weekdays.

(EAT A SANDWICH)

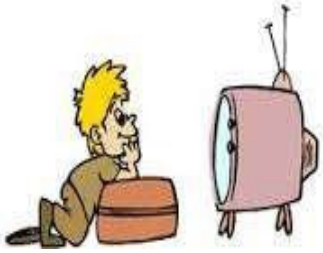
He_____after school.

(LISTEN TO MUSIC)

He_____in the afternoon.

(DRAW PICTURES)

He_____.



(WATCH TV)

He_____.

(PLAY FOOTBALL)

He_____.

(PLAY COMPUTER GAMES)

He_____in the evening.

(HAVE DINNER)

He_____with his family at 7 o’clock.