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İki Farklı Düzeltici Geri Bildirim Türünün İngilizce  
Öğretiminde Öğrencilerin Yazma Becerileri  
Üzerindeki Etkisi

The Effect of Two Different Types of Corrective  
Feedback on EFL Students' Writing

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## ÖZ

Bu çalışma, Kocaeli Üniversitesi İngilizce hazırlık biriminde bir sınıfta öğrencilerden iki farklı grup oluşturularak yazma becerilerini geliştirmede öğrenciye verilen iki farklı düzeltici geri bildirim etkisinin kıyaslamasını hedeflemektedir. Öğrencilerin, yazma becerilerinin gelişimini daha iyi takip edebilmek adına, veri toplama aracı olarak süreç odaklı yazma metodu kullanılmıştır. Bu çalışmada, metodun basamakları Taslak 1, Taslak 2, Taslak 3 şeklindedir. Öğrencilerin, bu taslaklarına iki farklı düzeltici geribildirim verilmiştir. Geri bildirimlerden biri direkt düzeltmeyi esas alırken; diğeri, öğrencilerin kendilerine verilen Düzeltme Tablosu Sembollerinden yola çıkarak, yanlışları üzerinde düşünerek dolaylı yoldan bulmalarını amaçlamıştır. Standart bir sınıfta, haftalık İngilizce yazma becerisini geliştirme dersi toplam 4 saattir. Araştırma verileri 6 hafta boyunca haftada 4 saat olan yazma becerilerini geliştirme dersi olan 30 yetişkin öğrencinin hem ders içi hem ders dışı yazdığı paragraflar aracılığıyla toplanmıştır. Verilen konular, kullanılan kitaptaki konular ile paraleldir. Örnek yapılar ve konu ile ilgili kelime çalışmaları ders saati içerisinde yapılmıştır. Öğrencilerin ilk taslaklarına çeşitli düzeltici geribildirimler uygulandıktan sonra kendilerine düzeltilmesi için verilen ikinci taslaklarını eposta olarak göndermişlerdir ve elde edilen veriler her iki grupta da ikinci taslaklarında hata oranının azaldığını göstermiştir. Bir hafta arayla hem kontrol hem deney grubu ile üçüncü taslak oluşturmak için benzer bir çalışma yapılmıştır. Elde edilen verilerde öğrencilerin hatasız cümle oranının üçüncü taslaklarında, ikinci taslaklarına göre azaldığı gözlemlenmiştir. İki farklı düzeltici geribildirimden, dolaylı geribildirim daha etkili olduğu saptanmıştır.

**Anahtar Sözcükler:** Doğrudan geribildirim, Dolaylı geribildirim, Geribildirim, Türk öğrenciler, Yazma becerisi

## ABSTRACT

The present study aims to compare the effectiveness of two different types of corrective feedback: implicit and explicit through learners' process writing. Process writing is a method which includes drafts to observe students' improvement with the help of the following drafts. In this study, the sequence of drafts is like that: D1, D2 and D3. The research is conducted with 30 Turkish elementary level students from the preparatory school at Kocaeli University. The writing subjects are chosen in harmony with the subjects in the coursebook. This treatment lasts 4 hours in school and continues for students after school for 6 weeks. Students were expected to submit their second draft via email. The students are evenly divided into two groups. While the students in control group receive the correction on their draft 1 and 2 explicitly such as direct correction; the students in the treatment group are expected to infer their errors on their own from the symbols in the correction symbols chart given them beforehand. The data obtained from the second drafts given for the correction to the students after applying various corrective feedback to the students' initial drafts show that the error rate decreases in the second drafts in both groups. A similar treatment standing as Draft 3 is conducted both with the control and experimental groups after a week later. The data obtained show that there is a decrease in the error free clauses rate in the third draft when compared to the students' second draft. Out of two different types of corrective feedback, the implicit feedback is slightly more effective.

**Keywords:** Corrective feedback, Explicit feedback, Implicit corrective feedback, Turkish students, Writing skills.

## INTRODUCTION

According to Kepner (1991), contrary to the traditional teachers, the recent EFL teachers do not regard correcting L2 students' errors on their writing as a burden; furthermore, they subscribe the view that each error encountered should be corrected for the fear of the fossilization of the errors so EFL teachers tend to correct all mistakes in L2 students writing. Therefore, to keep track of the progress in L2 students writing, process writing instruction suits better than traditional methods in meeting the needs of the modern information society (Jia, 2017). Process writing favors the progress of linguistic accuracy and through grammar correction, the accuracy of students' writing can be improved and therefore, process writing is regarded as a way of helping learners to promote communicative effectiveness (Ashwell,2010). In the hope of better supporting learners' independent, error free writing ability, a growing body of practitioners prefers to implement the steps of writing process-generating ideas, organizing, drafting, revising, editing and reviewing into their writing courses (White & Arndt, 1991). Thus, with the help of process writing which enables teachers to keep track of the progress of L2 students' writing, this study was conducted in the one of preparatory classes at Kocaeli University. Two different patterns of corrective feedback were given to foreign language learning students producing a first draft (D1), a second draft (D2), and a final version (D3) of a single topic composition. These corrective feedback patterns are explicit and implicit corrective feedback. The students' writing performance was assessed through the percentage of error-free clauses and the findings of the study were interpreted in the correlation with the number of error free clauses. This research aims to both make a contribution to education practice and evoke creativity in the research of English writing instruction.

## BACKGROUND AND REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Only imposing on students with positive evidence or equipping them with only negative evidence has been hotly debated through the history of SLA. While Behaviorism regarded errors as a dark side of learning process and should be corrected by the instructor without loss of time (Larsen-Freeman, 2000; Richards & Rodgers, 2001), Cognitivists considered errors as a natural and indispensable outcome of learning. (Larsen-Freeman, 2000). Nativist's focus was only underlying knowledge of language and saw performance as unpredictable so errors received little interest. (Schwartz, 1993). Interactionist view takes errors seriously and represents the ways of how to deal with errors to SLA world.

It is surely beyond doubt that the studies and their theoretical and empirical findings about error correction have extensively been debated from different perspectives. It can be said that there are three mainstream study foci. First one is that evaluation students' papers in terms of students' preferences and reaction to teacher feedback (e.g., Cohen, 1987; Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Ferris, 1995a; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). Another type of research' s focus has been teachers' response practices (e.g., Cumming, 1995; Zamel, 1985) and a third study focus has been to evaluate the effects of corrective feedback provided by teachers (e.g., Lalande, 1982; Ashwell, 2000). Admittedly, corrective feedback has been one of the essential issues in Second Language Acquisition.

Lightbown and Spada (1999) describe corrective feedback as: "Any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect. This includes various responses that the learners receive." (p.171-172). While Cathcart & Olsen's (1976 ) study has shown that learners like to be revised and repaired by their teachers, facing students' errors in language classroom is an inevitable phenomenon for teachers and the source of dilemma exactly starts in this point. To correct or not to correct errors has evoked controversy in SLA. Lightbown and Spada (1990) conducted a study in which the students received corrective feedback and as a result showed greater accuracy in their productive skills. In the conspicuous absence of the proof to the contrary, it seems that error correction is indispensable part of proficiency in language learning (Lee ,1995; Bailey and Celce-Murcia 1979).

The debate whether the corrective feedback on L2 writing is beneficial on students' writing or not has been stimulated by Truscott's (1996) claim which is no need for corrective feedback and is also harmful on L2 students writing. As response to Truscott (1996), Ferris (1999) published "The case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes" that has proved that corrective feedback is essential for learners. Furthermore, the study conducted by Cathcart and Olsen (1976) has shown that learners like to be corrected by their teachers. Similarly, Lightbown and Spada (1990)'s study stands as a proof that with the help of corrective feedback, learners attained greater accuracy level.

### **Types of Corrective Feedback**

Russell and Spada (2016) classified corrective feedback depending on the factors that may have an impact on the effectiveness of corrective feedback. Some of them are the type of feedback (implicit or explicit), the amount of feedback, the mode of feedback (oral or written), the source of feedback. When the matter is effectiveness of CF, some dissenting voice arises over CF that Truscott (1996) is one of them. Although much of explicit correction has been operated under the assumption that it would help them advance the accuracy level of the following draft, this attitude would open a Pandora's box of problems. Truscott (1996) argues that this trial is in vain and a waste of time. Furthermore, having a close look the studies conducted by Kepner (1991), Semke (1984) and Sheppard (1992), they found out that CF neither was useful nor stood as a "rule reminder" in students' writing (p.310). Namely, CF is useless in terms of standing as an effective tool to help students to improve their writings. In accordance with his deduction, Truscott (1996) claims that "CF is both ineffective and harmful and should therefore be "abandoned" in his article "The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes" (p.328).

As a reaction to Truscott (1996), Ferris (2004) published the findings and implications of his empirical study that investigated the effects of type of corrective feedback on 53 adult migrant students by focusing on three types of error (prepositions, the past simple tense, and the definite article) came up with this result: improved accuracy in writing at the end of 12 weeks period. What is more, his findings were satisfying enough to stand strong behind his claim and evaluated Truscott's (1996) arguments as unconvincing and though sounding convincing, Truscott's claim hangs in the air because of the lack of "statistically significant evidence" to underpin his claim (Chandler, 2003, p.290). Furthermore, there is a good number of studies conducted in the search of distinguishing the effectiveness of implicit and explicit corrective feedback on the path of supporting students to improve grammar accuracy (Fathmann and Whalley (1990), Ashwell (2000), Hedgcock, 1998; Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986).

### **METHODOLOGY**

Hotly debated issue between Truscott (1996) and Ferris (2004) has constituted the base of several studies. Both sides have been supported by a variety of empirical studies. Specifically, an increasing number of studies tries to put shed light on whether implicit or explicit corrective feedback is more likely to help students advance the accuracy of their writing (e.g., Ashwell, 2000; Ferris, 1995a, b; Ferris & Hedgcock 1998; Lalande 1982; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986). However, let alone reaching a consensus on whether corrective feedback is helpful or harmful, the results of these studies whose foci were the implementations of certain types of corrective feedback do not compatible with each other. Namely, while Ashwell (2000) and Semke (1984) concluded that the treatment and the control groups did not show any differences from each other in terms of formal accuracy, the conclusion of the study conducted by Lalande (1982) is that the students in treatment group made fewer errors at the end of the term.

In this study, the copies of drafts and final versions of the students' writing were assessed on the grounds of the formal accuracy by two teachers. These procedures consisted of counting each grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors that could be encountered in any draft or final version of the drafts and assessing each one for a mean rating for formal accuracy.

A number of studies concerning the value of error has already existed; however, it is equally obvious that further study is required to be carried out 1) on different cultural setting 2) with less advanced students.

## Research Questions

This paper aims to answer these questions below;

1. Is there a significant difference between the effects of using correction symbols list and underlining errors on EFL learner's writing accuracy?
2. Is there a meaningful difference between the students' second draft and third draft in terms of formal accuracy?

## Participants

The student participants were 30 elementary level students in the same class of EFL preparatory school at Kocaeli University. Their levels were determined by an end-of module test applied after the first term. Therefore, their language proficiency levels were the same; Elementary. In the class there were 30 learners. Age ranged from 18 to 26 but the majority were 18. Eighteen students are male and twelve students are female. Their departments varied such as various kinds of engineering Economy, Math. They were in the same level, elementary. They were volunteer to take part in this small action study as they thought it would be beneficial for their English study.

## Process Writing

Process writing is an approach developed by Heald-Taylor (1994) combining writing skills from the beginning in learning language process. Process writing has steps that give a sense to students that making mistakes is a natural phenomenon in learning a new language. In the light of the rationale of the process writing, these steps (first draft, second draft, third draft) were in use. Ashwell (2000) contended that process writing is regarded as a way of helping students to advance the grammatical accuracy and additionally, contribute to communicative effectiveness. In a nutshell, linguistic accuracy is the main issue in process writing.

## Implementation

In the implementation of the study, different patterns of feedback were applied to EFL students producing a first (D1), second (D2) and third (D3) draft. In order to collect data in this study, each week, the students were allocated 30 minutes in class to organize and write about a topic related to the topics in the course book (Elementary Speakout, 2015) for their first draft. The class was divided into two and different types of CF were implemented. While the first group received implicit CF (Correction Symbols Chart), the second group's feedback was explicit.

In a detailed explanation, while the teacher corrected all errors explicitly in one group, the teacher used only error correction code in the light of Correction Symbols Chart and this Correction Symbols Chart includes example sentences for each symbol and before it was employed in this study, the teacher and the students discussed the meaning of each symbol. Thus, on the course of the study, the students in the treatment group were expected to negotiate the types of errors they made. The same subject was assigned to both groups in order to attain similar means for formal accuracy for two groups for D1. In the first group, underlining and correction were the major methods employed in this study. The correction symbols charts used for the treatment group. In the light of the correction symbol chart, the treatment group was expected to deduce their errors. For instance, if there was a missing linguistic structure in a sentence, the signal “^” was used. For the control group, for instance, if an auxiliary “be” was missing, a highlighted “be” was added in exactly where the auxiliary “be” was needed.

After D1s were handed back to the students with comments, symbols and pointers for subsequent writing, the students were expected to send their D2 via email to the teacher. -One

week after each treatment, the students were assigned to write about the same topics. Therefore, the copies of remaining drafts and final versions of the students' writing were assessed on the grounds of the formal accuracy by two teachers. In the course of assessment D3, the students' errors were evaluated in the light of the categorization of the errors in D1 and D2 and aimed to detect whether the students showed any progress in their final drafts. These procedures consisted of counting each grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors that could be encountered in any draft or the final version and assessing each one for a mean rating for formal accuracy. After that, error free clauses were counted in each draft. For six weeks, the percentage ratio of error-free sentences and incorrect sentences were calculated. In case instead of making necessary alterations in the sentences consisting of the errors, the students wanting to write totally different sentences or adding new sentences were informed that their previous drafts would be checked.

## FINDINGS

Errors helped learners advance the accuracy of their writing when developing new similar texts. The revised versions of the students' writing were D2 after D1 and D3 after D1. They were compared with the previously recorded errors and the improvements were tracked. The performance was assessed through the percentage of error-free clauses and the findings of the study was interpreted in the line of error free clauses. Suffice it to that, participants were assessed on a quantitative variable. It is namely accuracy performance. This was essentially calculated as the percentage of correct usage of each targeted linguistic form.

Table 1: The averages of the group receiving implicit CF during six weeks

Weeks	Error Free Clauses in First Draft %	Error Free Clauses in Second Draft Implicit CF %	Error Free Clauses in Third Draft Implicit CF %
Week 1	52.77	56.88	54.92
Week 2	62.51	67.02	69.28
Week 3	67.02	72.77	68.21
Week 4	55.48	56.34	58.52
Week 5	61.25	68.90	67.89
Week 6	65.91	66.23	66.07
Total Average	60.82	64.69	64.14

Table 1 shows the accuracy averages for the group who received implicit corrective feedback. Data evaluation indicates that from the first week to the sixth week, the students advanced their linguistic accuracy while the total accuracy of the students varied fairly obviously across the eighteen writing sessions. That is to say, there is a steady progress in terms of the accuracy on the grounds of both across the weeks and between D1 and D2 though a small fall showed itself in D3.

Table 2: The averages of the group receiving explicit CF during six weeks

Weeks	Error Free Clauses in First Draft %	Error Free Clauses in Second Draft Explicit CF %	Error Free Clauses in Third Draft Explicit CF %
Week 1	53.44	57.68	56.92
Week 2	63.72	69.89	64.88
Week 3	58.48	61.45	62.02
Week 4	53.92	54.39	53.92
Week 5	66.03	73.22	72.49
Week 6	65.67	63.11	66.62
Total Average	60.21	63.29	62.80

Table 2 shows the accuracy averages for the group who received explicit corrective feedback. Across the weeks, the progress is steady in that group, too. Except D2, the accuracy rate of this group is behind the group who received the implicit feedback for six weeks.

This study attempted to investigate the effect of two different types of corrective feedback on the writing. Table 1 and 2 represent the mean scores for the groups who received implicit and explicit corrective feedback. It is understood that there is an improvement on both the first two drafts; in treatment group, there is a rise from 60.82 per cent to 64.69 and in control group, from 60.21 to 63.29. The data also revealed that there is a fall at accuracy rate in D3 of both control and treatment group. This fall happens likely because of a week time period between the implementation of D2 and D3. Data evaluations suggest that students who received implicit feedback improved their linguistic accuracy on writing tasks better. However, while the similar studies conducted by Ashwell (2000) and Semke (1984) reveal that these two patterns did not produce fairly different results in terms of formal accuracy, the conclusion drawn from the similar study carried out by Lalande (1982) is that the students using correction code made fewer errors at the end of the semester. To put it plain, Lalande's (1982) study result is compatible with this study result.

## DISCUSSION

The aim of this study was to examine the effectiveness of implicit and explicit feedbacks on EFL students writing. Contrary to Truscott's review of research by Kepner (1991), Semke (1984) and Sheppard (1992) asserted that error correction does not significantly contribute to L2 student writing, the findings of the study show that both treatment and control group have made progress across the weeks. On the course of implementation of process writing, the students' D1 were handed back to the students with comments, symbols and pointers for subsequent writing in accordance with the requirements of their own group. The students were expected to send their D2 via email to the teacher. Upon seeing the results of D2, one could quickly jump the deduction that there is a progress in both groups in terms of formal accuracy. However, one week after each treatment, though the students were assigned to write about the same topics, there is a fall in both groups' formal accuracy, especially the control group's formal accuracy rate has fallen dramatically. On the other hand, both groups have shown a great deal progress during the treatment. Across six weeks, the students were predominantly provided with the differences between their errors and the corrections they were given, this may open the doors of noticing that is widely welcomed in the SLA literature because with the help of noticing, uptake and long-term acquisition can take place (Gass, 1997; Schmidt, 1990, 1994).

## SUMMARY

In both types of corrective feedback, there are significant differences between the second and third drafts. While in the first drafts, the number of error free clauses are high, in the second drafts, there is a dramatical fall. Lalande (1982) conducted a study having similar results with this study. Lalande (1982) came up with the results indicating that the students who received correction code produced fewer errors at the end of the semester. In this study, comparisons including both treatment and control group showed that implicit feedback helped the students to advance the formal accuracy of their writing more than the control group who received explicit feedback. The findings of the study may offer some useful suggestions for teachers about the type of feedback that will be applied.

## Limitations

Based on the findings of the study, further research with a larger number of participants over a longer period of time can be conducted. Due to the small size of participants, the results can, without a doubt, only be regarded as quite tentative. It seems important to mention that overall improvements in the students' compositions between D2 and D3 should not be attributable to overall differences in the amount of feedback received.

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