

**EXPLORING THE ROLE OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN SECOND LANGUAGE  
WRITING**

by

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore what research says about the role of corrective feedback in second language writing. Error correction in writing has been a contentious issue as researchers debated the effectiveness in helping improve learner's linguistic accuracy in writing. This debate was the impetus for further research that attempted to address whether written CF facilitates L2 acquisition. This paper reviews the background of this debate and looks at some of the major research on this issue and its conclusions. In so doing, it looks at the different written corrective feedback (WCF) types, direct, indirect, metalinguistic and focused feedback and their role in helping students improve their accuracy of problematic linguistic features. Recent research is presented which suggests that focused WCF leads to gains in linguistic accuracy (Sheen, 2007). In the connections to practice section I propose to do a teacher information workshop to present these research finding and suggest some ways to implement WCF in the second language classroom. In this workshop teachers will be informed of the strengths and limitations of using each type of WCF to help make them aware of the range of feedback available in order to provide targeted feedback effectively. The paper concludes with future implications for the classroom.

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## **SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION**

Providing effective feedback to help learners in their writing development can be a daunting and confusing task for teachers. Particularly complex is identifying which aspects to address in a student's writing and how to do so to best help the learner improve. As a Spanish Middle years and High school educator of seven years I am constantly striving to strike a balance between correcting errors, a task which can be time consuming, and fostering more autonomy in the student's writing. After exploring a range of feedback practices, I am left wondering what the most effective type of feedback is. As a teacher I want to know how to draw attention to a learner's errors, and provide feedback that is meaningful. One approach I have used and which I believe has potential to help students writing in a second language is corrective feedback (CF). For this project, therefore, I will explore what research says about corrective feedback in second language writing, in particular corrective feedback strategies that might be productive in helping learners with persistently problematic linguistic features.

While writing feedback encompasses many aspects of the writing process including composition skills, style, content etc, the focus of this paper will be written corrective feedback that supports second language learners in their writing development; in particular, form focused CF. In form focused CF specific errors are selected and corrected (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008)

### **Significance of my project**

Providing feedback in a second language is vital to a student's writing development. While making errors is natural in all aspects of language learning, second language writers face unique challenges in developing writing skills (Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, & Wolfersberger, 2010). Written corrective feedback gives learners information that they need to notice their errors. Ferris (2002) suggests that students "need distinct and additional intervention from their

writing teachers to make up their deficits and develop strategies for finding, correcting, and avoiding errors” (p. 4). However, there has been controversy around corrective feedback. A discussion of what the research has to say about the merits and critiques of using corrective feedback will be a useful addition to the literature.

### **Questions for the project**

The following questions will be investigated:

1. What does the literature say about corrective feedback?
2. How can a teacher incorporate corrective feedback strategies into her practice?

### **Theoretical Framework**

The framework for this study is based on: 1) the cognitive theory and work of Schmidt’s (1990) Noticing Hypothesis and, 2) Long’s (1983) Interaction Hypothesis and 3) the social constructivist theory of Vygotsky (1978).

#### **1) Cognitive theory and noticing hypothesis**

Much of the work done in written corrective feedback is grounded in cognitive theories. That is, “CF promotes learning because it induces noticing and noticing-the-gap” (Sheen, 2010a, p. 170) and in this way helps interlanguage development.

According to the noticing hypothesis theory (Schmidt, 1990), in order for something to be learned, it has to be noticed first, however, noticing on its own does not result in acquisition. Learners have to consciously pay attention to or notice input in order for input to become intake for L2 learning. In this way, corrective feedback triggers learners to recognize the gaps between the target norms and their own interlanguage (IL) which leads to grammatical restructuring. While second language students make errors as part of the learning process, drawing attention to these errors is an important aspect to their language development.

## **2) Long's interaction hypothesis**

Long's (1983) interaction hypothesis is important in considering the value of corrective feedback. According to Long modified interaction is the necessary mechanism to make language comprehensible. Long emphasized the role of negotiated interaction in language development.

He proposed that:

Environmental contributions to acquisition are mediated by selective attention and the learner's developing L2 processing capacity, and that the resources are brought together most usefully, although not exclusively, during negotiation of meaning. Negative feedback obtained during negotiation work or elsewhere may be facilitative of L2 development, at least for vocabulary, morphology, and language specific syntax and essential for learning certain specifiable L1-L2 contrasts. (p. 414)

Long posited that, when communication is difficult, interlocutors must negotiate for meaning, for example, through confirmation and comprehension checks, clarification requests, elaboration and simplifications: "Negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the Native Speaker or more competent interlocutor facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" (pp. 451-452).

In terms of written corrective feedback negotiation for meaning occurs when the teacher provides written feedback in terms of form or vocabulary corrections, clarification or elaboration requests, and so on. This type of interaction and negotiation provide comprehensible input and learners are able to notice the gap between their output and the feedback which they receive, and this pushes a learner to produce modified output.

## **3) Social Constructivist theory**

Vygotsky's (1978) social constructivist theory holds that a child first develops new learnings during interactions with adults or more competent peers. These learnings are then internalized to become part of the child's psychological world. According to Vygotsky:

Every function in the child's cultural development appears twice: first, on the social level, and later, on the individual level; first *between* people (*interpsychological*), and then *inside* the child (*intrapsychological*). This applies equally to voluntary attention, to logical memory, and to the formation of concepts. All the higher functions originate as actual relations between human individuals. (p. 57, emphasis in the original)

Vygotsky proposed, therefore, that all mental processes exist first in a shared environment, and then move to an individual plane. Thus, the social context is 'part and parcel' of the learning and developmental process. Further, shared activity can be seen as a joint venture, which facilitates a child's internalization of mental processes.

Vygotsky's zone of proximal development (ZPD) is central to social constructivist theory (Pichard & Woolward, 2010). As stated above, the theory states that cognitive development arises as a result of social interaction and such interactions take place in the zone of proximal development (ZPD). The ZPD describes the difference between what a person can learn on his or her own and what that person can learn when supported by a more knowledgeable other. According to Vygotsky (1978), the ZPD "is the distance between the actual developmental level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers" (p. 86). Learners are helped to move into the ZPD and then beyond it to a new and higher level which then provides a new ZPD, implying a capacity for more development at every stage

(Pichard & Woolward, 2010). As such Vygotsky believed the adult or more capable peer plays a role as mediator to the child that is, scaffolding a student's learning by guiding them to achieve higher levels of development, and then gradually removing the support so that the learner takes on more of the task (Chapman, 1997).

Viewed through a lens of social constructivist theory, corrective feedback (CF) is effective when tailored to the learner's stage of development. Learners are supported to perform a linguistic feature that they are not yet able to handle independently. Vygotsky's theory explains that through scaffolding, learners are able to use the target language with assistance from teachers or peers in the classroom to produce language that they would not yet be able to do on their own (Sheen, 2010).

### **Limitations**

Much of the research conducted in corrective feedback in writing has been done in the context of English as Second language and with college or university composition students in L2 settings. While there is a substantial amount of findings in these contexts, research findings that are conducted in high school settings however, are scarce. As such, I will rely on studies that offer more information conducted in university and college settings. I aim to review these studies bearing in mind that the contexts will vary.

## **SECTION 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

The following section is organized into three parts. Part One will briefly review the controversy around CF and explore definitions of CF and CF feedback types in writing. Part Two explores what the literature has to say about the effect of CF types on SLA including learner's preferences for them. Part three discusses the use of CF in the classroom.

### **Part 1: Controversy around Corrective Feedback**

The role of corrective feedback in SLA and whether it helps accuracy and overall writing has been debated for many years. Error feedback has been viewed as, either, contributing to the learner's language improvement (Sheen, 2007) or according to the most extreme views, such as Krashen (as cited in Ferris, 2010) and Truscott (1996) as being ineffective or even harmful. Truscott sparked considerable controversy with his viewpoint on error correction.

#### **Background to the controversy**

The notion of CF contributing to the learner's language development has been a point of contention since Truscott (1996) first argued that "grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (p. 328) in writing classes as he believed it to be ineffective and even harmful. This argument has been of significant influence within the field of SLA and L2 writing, "[crossing] disciplinary-or at least subdisciplinary-boundaries" (Ferris, 2010, p. 185) between the two areas of research and prompting both areas to address these criticisms.

Truscott's arguments, however, were centered on points that have not received much support (Chandler 2003, Ferris, 1999). Truscott (1996) mentioned that studies on CF had been unable to show effectiveness on improvement and asserted this was related to the methodology of the studies, which did not include a control group. More recent research, however, has shown

the effectiveness of error correction using a control group to support their findings (Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008; Sheen, 2007).

Concerning error correction and SLA, Truscott also pointed out that error correction that does not take into account a learner's developmental sequence of acquisition is problematic and also unrealistic because teachers will not know what developmental sequence the learner is at and know how to address it. However, Lightbown and Spada (2006) emphasized that "developmental stages are not like closed rooms. Learners do not leave one behind when they enter another. In examining a language sample from an individual learner, one should not expect to find behaviours from only one stage" (p. 92). Furthermore, Lightbown and Spada asserted that "learners have bursts of progress, then seem to reach a plateau for a while before something stimulates further progress [...] these may be especially true for learners whose exposure to the second language does not include instruction or the kind of feedback that would help them to recognize differences between their interlanguage and their target language" (p. 80). Furthermore Truscott (1996) does not explain how one would come to the conclusion of knowing if a learner has retained new elements of language or not.

According to Bitchener and Knoch (2010) "learners who notice the difference between target-like input (be it oral or WCF [written corrective feedback]) and their non-target-like output are able to modify it as target like output" (p. 194). Additionally, more recent studies report that learners are able to apply feedback in writings of new texts, particularly if the feedback is on specific targeted forms (Sheen 2007, Bitchener & Knoch, 2008).

Concerning the methodology, Truscott (1996) made a valid point in his argument that studies not having a control group reduced their validity. This prompted researchers to address this need in written CF studies. The research studies ranged extensively in the types of errors

addressed, the feedback types and the number of errors corrected. Written CF has focused on a variety of approaches to feedback and more recent research presents positive findings on focused CF (Ellis et al., 2008, Sheen 2007, Bitchener & Knoch, 2008).

The issue is no longer whether CF should be done, but rather how it should be done. The controversy around CF is also extended to the variety of strategies of written CF that a teacher can use.

### **What is it and how is it approached?**

In general the focus of SLA research in regards to CF has been to examine “how it affects learning processes... and changes in linguistic competence” (Sheen, 2010b, p. 204). Written CF can be regarded as a positive way “to draw L2 learner’s attention to linguistic forms in their writing products and thus improve their acquisition of L2” (p. 208). The definition of corrective feedback used throughout this paper will refer to Lightbown and Spada’s (2006) definition as:

An indication to a learner that his or her use of the target language is incorrect.

Corrective feedback can be explicit (for example, in response to the learner error ‘He go’- No, you should say “goes”, not “go”) or implicit (for example, ‘Yes, he goes to school every day’), and may or may not include metalinguistic information (for example, ‘Don’t forget to make the verb agree with the subject’.

(p. 197)

One important distinction to make is between CF grounded in SLA or in L2 writing theories. For instance, according to Sheen (2010a) “oral CF research has been largely grounded in SLA theories and hypotheses, whereas written CF research has drawn on L1 and L2 writing composition theories” (p. 171). Both, however, are important to the learner’s language

development and studies on oral CF can contribute to the learning of what type of corrective feedback would be more effective in helping learners improve their written linguistic accuracy.

It is also important to highlight that feedback in writing can refer either to a focus on the overall composition of a text including its organization and content, or on correcting linguistic errors. This is significant since there are different concerns for SLA and second language writing researchers. SLA researchers have focused on examining the impact of CF on improvement in linguistic accuracy. Writing researchers have examined feedback in regards to how writing can improve overall writing performance. This distinction is best highlighted by Ferris (2010), who emphasizes that “the studies of written CF designed by SLA researchers examine whether written CF facilitates long-term acquisition of particular linguistic features, and if so, how” (p. 188). In contrast, L2 writing researchers view CF as an approach to help students improve their overall writing and consider that a narrow focus of corrective feedback only on linguistic features is not practical (Ferris, 2010). Thus, the extent to which CF is beneficial in writing depends on who is researching it, SLA or L2 writing researchers. It appears that both have examined similar topics in parallel and yet both are viewing correction in different aspects of writings (content or grammar). The question of whether CF in writing contributes to student’s linguistic accuracy improvement over time has been more recently addressed in SLA studies of written CF. In this paper, I aim to review SLA written CF studies.

### **Direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback**

To explore the issue of error correction in second language writing, research has focused on which types of error correction are effective in dealing with the type of errors. Among the methods used in written corrective feedback are direct and indirect.

In direct feedback the correct linguistic form or structure is provided above or near the linguistic error, it may include the crossing out of a word/phrase, the insertion of a missing word/phrase or the correct form or structure is provided. (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005). Direct feedback provides learners with explicit feedback and this is more desirable if learners do not know that the correct form is (Ellis, 2009). This is helpful to writers because it gives them information to help them with more complex errors such as idiomatic usage or syntactic structure (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). Additionally, direct feedback appears to be more effective with lower proficiency learners (Bitchener, 2008). It is argued that direct CF may not contribute to long term learning because it requires minimal processing on the part of the learner (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). However more recently Sheen (2007) suggests that direct CF is effective in promoting acquisition of specific grammatical features.

In contrast, indirect corrective feedback indicates that an error has been made in the form of underlining the error, using a code to show where the error occurred and what type of error it is, however, rather than the teacher providing an explicit correction, students are left to resolve and correct the problem that has been drawn to their attention (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). It is argued that because such a strategy encourages learners to self-correct their errors, it pushes them to test what they know and induces deeper internal processing and helps them internalize the correct forms. As such it is considered to be more likely to lead to long-term learning (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Indirect feedback is considered less preferred for lower proficiency writers in language learning classes because they have a limited linguistic knowledge to self correct errors. (Ferris, 2002). A further discussion of the effectiveness of these types will be presented in the next section.

Viewed from the perspective of second language acquisition some argue that the distinction of when to use direct and indirect CF is problematic. According to Ellis, Sheen, Murakami and Takashima (2008),

the effectiveness of direct and indirect CF is likely to depend on the current state of the learner's grammatical knowledge. From a practical standpoint, however, it is unlikely that teachers will be sufficiently familiar with individual learners' interlanguages to be able to make principled decisions regarding whether to correct directly or indirectly. (p. 355)

### **Error feedback in combination with oral metalinguistic explanation**

Direct corrective feedback has also included oral meta-linguistic explanation, such as in the form of class discussion, a mini lesson where the rules and examples are presented, practised and discussed or one-on-one conferences (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009).

### **Focused and unfocused corrective feedback**

A critique of the efficacy of L2 writing studies on written CF has been that error categories treated have included an unfocused approach with a number of linguistic error categories (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Sheen, 2010). Having this much to attend to "it was likely to produce too much of a cognitive overload for learners" (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008, p. 204). To address this critique, SLA researchers (for example, Doughty & Varela, 1998) drew on previous CF oral research studies that have produced positive results when targeting specific error categories and undertook research on written CF following the same criteria.

More recently researchers have examined the effectiveness of focused CF which targets one linguistic feature or specific errors to be corrected and ignores other errors and unfocused CF where "a teacher corrects all (or at least a range of) the errors in learners written work (Ellis et

al., 2008, p. 356). Support for using focused CF comes from cognitive theories of L2 acquisition such that “learners are more likely to attend to corrections directed at a single (or a limited number of) error type(s) and more likely to develop a clearer understanding of the error and the correction needed” (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 356). According to Schmidt’s Noticing hypotheses, attention and understanding are important for acquisition using a specific error to be corrected in a focused approach can yield positive results. In addition, according to Sheen (2007), “L2 learners have limited processing capacity and asking them to attend to corrections that address a range of issues at the same time might tax their ability to process the feedback” (p. 278).

The following section explores what the literature says about the types of CF in order to inform L2 teachers on the various strategies they can use. The third will discuss the use of corrective feedback in the classroom.

## **Part 2: What does the literature say about the different written corrective feedback types?**

Studies on feedback in writing have highlighted the different types of feedback provided and depending on the type used they have led to different outcomes. The following section aims to review what the literature says about the different types of CF in order to gain an understanding of when they are used and which level of learner might benefit most from any particular type. In the same manner learners’ preferences for feedback in writing will be discussed as a way to provide a better understanding of the importance in providing feedback. A discussion of these studies and the implications for teachers will be further discussed in the third section of this paper.

## **Direct corrective feedback and indirect corrective feedback**

Recent studies showing direct feedback in writing, where the teacher provides explicit corrections have demonstrated positive findings (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Chandler, 2003).

In a two part study, Chandler (2003) examined two ESL undergraduate groups and compared the effects of four types of feedback: direct correction, underlining with description, underlining only, and description only for a 14 week semester. Five essays were collected and corrected every second week and students had to correct their errors before submitting the next assignment. Students received four types of feedback in an alternating fashion. Chandler found that both, direct correction and simple underlining of errors had the most significant effects on accuracy. Thus Chandler reported positive findings for direct feedback and asserted that direct correction minimizes the confusion that can happen if learners don't understand the feedback and this is best for producing accurate revisions and for subsequent writing. This led Chandler to conclude that direct WCF has a significant impact on the development of the student's accuracy. However, Chandler did not include a control group which makes it difficult to make any definitive conclusions. As Ellis (2009) noted, "it did not address whether revising errors leads to acquisition of the correct forms" (p. 105).

Liang (2008) found that indirect correction helped students make fewer morphological errors with greater accuracy in a new piece of writing. The study examined error feedback and 12 university ESL students' ability to self edit by providing either direct feedback or indirect feedback on three error categories; morphological errors, semantic errors, and syntactic errors to two randomly assigned groups. Group A received direct feedback with the errors underlined and corrected, group B received indirect feedback with errors only underlined. Data were collected

from two drafts of the first essay and the first draft of a second essay. The findings showed that both types of feedback helped students self-edit their texts, but each type served a different purpose in the correction process. Direct feedback (Group A) reduced the students' errors in the immediate draft. The students had to copy the information only which implies that students can copy the information to a new draft, but they were unable to implement and transfer that knowledge to a new situation. On the other hand, indirect feedback lessened the morphological errors more than semantic errors. Concerning the different types of errors, both groups made fewer errors in morphology from essay 1 to essay 2. Group B outperformed Group A in essay 2 in terms of word choice, which shows that students paid attention to word choice when they wrote a different essay. Using underlining as a strategy helped students work out the corrections for themselves because they were aware of their grammatical errors when writing a new essay. The effect of corrective feedback where the teacher underlined the error, led to fewer errors on a subsequent assignment.

The previous studies support Ferris and Roberts (2001) view that indirect feedback is more effective than direct feedback because it requires the learner to engage in guided learning and problem solving which may contribute to long-term learning. The results of Liang's (2008) study contributed to the understanding of the effect of different feedback types on writing accuracy; however, it is limited due to the small sample size and short treatment type. Ferris and Roberts (2001) examined error feedback by studying how explicit error feedback should be in order to help students self edit their texts. They took 72 university ESL students and looked at the different abilities to self-edit their texts; this was done across three feedback conditions:

- errors marked with codes from five different error types (verb errors, noun ending errors, article errors, word-choice errors, and errors of sentence structure),
- errors in the same categories underlined but not marked or labeled, and
- no feedback.

This study is important because it compared two types of indirect feedback. The findings indicate that students who received both underlining and coding did slightly better in revising their grammatical errors than those receiving underlining only, but there did not seem to be an immediate advantage to more explicit coded indirect feedback for the students in the study. Not surprisingly, both groups did better in revising errors than the control group receiving no feedback. This study provides support for indirect corrective feedback and it considers indirect corrective feedback as more likely to lead to long-term learning (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

### **Error feedback in combination with oral metalinguistic explanation**

Direct corrective feedback has also included oral meta-linguistic explanation, such as in the form of class discussion, a mini lesson where the rules and examples are presented, practised and discussed or one-on-one conferences (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009).

Bitchener's (2008) study offered positive evidence on the value of corrective written feedback in combination with oral metalinguistic explanation. The two month study investigated the effect on accuracy for different corrective feedback options. A comparison of feedback was assigned to four groups:

- a combination of direct corrective feedback,
- written and oral meta-linguistic explanation (in the form of a thirty minute classroom lesson),
- direct corrective feedback and written metalinguistic explanation,

- direct corrective feedback only,  
and the control group received no corrective feedback.

Two functional uses of the English article system (indefinite ‘a’ and definite ‘the’) were targeted in the feedback. It was found that the accuracy of students who received feedback in the immediate post-test outperformed those in the control group who received no corrective feedback in the use of the referential indefinite “a” and the referential indefinite “the.” What was interesting in this study is that the level of accuracy was retained two months later without additional feedback or instruction.

The findings are positive in that they provide another way of looking at how teachers can provide effective feedback for the treatment of recurrent language errors. In this case, using the target focus of definite and indefinite articles in English improved students’ accuracy on subsequent work. This study offers good news to teachers who may find error feedback a necessary, but a time consuming task, that providing feedback can be effective, especially when combined with mini lessons such as found in this study. This study also provides a good example of the effects of different feedback types on particular types of errors. The findings contribute to the understanding that oral meta-linguistic explanation, such as a mini 30 minute lesson, may be just as effective and may involve less extensive amounts of time as the one on-one conferences that Bitchener et al. (2005) conducted. In addition, the findings of this study (Bitchener, 2008) demonstrate the value of focusing on a single error category.

Contrary to this finding, in a more recent study, Bitchener and Knoch (2009) found that there was no significant difference between participants who received direct error correction with written meta-linguistic explanation and those who received no feedback. The study was conducted for ten months, and it aimed to examine the effects of written corrective feedback on

two uses of the English article system given to 52 low-intermediate university ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand. Four different types of feedback were assigned: Direct corrective feedback, written, and oral meta-linguistic explanation, direct corrective feedback and written meta-linguistic explanation, Direct corrective feedback only, and the control group. The students produced five pieces of writing (pre-test, immediate post-test, and three delayed post-tests).

The study revealed that only two of the three treatment groups outperformed the control group and that there was no advantage for the group that received the oral meta-linguistic feedback during the mini lesson. In fact, this indicated that any of these options were just as effective as the other; there was no advantage for any one of the direct feedback options. Bitchener and Knoch (2009) attribute this to the small sample size for the differences in this finding in comparison to previous studies that indicate a combination of direct feedback with oral or written meta-linguistic explanation helps students in improved performance in writing.

Although there were differences in the findings, this study corroborates previous research (Bitchener et al. 2005; Bitchener 2008) the role that written corrective feedback can have long-term acquisition of certain linguistic forms or structures. By having a more focused approach on the error rather than a comprehensive range of error categories, it gives teachers and students a very specific structure or form, a focal point whereby it helps learners with certain recurring language errors. Considering these studies, it appears that metalinguistic explanation may be an advantage over direct error correction alone.

### **Focused and unfocused feedback**

A critique to the efficacy of L2 writing studies on written CF has been that error categories treated have included an unfocused approach with a number of linguistic error categories (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Sheen, 2010). Having this much to attend to “was likely to

produce too much of a cognitive overload for learners” (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008, p. 204). To address this critique, SLA researchers drew on previous CF oral research studies that have produced positive results when targeting specific error categories (Doughty & Varela, 1998), and undertook research on written CF following the same criteria. In order to explore the results of those studies, in the next section, I will review research on focused CF, targeting one or two linguistic features and unfocused CF to compare its effectiveness in accuracy gains in students’ writing.

More recently, researchers have examined the effectiveness of focused CF, which targets one linguistic feature and unfocused CF where “a teacher corrects all (or at least a range of) the errors in learners’ written work” (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 356). Support for using focused CF comes from cognitive theories of L2 acquisition such that “learners are more likely to attend to corrections directed to a single (or a limited number of) error type(s) and more likely to develop a clearer understanding of the error and the correction needed” (Ellis et al., 2008, p. 356).

Using focused written CF of English articles, Sheen (2007) applied direct CF alone – “indicating the location of an error and providing the correct form” (p. 262), and direct CF in combination with metalinguistic CF “indicating the location of an error, providing the correct form and including metalinguistic comments with explanation of the correct form” (p. 262) and also used a control group. The researchers examined the effect of these two types of feedback on ESL learners’ acquisition of a targeted structure, English articles. The research also examined the extent to which the learner’s language analytic ability mediated the effectiveness of CF. The language analytic ability was based on a language analysis test. This study did not look at students’ revision; instead, researchers incorporated a pre-test treatment and post-test and delayed post-test structure implementation where a speeded dictation test, a writing test which

involved a new piece of writing, and an error correction test were administered. The two treatment groups outperformed the control group on the immediate post-tests that included a speeded dictation test, a writing test and an error correction test. The direct metalinguistic group, however, made longer term gains in improving accuracy, and was superior to direct CF without metalinguistic comments. The findings demonstrated that learners benefited more from both types of CF when they have a high level of language analytic ability, which Sheen attributes to the fact that “CF treatments are more likely to increase in level of noticing and understanding when learners have a higher aptitude for language analysis” (p. 276). The findings indicated that focused written CF resulted in accuracy improvement. These are positive findings and support that written CF has an effect on acquisition.

Bitchener and Knoch (2008) conducted a study which explored the extent to which a targeted focus on two functional error categories, the indefinite article ‘a’ and the definite article ‘the’, resulted in improved accuracy in four new pieces of writing. The ten month longitudinal investigation was carried with 52 university ESL students in New Zealand in which participants received corrective feedback or no corrective feedback in pieces of writing that entailed describing what was taking place in a given picture. This study also used a pre-test, immediate post-test, and three delayed post-tests to measure accuracy. Bitchener and Knoch (2008) found that the group that had received feedback performed better than the group that received no feedback in all four post-tests. Having a focused written corrective feedback helped learners acquire features that had an enduring effect on accuracy for a ten-month period. The findings show the significance of focusing on a selective single error category at a time instead of a wide range of features. Bitchener and Knoch (2008) add that as such, this study concurs also with findings in oral corrective feedback studies (Doughty and Varela, 1998).

In the two preceding studies, a focused CF approach yielded positive results. However, Ellis, Sheen, Murakami and Takashima (2008) compared focused with unfocused CF to find its effect in using the indefinite and definite articles. Unlike the previous two studies, which used ESL participants, this study involved 49 EFL university participants and compared the effects of focused and unfocused written CF on their use of English indefinite and definite articles to express first and second mention in written narratives. A correction of just article errors on three written narratives was given to the focused CF group while the unfocused CF group received corrections of articles as well as other errors. The narrative writing tests were based on three different picture compositions and counterbalanced in each group at each testing time. A pre-test was administered before students were given the writing task. The immediate post-test was administered the same day they received the feedback on their last piece of writing and 4 weeks later the delayed post-test was administered. For each test students were provided one of the stories and a sheet of paper. They were then asked to write a title and a detailed story with no time pressure. The results of the study did not show a difference in the focused with unfocused CF, but both groups gained on an error correction test as well as on a test that involved a new piece of narrative writing.

Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) consider that bringing the student's attention to certain formal deviations will be helpful to their language development. According to the authors:

The key to learning L2 feature, as always, is noticing, and error correction is a convenient way of achieving this goal. When learners notice the gap between what they have produced and what the acceptable form is, they will take the required steps in internalizing the rule and would consequently be more careful in its use. (p. 6)

This is related to Schmidt's (1990) noticing hypothesis which highlights the importance of noticing in language learning, learners are more likely to attend to corrections directed at a single error whereas those directed at a diverse set of linguistic errors might make it more difficult to notice and understand which is important for CF to work for acquisition. This in turn supports the claim of cognitive theories (Schmidt, 1994).

More recently, Anderson (2010) investigated the use of "tiered corrective feedback" which he defined as "the various stages of focused corrective feedback beginning with the concentration on one grammatical feature and proceeding upwards in increments of one" (p. 4). Anderson examined the effect of varying intensities of written corrective feedback (on one, two, or three specified linguistic features) on students' accuracy in the production of those features. Corrective feedback was given to 39 intermediate English adult participants in a Canadian university writing class on articles, lexical categories, and subject-verb agreement. They were required to produce three writing tasks over a three week period. Anderson's findings suggest that there was a statistically significant decrease in targeted errors as a result of the corrective feedback, when up to two types of errors were corrected. However, when students received feedback on three types of errors it had less impact of feedback efficacy. Anderson (2010) highlights that perhaps "they had too much to attend to simultaneously and the effectiveness of the CF lessened" (p. 85). The control group did not receive any feedback and "demonstrated a slight increase in error frequency" (p. 90). While Anderson's study had a small sample of 39 students, it supports similar findings of previous studies that suggest focusing on one or two linguistic features may be more effective than focusing on a wider range of linguistic features.

### **Evaluation of focused WCF studies**

In three of the aforementioned studies, a focused CF approach was used with similar targeted structures, English articles, “a” and “the”, which appear to present difficulty for any level of proficiency while Anderson’s study (2010) used tiered focused corrective feedback with articles, lexical categories, and subject-verb agreement. All four studies also had a control group. The main strength in my view is that the studies were conducted in both ESL and EFL classes, providing a greater representation of the effectiveness of focused CF by examining both of these contexts. The studies provide optimistic results in that providing focused CF to assist learners acquire grammatical features have a longer effect, as much as 10 months later as demonstrated in Bitchener and Knoch’s (2009) study. The findings in these studies also challenge Truscott’s position that views CF as ineffective in learner’s grammatical accuracy, and according to Ferris (2010) “these studies have been methodologically rigorous” (p. 186).

The SLA research in CF studies presented have provided strong methodological support that addresses previous criticisms on the ineffectiveness of written CF. Therefore, contrary to Truscott’s claim, these studies point to the effectiveness of CF on the development of learner’s grammatical accuracy in both ESL and foreign language contexts and on new pieces of writing.

Much of the research then has primarily focused on the teacher; that is, on the strategies they use in providing error feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001), but it is equally valuable to find out what students prefer and their reactions to teacher feedback. This is relevant to improvement in L2 writing. My aim is to review the studies on student’s preference to gain a better understanding of what type of corrective feedback is useful to students.

### **Learners’ feedback preferences for error feedback: Direct and indirect**

The student’s attitude toward feedback can affect the way a student responds and implements it in his/her writing process. Moreover, student preferences to written feedback can

differ according to students' beliefs of the purpose of written feedback. Therefore, attitudes and expectations of students provide some insight of when and how students respond to feedback.

Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996) investigated college level writers' (both foreign language (FL) and English as a second language (ESL) students') perceptions of their instructors' feedback on their writing assignments. Interview data showed that instructional practices largely shaped learner's expectations concerning the educational goals of written feedback. Those L2 students studying a foreign language (FL) viewed writing as a way to practise language, which meant that they were looking for different types of feedback. According to Hedgcock and Lefkowitz (1996), the interviews showed that for FL students a prevalent attitude and expectation is that "composing and revision in L2 are for grammar practice, not trying out new ideas or demonstrating creativity" (p. 297).

In contrast, for ESL students, writing in English is important for expressing ideas and being evaluated in academic settings. Interviews conducted showed that ESL students also valued feedback that focused on form and expressed a preference for sentence level correction and when their teachers highlighted grammatical errors. Both groups expressed that "interpreting teacher feedback sometimes involves playing a lexicogrammatical guessing game" (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1996, p. 297).

Other researchers have tried to find out what L2 students themselves want from the written teacher feedback. Leki (1991) used a questionnaire to investigate ESL students' preferences for error correction in college-level writing classes. The findings showed that students considered grammar, spelling and choice of vocabulary to be important. She discovered that having error-free work was also important to students and they preferred the teacher showing the location of the error and provided a clue on how to correct it. Overall, the study

revealed that students were eager to receive feedback on their writing and believed they benefited from it, but they did not want the teacher simply to tell the students about the errors and leave them to find the errors for themselves. This is in contrast with the findings of some researchers that indirect feedback, which tells students about the error and lets them correct it, is the best way to improve accuracy. What learners believe to be helpful to them is in contradiction with what studies report to be helpful in improving.

On the other hand, it is important to consider that students' preference is related to their motivation, initiative and whether they view the type of error correction as an opportunity to improve. For instance, Lee (2005) investigated L2 secondary student's perceptions, beliefs and attitudes about error correction in the writing classroom. Findings showed that the majority of students wished that their teachers would mark and correct the errors for them because they feel that the teachers are more competent, know more than the student about grammar, or the student does not feel confident about his/her abilities to do it independently. In addition, this view could be related to the fact that students feel they must write without errors and in order to achieve error free writing direct feedback is preferred. Among other reasons why students preferred direct feedback is that they didn't always remember the grammar rules and would probably make the same errors again. Having a focused targeted approach to error correction as Bitchener (2008) discovered, would be helpful and help the students to improve accuracy of related to such errors in future writing. Focusing on a selected error, can guide students and provide them with an opportunity to feel success rather than be overwhelmed or frustrated by variety of grammar rules.

Although Lee's (2005) study provides insight into students' preferences for error feedback, it is difficult to apply these findings to other L2 settings. Thus, the context of Hong

Kong high school students in Lee's (2005) study cannot be generalized to other settings, since "in Hong Kong error correction is a relatively unexplored area" (Lee 2005, p. 5) and this suggests that students may not know what to do with it. The survey findings in Lee's study indicate a preference for direct correction. However, in another study conducted by Liang (2008), it was found that university students' preference for error correction was the use of underlining and description of the errors in their writing because they wanted to know what kind of errors they had made.

The students' preferences indicated in both of these studies (Lee, 2005; Liang, 2008) have much to do with motivation and students' perception of the purpose of error correction. College students may see error correction as an opportunity to improve their writing and therefore take more responsibility; they have to rely on themselves to correct their errors in their future writings. Liang (2008) believes that direct correction is preferred because the correct forms are provided and therefore it is an easier way for students to correct errors. The problem is that students still don't know why they made those errors.

The findings in Lee's study, which suggest that students prefer direct teacher feedback, contrast with the findings that indirect feedback is preferable to improve students' accuracy in long-term writing development (Ferris, 1999). This dissonance about what students prefer and what some researchers claim is beneficial over time suggests that as teachers we should consider the long-term value of error correction, but also vary the type of feedback according to each situation and level of language. As researchers have pointed out (Ferris & Roberts, 2001), direct feedback could be more appropriate for students at a lower proficiency level, whereas, indirect feedback may be more beneficial in the long term and more applicable to higher level proficiency students that can work out the errors independently. If the goal is for students to

become independent in self-editing, we should consider that at a student in a lower proficiency class will need more guidance and therefore, giving them a chance to edit their work without direct feedback might prove ineffective in helping students improve accuracy. What is clear is that students want error feedback and believe that it is beneficial in helping them become better writers (Lee, 2005).

### **Part 3: Discussion on the use of Corrective Feedback in the Classroom**

This section provides a discussion on the implementation of CF in the classroom and concluding remarks based on the literature review of CF. It aims to discuss and consider some of the pedagogical implications.

While the value of written CF has centered on whether or not it is effective in helping learners' linguistic improvement, it is important to highlight that learners express preference for correction and expect it. The literature on WCF shows that a focused approach is promising in helping learner's with specific problematic linguistic features. Sheen, Wright, and Moldawa (2009) assert that:

Focused CF may enhance learning by helping learners to (1) *notice* their errors in their written work, (2) engage in hypotheses testing in a systematic way and (3) monitor the accuracy of their writing by tapping into their existing explicit grammatical knowledge. (p. 567)

Regarding the classroom application of focused WCF, it may not always be practical for a language teacher to focus solely on a few linguistic features and for an extended length of time. Additionally, learners make a broad range of written errors and such a focused approach does not comprehensively address other accuracy issues (Ferris, 2010). However, it is one valuable approach to helping learners with problematic linguistic features. While, as Guenette (2007) pointed out, there is no "corrective feedback recipe", studies on CF continue to help us

understand the best ways to support learners in their writing progress. Looking at the variety of feedback types provides teachers with options that are available to them to use and to consider according to the needs of their own classroom and students.

The question is then how can teachers incorporate useful corrective feedback strategies into their own practice? Research on WCF continues to help us understand the best ways to support learners in their writing progress. As teachers we need to assess the needs of our students and engage them in CF practices. The success and implementation of CF may depend on a variety of factors that each teacher faces in the classroom.

Based on the research, using a combined approach, such as providing mini lessons and using few targeted problematic linguistic features to learners could be one efficient way to provide feedback to learners. Thus, mini lessons that focus on different types of errors or grammar seem to be more beneficial to students' improvement and their ability to self-edit. While teachers may not be able to focus exclusively on a single linguistic error when correcting the student's writing, teachers can make decisions that may better suit the needs of their students, perhaps by alternating foci on different assignments.

Involving learners in the process of CF can provide information to teachers as to which linguistic features they may find more problematic. When working with students, teachers can inform students on the purpose of providing feedback and on which particular error type they will focus on. Bitchener and Knoch (2008) assert that "motivation is more likely to be gained if teachers negotiate with students about..., how frequent the feedback will be given, about the type of feedback that will be given, and about what the students will be expected to do in response to feedback" (p. 210).

For teachers, the findings show that in order to support L2 writers in improving linguistic errors in writing, it may prove more productive to target one or two language errors rather than an unfocused approach. This facilitates students' ability to focus on a few errors to which they can attend and learn to implement in future writing. For example, teachers could correct articles at one time and past-tense errors at another. Based on the findings of CF, a single feedback session can be productive. In both studies by Bitchener and Knoch (2008; 2009) using a single feedback session showed that it can be effective in developing accuracy in the use of two rule-based features. Bitchener and Knoch (2010) suggest using this targeted approach "until clear signs of accuracy improvement" (p. 209). The decision on which grammatical feature to focus on may be based on what teachers observe in the students' writing. Teachers can also decide with the students on an additional feedback focus. However, other aspects of writing would also require attention in order to improve overall writing abilities. Teachers can choose to correct different aspects of writing at different times such as content and organization. Regarding linguistic errors, perhaps teachers can prioritize focus based on persisting errors that are common to students or have learners track their errors in logs over a series of assignments.

Finally, teachers will need to assess their own classroom, students' needs and consider the many variables that will influence the implementation and options of feedback that are available to them. Teachers can explore a variety of CF strategies that might be better suited in their own contexts. According to Guénette (2007)

The success or failure of corrective feedback will depend on the classroom context, the type of errors students make, their proficiency level, the type of writing they are asked to do, and a collection of other variables that are as of yet unknown. (pp. 52-53).

The wide range of CF types available to teachers is useful and recent research on focused WCF has contributed to CF studies. Teachers still need to assess and take into account their classroom needs and learners as we cannot ignore the fact that not all students will benefit from CF in the same way for reasons such as motivation and learning style. Guénette (2007) highlights that “any type of feedback that does not take the crucial variable of motivation into consideration is perhaps doomed to fail. [...] if the students are not committed to improving their writing skills, they will not improve, no matter what type of corrective feedback is provided” (p. 52).

The literature presented has given me a wider understanding of the varying perspectives on the ways to study written CF and informed me as a teacher how to apply the various findings appropriately in the class. I am, however, a high school Spanish teacher; therefore I believe future studies on written CF can further focus on presenting studies that look at different age groups. The studies I reviewed for this paper addressed post-secondary, however, I believe contextualizing the research in a high school is valuable to understanding if similar CF strategies are productive and with younger age groups. Studies discussing the variety of contexts and age in written CF contribute to a wider understanding of CF.

### **SECTION 3: CONNECTIONS TO PRACTICE**

This section is divided into three parts. The first part provides related background information to the school where I will implement a workshop presentation including general information on the school itself, the families of the students and the teachers- including a description of myself as a language teacher. The second part presents a discussion and objective for leading a workshop on feedback strategies in L2 writing and the suitability of conducting a workshop on this topic with second language teachers in my school. The final part is a PowerPoint presentation for a workshop I plan to share with second language teachers in my school based on what I learned during my graduate program.

#### **School**

I teach in a private school in Vancouver that offers the International Baccalaureate (IB) program. The IB has a rigorous curriculum and an emphasis on interdisciplinary connections and critical thinking. The school stands out as being unique as it is one of the only schools in western Canada to offer the three International Baccalaureate programmes exclusively from Kindergarten to Grade 12: all Grade 11 and 12 students are registered in the full IB Diploma Programme.

The school has about 250 students and about 40 members of teaching staff. The staff is committed, energetic and they strive to continually improve their teaching by seeking out professional development opportunities; about 90% of teachers hold a Masters degree. The student population is comprised of 90 per cent Vancouver residents and 10 per cent international students. The majority of students speak a language other than English at home such as Mandarin, Cantonese, Punjabi, Farsi, Japanese, and German. Their attitude toward learning Spanish as a second language is generally positive.

The school places a great emphasis on learning languages and requires that all students study two languages: Spanish is mandatory from K-8, French in Grades 7-8. In Grade 9 students must choose one of these languages to continue studying through Grade 12 if they wish to continue into the Diploma program. As part of the school's commitment to providing meaningful language and cultural experiences it offers a wide range of related extra-curricular activities in and out of school, including yearly international trips to Spain, Costa Rica and an outreach program to Kenya.

Currently the school is revisiting the language model. With an increasing student population it is considering introducing different Spanish language levels for the 2011/2012 year. The basis for this decision comes from a concern for new students from k-8 who join the school and are required to join Spanish. The proposed model is based on the Spanish teacher's suggestion to adopt the recommended IB language model with three levels of difficulty in each grade: foundation, standard and advanced. This would more closely address the differences in students' language abilities and allow those who are new or struggling in Spanish to experience greater success in a foundation level class, and an advanced level for students who are more familiar with Spanish and ready to be challenged. As our language program grows and evolves I feel it is important that we, as teachers, continue to develop our skills to ensure we deliver a strong program that addresses the needs of the language learners for this reason I believe that the error correction workshop will be of value.

### **Families**

The school community consists of families that have chosen to enrol their children in the private system because they believe it will ensure high results. A particular attraction for the families is that the school offers the IB program. They have high expectations of the program

and are committed to high standards. They are supportive of their child's education and seek opportunities for their children in and out of school that extends their academics. The majority of the family population is affluent middle class with one or more children enrolled in the school.

### **Concern of Second Language Teachers**

The school currently has six Spanish Teachers from K-12 and two French teachers from Grades 7-12. The second language teachers in the Middle Years and Diploma program ensure that students get ample practice in all the language areas to prepare them for the diploma exams in Grade 12. The four skills (speaking, listening, reading and writing) are included in teaching. Teachers expressed concern about the students' persistent errors and the time consumed by marking all the errors. For this reason I decided that my research in corrective feedback in second language writing would be useful to share with language teachers at my school.

### **The Teacher**

I currently teach Grade 7 Spanish and French in the Middle years program, however, generally I teach anywhere from Grade 6-10 Spanish including the Diploma program in Grade 11 and 12. I have been a Spanish teacher for 8 years and prior to that I was an ESL teacher for 4 years. My interest and passion for second language teaching begins with my own experience as a second language learner of English at the age of 10. While I did not have formal ESL classes, my own experiences of learning a language have contributed to my perspectives of second language teaching. As a second language learner of English, I was fortunate to have had the opportunity to practice by interacting with members of the community and friends from school. Yet, while I learned to eventually communicate with ease in the target language, English, writing on the other hand, was an intimidating, daunting task throughout my high school education. I consider that I

lacked the sufficient feedback in both the errors I made in spoken and written English. A more focused feedback would have helped me deal earlier with the struggle of writing.

I pursued a Masters in Modern language education to gain a deeper understanding of second language acquisition to assist in my teaching. During my studies I have taken a keen interest in research in second language writing and the value of providing WCF.

### **Rationale for workshop presentation**

I decided to share the information gained in my research for this paper in a workshop presentation with second language teachers in my school. My motivation for conducting a workshop was based on the aforementioned needs of the school. The expectations are that teachers ensure that high standards are met and fully prepare students for the rigorous academic IB exams by the end of their high school. This presentation will focus on reviewing suitable options available to provide WCF for various language levels. It will aim to contribute to a greater understanding and discussion of written feedback practices that teachers can use.

### **The workshop**

The workshop was conducted in the school library on March 10 from 4:00-6:00pm. The invitation was for the five language teachers in the Middle Years and Diploma Program, but was extended to any teacher who wished to take part in the discussion. While the presentation was 50 minutes, I planned to use the rest of the time for discussion on our current written feedback practices. The workshop was organized in the following way (see Appendix A):

Workshop title: Feedback strategies in second language writing

1. An activity to introduce the topic of providing feedback.

- a. Activity (10 min.): Teachers will bring in a small sample of their student's writing and mark it. Teachers can either, underline, circle or highlight the incorrect word or provide the correct form.
  - b. Questions for discussion
    - i. Which method did you use to mark?
    - ii. Which method did you find easier?
    - iii. What are the strengths and limitations of your preferred method of marking?
2. Presentation of written feedback in second language writing (30 min)
    - a. Why is written feedback in second language important
    - b. What is corrective feedback (CF)?
    - c. Types of CF?
    - d. What does research say about the advantages/limitations of using each?
    - e. Practical applications for teachers- What does this mean for you?
  3. Concluding thoughts based on the review of literature( 10 min)
  4. Feedback survey (See Appendix B)
  5. An open discussion of written feedback in our classrooms
    - a. Brainstorm what feedback strategies will be used in our language classrooms.

### **Incorporating responses to feedback in future workshops**

Based on the feedback received from teachers, they expressed the workshop was useful and provided valuable information to try in their classrooms. Future workshops will consider incorporating student's writing samples of various language levels to share with teachers.

## **SECTION 4: CONCLUSIONS**

At the beginning of this project I set out to find out what the research says about providing written feedback that allows learners to recognize their errors, correct them and learn to apply the correct form in new pieces of writing. My literature review revealed the following: As teachers we cannot dismiss corrective feedback. A number of studies have shown that learners value teacher feedback and express a desire to be corrected (Lee, 2005; Leki, 1991). There is also empirical evidence that points to that CF can contribute to acquisition (Sheen, 2007). While there are varying options available to teachers to provide WCF, I, the teacher, have to take into account the suitability of each depending on students' language level. For instance, research has shown that learners can self correct when they have the necessary linguistic knowledge. Studies have shown that attending to too many errors is too cognitively demanding on learners therefore a more promising approach is to focus on one specific category of error (focused approach). Additionally, following this, I developed a workshop to share with my colleagues of what I believe were the useful findings.

### **Reflections on the workshop**

I conducted the workshop with the second language teachers on March 11, 2011. After doing so, much productive discussion followed, including some of the concerns we face in teaching writing and providing feedback. As high school teachers our main concern is ensuring that during the time that we see students (twice a week for 90 minutes) we deliver the required curriculum, allow for sufficient practice. While feedback, both oral and written are crucial we cannot afford to dedicate full periods to feedback. However, in discussion we agreed that a feasible manner to incorporate one of the promising forms of WCF- focused feedback would be to teach mini-lessons of approximately 20 minutes on specific problematic grammatical points. It

was also discussed that we would also need to find other opportunities to provide feedback such as one on one conference possibly every two weeks.

The discussion was productive and I hope to continue to engage in conversations about best ways to provide feedback to students. While this was the first time sharing my findings, I believe a presentation that includes a sample mini lesson of focused feedback would have been useful. I am satisfied with the discussion that took place with the teachers and I look forward to offering this workshop in the next professional development.

### **Implications for future practice**

After exploring what research has to say about WCF in helping learners with problematic language errors, I feel I have gained a new appreciation and confidence in using focused feedback in providing WCF. Research has shown focused WCF does not overload students with too much information and when focused on a single targeted error it does lead to gains in linguistic accuracy. While there are many types of options available to teachers to use in giving feedback, the type of feedback that teachers provide will depend on their own context, time and situation. In my case, I am aware that I do not have the luxury to solely focus on writing as I need to continue teaching IB language curriculum (Spanish). However, I feel confident that I can implement focused feedback in my class by teaching a mini lesson possibly every month and changing the foci of feedback also to other areas of concern in writing such as content or organization.

Based on the research findings I would implement early on in the school year a questionnaire for my students to reflect on what has worked for them in the past. I believe it is important to take into account these insights and involve the students in the discussion of why feedback is important and what it involves. I plan to use a combination of feedback strategies

such as focused and direct feedback with lower level language learners. For more advanced learners I would concentrate mainly on using focused indirect feedback and give them the opportunity to correct themselves, possibly. Finally, among other feedback strategies I can ask students to record their errors in log books to give them a sense of progression in their language.

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# APPENDIX A: WORKSHOP POWER POINT PRESENTATION

6/12/11

**Feedback strategies in Second language writing**

Sylvana Herrera

**Feedback in second language writing**



***What we will do today:***

1. Activity
2. What is CF?
3. What does 2<sup>nd</sup> language writing research say about feedback?
4. How to use corrective feedback-practical pedagogical practices

**Activity:**

- Use the following example writing
- Provide feedback
- Share feedback used
- Why did you use this?

**Providing feedback in second language writing**

feedback or judgments provide information to the students to help them understand their writing progress, weaknesses and strengths.

**Issues in feedback**

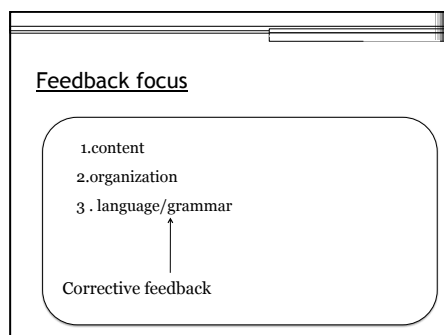
Teachers spend time and effort thinking

“ what are the best ways to respond to students?”

*Is feedback always effective? Does it help?*

**Purpose of corrective feedback**

1. help students revise their own writing
2. Help students acquire L2 forms



### What is corrective feedback?

- Lightbown and Spada (2006) define it as:  
Any indication to the learner that his or her use of the target language is incorrect.
- Explicit (for example, in response to the learner error 'He go' – No, you should say "goes", not "go")
- Implicit (for examples, 'Yes, he goes to school every day'), and may or may not include metalinguistic information (for example, 'Don't forget to make the verb agree with the subject'). (p. 197)

### Aspects of corrective feedback

1. Strategies for providing feedback( different ways T can correct linguistic errors)
2. How students respond to the feedback
  - How do you get ss to examine their corrections to improve their writing?

### Types of CF- different ways teachers can correct

- **Direct**
  - Teacher provides student with correct form
  - **Advantage:** provides learners w/ explicit guidance how to correct errors
  - **Disadvantage:** minimal processing on the part of the learner-it may not contribute to long term lasting
  - May have an **immediate** effect... but you may still forget the correction long term.
- **Indirect**
  - Underlining, highlighting the item in question, can also occur by making a note in the margin without exact indication of where the error occurred.
  - **Advantage:**
    - refers to guided learning and problem solving
    - Considered to lead to long term learning( Ferris and Roberts, 2002)
  - **Disadvantage:**
    - Learners who don't have linguistic knowledge cannot correct
- **Metalinguistic**
  - providing a linguistic clue for the targeted error(s). Ex: error codes, metalinguistic explanation of the errors ( comments)
  - It is given the learner information about what type of error is involved
  - **Disadvantage:** For T time-consuming, demanding knowledge of explicit grammar
  - Sheen (2007) compared direct and metalinguistic feedback-found ss able to use language in new pieces of writing w/ metalinguistic feedback.

### Focused and unfocused feedback

**Focused**

- Provides multiple corrections of the same error
- - more likely to be attended to
- - more likely to develop understanding of the nature of the error

**Unfocused**

Addresses a range of errors

Sheen(2007) focused CF more effective in promoting specific linguistic features(use of articles)

### WHAT DOES RESEARCH SAY ABOUT EACH TYPE?

- **Direct-**
  - Best for producing accurate revisions( Chandler, 2003)
  - more effective with lower level proficiency ss( Ferris, 1999)
- **Indirect-**
  - Potential problem- need linguistic knowledge necessary to understand why (or where) the error occurred.
  - Especially for the "untreatable" (Ferris, 1999) or the problematic and ambiguous errors that L2 students often make.
  - Students have to engage in deeper processing/ More cognitively demanding on ss
  - Quick and easy to do
- **Metalinguistic**
  - Greater long term improvement( Sheen, 2007)
- **Focused feedback**
  - slow improvement
  - Reduced the potential of confusion
  - Reduced cognitive overload of students( sheen, 2007)
  - SS address a range of issues at the same time may tax their ability to process the feedback

### How can teachers use CF?

- 1) Combined with strategy training
- 2) Grammar mini-lessons- Example : 20 min
- 3) Focused on one/two grammar points at a time  
( a week for ex) ---give students choice of  
grammar point you will focus on.
- 4) Use feedback that will be appropriate for  
language level( direct and indirect)

## Appendix B: WORKSHOP EVALUATION FORM

**Workshop Title: Feedback strategies in Second Language Writing**

**Presenter: Sylvana Herrera**

Date: March 11, 2011

For each of the following areas, please indicate your impression on the workshop:

<b>Content</b>	<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Needs Improvement</b>	<b>Not Applicable</b>
Covered Useful Material	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Well Organized	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Effective Activities	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Useful Visual Aids and Handouts				
<b>Presentation</b>				
Instructor's Knowledge	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Instructor Covered Material Clearly	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]
Instructor Responded Well to Questions	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]	[ ]

1. What did you learn that you are most likely to try?
  
2. How could this workshop be improved?
  
3. Would follow up be useful?
  
4. Do you have any comments or suggestions?