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Date: 30/04/2010
TYPES OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN FOREIGN UNDERGRADUATE WRITING

NURUL FARAH BINTI ZULKIFLY

A report submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science with Education (TESL)

Faculty of Education
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

APRIL 2010
I declare that this thesis entitled "TYPES OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN FOREIGN UNDERGRADUATES' WRITING" is the results of my own research except as cited in the references. The thesis has not been accepted for any degree and is not concurrently submitted in candidature of any other degree.

Signature : ..................................................

Name : NURUL FARAH BINTI ZULKIFLY

Date : APRIL 2010
To my beloved mother and father,
siblings, and all my English teachers who have inspired me.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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ABSTRAK

Sepertimana persepsi terhadap kesalahan tatabahasa berubah sedikit demi sedikit, peranan respons korektif di dalam kelas penulisan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa kedua/bahasa asing mulai dipersoal. Justeru itu, penyelidikan ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui apakah respons korektif diterapkan oleh guru di UTM dalam kelas penulisan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing serta jenis umum maklum balas korektif yang diberikan kepada kesalahan kata kerja; kesalahan umum yang sering dilakukan oleh mahasiswa dalam penulisan mereka. Penyelidikan ini melibatkan tiga puluh pelajar asing UTM yang mengikuti Kursus Intensif Bahasa Inggeris dan guru mereka. Data dikumpul melalui beberapa siri pemerhatian di dalam kelas, analisis terhadap karangan pelajar dan juga satu sesi wawancara dengan guru yang berkenaan. Kajian menunjukkan bahawa maklum balas korektif memang wujud di kelas penulisan Bahasa Inggeris sebagai bahasa asing; walaupun hanya sedikit perhatian diberikan samada secara eksplisit maupun implisit. Maklum balas korektif secara implisit lebih banyak diutamakan kerana guru lebih memberi perhatian kepada isi dan perkembangan idea dalam perenggan-perenggan esei. Penelitian terhadap kajian ini juga menunjukkan bahawa bagi sebahagian besar kesalahan kata kerja yang ditemui dalam esei pelajar, guru menggunakan maklum balas korektif secara langsung iaitu menambah morfem, perkataan atau frasa yang betul, dan juga maklum balas korektif tidak langsung seperti menggarisbawahi dan melingkari kata kerja atau frasa kata kerja.
ABSTRACT

As perceptions towards grammatical errors have gradually changed, the role of corrective feedback in ESL/EFL writing class starts to be continuously questioned. The study intends to find out whether corrective feedback is applied in UTM EFL writing class as well as the common types of corrective feedback given to the verb errors; common errors which are often done by students in their writings. The study involved twenty three UTM EFL undergraduate students under English Intensive Course and their teacher. Data were gathered via a series of observation on the class lessons and students’ writing essays as well as one interview session with the teacher in charge. The study revealed that corrective feedback indeed exists in writing class; regardless how little it is given attention explicitly or implicitly. Where the actual writing lessons are concerned; corrective feedback was given implicitly as teacher was more concerned on the content and the organization of ideas in sentences and paragraphs. The study also suggests that for verb errors mostly found in students’ essay, teacher used direct corrective feedback; adding the necessary morpheme, word or phrase as well as indirect written feedback; underlining and circling the verbs or verb phrases.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>ESL</td>
<td>English as Second Language</td>
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<td>EFL</td>
<td>English as Foreign Language</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IEC</td>
<td>Intensive English Course</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IELTS</td>
<td>International English Language Testing System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SPACE</td>
<td>School of Professional and Continuing Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOEFL</td>
<td>Test of English as a Foreign Language</td>
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<td>UTM</td>
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It is undeniable true where second language teaching is concerned; writing is one of the productive skills believed to be an instrument of communication that indicates learners’ proficiency level. Writing consists of a system which uses visible signs or graphic symbols for interpersonal communication. This system cannot be acquired as natural as speaking ability where a person picks up his first language through the exposure towards the language environment, but an ability which needs to be taught with systematic instruction.

Over the years, the approach of teaching writing in English as Second Language Classroom has gradually changed. Based on Behaviourist theory that focused on product approach in teaching writing, the aims would be to practice grammar and produce samples of error-free piece of writing. Through this approach, there was lack of emphasis on individuals’ development of composition skills, in which learners ended up producing the same composition. Things changed when Communicative Language Teaching was introduced in early 1970s; bringing the new approach to writing known as process approach, by which
writing began to be regarded as an active and complex process of thinking, selecting, organizing, drafting, revising and editing. The final result of the composition is the result of undergoing those stages. Through this approach, learners are encouraged to develop their writing skills in term of organization and coherence of the content, appropriate choice of registers, correct grammar rules, etc.

Consequently, while learners’ writing skills are being developed, the role of feedback has become more apparent. According to Keh (1990, cited in Harison, 2002), feedback is:

“input from a reader to a writer with the effect of providing information to the writer for revision. In other words, it is the comments, questions, and suggestions a reader gives a writer to produce ‘reader-based prose’ (Flower, 1979) as opposed to ‘writer-based prose’”

Meanwhile, Freeman (1987, cited in Harison 2002) suggested that feedback:

“includes all reaction to writing, formal or informal, written or oral, from teacher or peer, to a draft or final version”

Based on the two definitions on feedback above, it can be concluded that feedback is a form of response varying in types with the purpose to improve the writing itself which possibly comes from teachers, tutors or peers. In ESL/EFL writing class where response from a teacher is highly concerned, the feedback given would be focusing on the content and grammatical error, though which one should be focused more or the balance between both is still being debated.

While teacher feedback is about commenting on students’ piece of writing, it is essential for teachers as well as students to clearly understand the purposes of feedback so that teaching writing will be effective and students’ improvement over the lessons can be gradually seen. According to Lewis (2002:3-4), feedback provides teachers with the descriptions of students’ language proficiency which are indeed essential in monitoring students’ writing progress. As for students, feedback informs them on their writing strengths or weaknesses; served as language advice and input as well as motivation for students’ improvement.
This study intends to examine corrective error feedback in which its role in ESL/EFL teaching and learning has been a controversial issue ever since the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching in the 1970s. Generally, error feedback is when a teacher points out that there is something wrong with students’ sentences in term of the wrong use of the language form. Corrective error feedback, on the other hand, not only means that teacher gives specific information on what is wrong but also on how to fix it. The study will narrow down its focus to the types of corrective error feedback used by teachers in highlighting and correcting students’ grammatical errors in ESL/EFL writing class. In fact, where grammatical error is concerned, the study focuses on the types of corrective error feedback practiced in ESL/EFL writing on verb errors.

1.1 Background of Study

Corrective error feedback has been one of the controversial issues in ESL teaching and learning as its role in improving learners’ language proficiency especially in writing has been questioned since 1970s when the Communicative Language Teaching was introduced. This is due to the fact that ever since teaching writing has been developed as a complex process which relates the language forms with language functions, views on errors have also varied along the way; from Behaviourist which takes errors as negative transfer which should not be allowed, to Innatist view, that errors are the natural outcomes of the progress of communication skills.

Its effectiveness in improving language accuracy in ESL/EFL learners’ writing is another controversial matter which started to emerge in the 1990s. The controversial issue related to the effectiveness of corrective feedback began when Truscott (1996, cited in Ferris, 2004:49) published a review essay called ‘The Case
against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes’. He strongly stated in his reviewed essay that error correction is harmful and should be abolished; thus inviting a lot of commentary and criticism. Being one of the critics, Ferris (1996, cited in Ferris 2004:50) argued that the foundation of Truscott’s research was insufficient and in a way had neglected the potential positive evidence of corrective feedback itself. In 1999, Truscott responded to Ferris’ article by restating his stand; corrective feedback should be eliminated from ESL/EFL teaching and learning. However, both agreed that there was lack of research on the effectiveness of corrective feedback thus suggesting that more research is necessary.

Later on, in an article published by Ferris (2004:49-62), she attempted to analyze several numbers of studies done since Truscott’s review essay in 1996 based on two research questions, do students who receive error correction produce more accurate texts than those who receive no error feedback? and do students who receive error correction improve in accuracy over time?. From the analysis, most studies done (Ashwell, et al. 2000) showed positive predicts that corrective feedback is effective in improving ESL learners’ writing. Where corrective feedback in EFL writing is concerned, among studies which were done are Kepner (1991, cited in Ferris 2004), Lalande (1982, cited in Ferris 2004), Robb, et al. (1986, cited in Ferris 2004) and Semke (1984, cited in Ferris, 2004). From a comparison made among those four studies, the ones carried by Kepner (1991, cited in Ferris) and Robb, et al. (1986, cited in Ferris 2004) did show learners’ improvement over particular corrective feedback given. Here, it can be concluded that, despite Truscott’s commentary that there is no convincing evidence on the effectiveness of corrective feedback on the improvement in language accuracy with reference to studies done by Kepner (1991, cited in Ferris 2004), Semke (1984, cited in Ferris) and Sheppard (1992, cited in Ferris), it is indeed wrong to overlook the role of corrective feedback in ESL/EFL teaching and learning.

Since most of the studies carried focus on the effectiveness of the error feedback rather than the specific methods in which the particular categories of corrective error feedback used, most of the studies only distinguish between direct
and indirect feedback as well as written and oral feedback (Ferris, 1995, Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, Lalande, 1982, Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986 cited in Bitchener, et al., 2005:193), with no emphasis on particular strategies in giving the types of feedback mentioned earlier. The closest reference to types of corrective error feedback is through the study conducted by Normah Harun (2005) on feedback lesson on writing assessment using four different scoring strategies. In the study, both written and oral corrective error feedback are studied. Still, the study emphasizes more on the relation between different types of scoring strategies and types of feedback given rather than the types of corrective feedback given to particular categories of grammatical errors. In fact, the findings on types of feedback given comprises not only for grammatical error but also for the content of the writing itself. In relation to EFL writing class, several studies done only focus on direct and indirect feedback in general with no varied techniques highlighted. Due to that, this study intends to explore types of corrective feedback used by EFL teachers to correct grammatical error in which the context of the study will be on verb error.

1.2 Statement of Problem

Since learners tend to make similar errors in writing despite the number of years spent in learning English, corrective feedback is seen as a necessary tool to be applied in teaching ESL/EFL writing. Regarding EFL setting, Robert (2004) stated that the role of corrective feedback is undeniable as there are limited foreign language environment for EFL learners to do self-learning in their daily life. This study intends to find out on the role of corrective feedback in Malaysian EFL writing class.

Hendrickson (1978) stated that even though the role of corrective feedback cannot be neglected, there are a few considerations which need to be taken into
account; including which errors to be corrected and how to correct the errors. Due to that, with regard to the role of corrective feedback in EFL writing class, the study would investigate the extent of which corrective feedback is applied in a particular EFL setting. Where corrective feedback in ESL/EFL writing class is concerned, many studies have been conducted which showed the significance of corrective feedback in writing class. Though the common types of corrective feedback are mentioned in the studies, they are in fact general. The main distinction made is between direct and indirect feedback (Ferris, 1995, Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, Lalande, 1982, Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986). Due to that, there is a growing need to explore the types of corrective feedback and their specific strategies towards a more effective teaching of writing.

1.3 Purpose of Study

There are indeed quite several reasons to why the study is conducted by the researcher. The first one is to provide better understanding on what corrective feedback is in EFL classroom. With regards to errors, corrective feedback is viewed as something which is undeniable as long as there are errors being made. Corrective feedback served as an indicator of students’ incorrect use of the language with the aim of preventing similar errors from further production. The study intends to determine the role of corrective feedback based on a particular setting of EFL writing teaching and learning.

The second purpose of the study would be to identify the types of corrective feedback specifically applied on verb error. Since the study is directed towards the context of teaching and learning English as Foreign Language, the study would likely provide the insights of varied corrective feedback used on EFL learners in correcting verb errors. Among the common types of corrective feedback expected to
be identified in the study are direct written feedback, direct oral feedback, indirect written feedback and indirect oral feedback.

1.4 Objectives of Study

The objectives of the study are:

1. To determine the extent of which corrective feedback on verb errors is given in foreign undergraduate writing class.
2. To determine the types of corrective feedback given on verb errors in foreign undergraduate writing class.

1.5 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are as follows:

1. To what extent is corrective feedback on verb errors given in foreign undergraduates writing class?
2. What are the types of corrective feedback given on verb errors in foreign undergraduates writing class?

1.6 Scope of Study

Based on the objectives and research questions stated earlier, the study intends to discover the role of corrective feedback regarding verb errors in EFL writing class, in which the respondents would be foreign undergraduates who are taking a particular class on academic writing. This study is narrowed down on how common verb errors found in the writing class are corrected. Among the common
errors regarding verbs which are observed and analyzed would be subject-verb agreement, auxiliary agreement, modal agreement, verb complementation, verb omission, the existence of two main verbs in finite clauses as well as spelling.

Among the types of corrective feedback which are studied are direct and indirect feedback; be it in written or oral forms including the techniques used which reflect both corrective feedback. The techniques which are expected to be looked at are:

1. Direct written feedback: crossing out unnecessary word/phrase/morpheme, inserting missing word/phrase/morpheme, providing correct forms of structure and providing explanation on rules and examples at the end of students’ scripts with reference to where the error is and its type.
2. Indirect written feedback: underlining/circling the error, underlining/pointing to the exact location of the error with the standard code on the type of error done.
3. Direct oral feedback: conducting mini lesson where rules and examples are presented, practiced and discussed either one-to-one or one-to-small group.
4. Indirect oral feedback: recasts, meta-linguistic feedback and elicitation.

1.7 Significance of Study

Based on several studies conducted on the effectiveness of corrective feedback by several researches mentioned earlier, corrective feedback indeed has its very own value in ESL and EFL teaching and learning. Though the extent of its implication towards students’ improvement in writing is still debated over the years, teachers still use corrective feedback to correct students’ grammatical error. The study likely offer meaningful insight to what corrective feedback is. As errors reflect language difficulties, it will be a significant reference to ESL and EFL teachers on the role of corrective feedback in overcoming such difficulties in
teaching ESL writing. From there, it is hoped that the study would help them
develop their own principles of error correction in ESL classroom which include
what kind of error should be corrected, when it should be corrected and how it is
corrected.

Apart from that, the study would also be a useful reference on possible types
of corrective error feedback and their various methods of correcting grammatical
errors in particular, which are applicable in ESL and EFL writing class. Though the
study focuses on corrective error feedback on verb errors, it would likely be a guide
to ESL/EFL teachers in tackling not only verb errors but also other types of
grammatical errors in ESL/EFL writing using appropriate techniques and strategies.

On the other hand, where students are concerned, the study would likely
help students to understand the significance of errors. It is hoped that the study
would raise students’ awareness on the common verb error which they usually
make. Consequently, they would take the effort to improve their writing in a way
that they would be more cautious on the grammatical part of writing.
This chapter discusses views and concepts related to corrective feedback, error and views of error in ESL/EFL learning, types of error, feedback in ESL/EFL learning, corrective feedback: types of corrective feedback and common techniques applied in ESL/EFL learning.

2.1 Error in ESL/EFL Learning

To begin with, error in Second Language Acquisition is inevitable. This is due to the fact, no matter how many times ESL/EFL teachers highlight the accurate language forms and functions, be it in the spoken or written English forms, students still make errors especially in linguistic features.
Some linguists find error as intolerable and therefore employ negative meanings to it. D’cruz (1986, cited in Harison 2002) referred the error as “the inaccurate or inappropriate use of phonological, syntactic or semantic items and structures of the target language with regard to accepted usage”. Here, errors are regarded as the deviations from appropriate language forms. This is supported further by Elliot (1988, cited in Harison 2002) who defined error as “an unwanted form-specifically a form which a particular course designer or teacher does not want”.

On the other hand, despite the fact that errors reflect the inappropriate form of language, some have come out with positive definitions of the error itself. According to Harison (2002), errors in ESL/EFL learning are the indicators of language difficulties faced by students while struggling to put meaning to the written or spoken English. Indeed, language difficulties faced by the students can be considered as the results of learning and processing. This is supported further by Corder (1967, cited in Harison) who stated that error is: “a way the learner has of testing his hypotheses about the nature of the language he is learning”. Therefore, errors are regarded as the device used to experiment one’s understanding of language forms and functions.

In SLA, error result either from first language interference or the interference within the second language system itself. Where first language interference is concerned, Lado (1957, cited in Harison) stated:

“that individuals intend to transfer the forms and meanings of their native language and culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives”

Due to ESL/EFL learners’ familiarity of their first language, there is a tendency in applying its rules in second language learning. On the other hand, errors resulted from the interference within the second language are caused by inadequate learning, difficulties inbuilt in the target language, faulty teaching and so forth. Richards (1971, cited in Harison, 2002) explained this further by stating that:

“intralingual and developmental errors- which reflect the general characteristics of rule learning, such as faulty generalization, incomplete
application of rules and failure to learn conditions under which rules apply”

He agreed that developmental errors stated earlier “illustrate the learner attempting to build up hypotheses about the English language from his limited experience of it in the classroom or textbook”. This supports the definitions given earlier by Harison (2002) and Corder (1967, cited in Harison, 2002) that errors are the results of learners learning the target language in order to put appropriate meanings to the written or spoken form of it.

2.2 Views on Error in ESL/EFL Learning

Over the years, views on errors in second language learning specifically have gradually changed. The emergence of various language learning theories and approaches over the years has defined the role of errors in different perspectives.

During 1960s where second language learning was dominated by behaviourist ideas, emphasize was given to habit formation in the forms of imitation, reinforcement and repetition of behavior. Its main purpose would be to produce positive transfer in which learners manage to get the right forms of language embedded in their minds. However, there were times when habit formation resulted in negative transfer; caused when learners’ first language interferes with the second language learning. Learners are familiar with their first language rules and tend to apply the same rules in second language learning. This will lead to the forming of language difficulties and errors as the patterns between both languages would be different. Lado (1957, cited in Burt, Dulay & Finocchiaro, 1977) summed up the language transfer in a way that:
“Those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult.”

Therefore, in Behaviorist point of view, errors are forbidden as they manifest that learning does not happen. This is due to the fact that where the change in behavior is concerned; learners who still make errors after habit formation imply that they still have not memorized the language forms learnt through drills and practices. This view is more or less shared by Norrish (1983) who stated that error is “a systematic deviation when a learner has not learnt something and consistently ‘get it wrong’”. This means errors done in language forms are the results of learning failure in particular language pattern.

The emergence of communicative approach later on has changed the notion of which the role of errors is viewed in second language teaching. Compared to behaviorist that views errors as first language interference, the communicative approach promotes that errors are the results of creative construction of language on the part of learners. Burt and Dulay (1974, cited in Burt, Dulay & Finocchiaro, 1977) criticized the ‘negative transfer’ by conducting a study to identify the errors done in English speech of 145 Spanish children. It was found out that the larger proportion of errors done came from developmental errors, the ones which result from learning rather than the interference of first language. This proves that errors are part of language creative construction, in which learner actively construct the rules from the language information they counter and adapt them towards the target-language systems. Therefore, errors are not seen as failure in learning, but the evidence that learners’ are born with natural ability to process the data of the language encountered.
2.3 Types of Error

According to Lewis (2002:9-11), there are eight types of error in writing. They are:

1. Errors of omission,
2. Errors of overuse,
3. Errors of fact,
4. Errors of form,
5. Errors of clarity,
6. Socio-cultural errors,
7. Discourse level errors,
8. Local and global errors.

Errors of omission are errors in pattern of the sentences such as omitting of articles or word endings in sentences. Errors of overuse deal with the overuse of some English words because of students’ limited vocabulary or the word itself is a new word to students, so he keeps using it in sentences. Errors of fact relates to the use of wrongly or irrelevant factual information where as errors of form deal with grammatical part of the language. Errors of clarity deal with the problem faced by students, when the intended message in the written form cannot be fully comprehended. Socio-cultural errors revolve around the language use in which consideration on where and to whom sentences are referred to is taken into account. On the other hand, discourse errors are errors done when students want to join ideas in speech and writing itself. Last but not least, local errors refer to errors in sentences which do not hinder the delivery of the message while global errors refer to the ones that cause serious barrier to communication.

Among the errors stated earlier, local and global errors are the ones related to grammatical part. According to Ferris (1999), local error would be the ‘treatable’ error or known as the rule-governed error. This kind of error includes subject-verb agreement, missing articles and verb form errors. Compared to local error, global
error is the ‘untreatable’ error or known as the idiosyncratic error where learners are required to acquire language knowledge in order to correct the error as it is not rule-governed. The most common errors under this category would be lexical errors such as missing or unnecessary words as well as sentence structures such as word order problems. All the errors are more clearly described in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Error</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>‘Treatable’ Error</td>
<td>All errors in verb forms or tense; including relevant subject-verb agreement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Rule-governed)</td>
<td>Verb errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Plural or possessive ending incorrect, omitted, or unnecessary; includes relevant subject-verb agreement errors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Noun-ending errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Article errors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>‘Untreatable’ Error</td>
<td>All specific lexical errors in word choice or word form, including preposition and pronoun errors. Spelling errors only included if the (apparent) misspelling resulted in an actual English word.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Idiosyncratic)</td>
<td>Wrong word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Errors in sentence/clause boundaries (run-ons, fragments, comma splices), word order, omitted words or phrases, unnecessary words or phrases; other unidiomatic sentence construction.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: Types of ‘Treatable’ and ‘Untreatable’ Errors

While the concern of the study is on verb errors, Lee & Seneff (2008) listed four common types of verb errors as follows:

1. **Verb complementation errors:**
A nonfinite clause can serve as complementation to a verb or to a preposition. Mistakes done when it comes to verb complementation is that infinitive ‘to’ is left out like the example below:

*He wants *live there.*

In this sentence, ‘live’, in its base form, should be modified to its infinitive form as a complementation to the verb ‘wants’.

2. **Auxiliary agreement errors:**

   Auxiliaries must be used when specifying the perfective or progressive aspect, or the passive voice. Mistakes arise when the main verb does not ‘agree’ with the auxiliary, for example:

   *He has been *live there since June.*

   In the sentence, the main verb ‘live’ should be modified to its present participle form, ‘living’.

3. **Modal agreement errors:**

   In modal agreement, the verb which comes right after the modal used must be in the base form. Mistakes often arise when the verbs used are not in the base form as in the example below:

   *He can *sees through the lies.*

   In this sentence, the verb ‘sees’ should be modified to its base form, ‘see’.

4. **Subject-verb disagreement:**

   The verb is not correctly inflected in number and person with respect to the subject. A common error is the confusion between the base form and the third person singular form, e.g:

   *He *have been living there since June.*

   In the sentence, the verb-to-be ‘have’ should be modified to its singular form, ‘has’.
2.4 Feedback in ESL/EFL Learning

Feedback in general as defined by Reid (1993:218) is any input from reader to writer that provides information for revision. It means that any commentary given by the readers which is seen useful by the writers would certainly help them for improvement in their pieces of writing. The role of feedback in writing has come into light when the role of teacher in dealing with students’ writing has gradually changed. Lewis (2005:2) stated in the introduction of her book, ‘Giving Feedback in Language Classes’ that the role of teachers in hunting for errors and correcting them like they used to do, has shifted into something more than just a series of drills and practices of the correct language forms, which is to inform students on the progress they are making and guide them towards improvement. Feedback now can be seen in many different angles; from the language forms itself to the whole context of writing.

Feedback in a broad view consists of three types, teacher feedback, peer feedback and self-correction. Among the three, teacher feedback would be the most common, dated back very long ago. In teacher feedback where most of the responses given during the writing class it, there are five common types of feedback (Lewis, 2005:15) as shown in Table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Teacher Feedback</th>
<th>Descriptions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Traditional Marking</td>
<td>- Teachers sit with a pen or pencil and mark students’ work with words, quick symbols or signs.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Taping comments          | - Conferencing: when the writer and teacher sit together and discuss about the writing  
                          - Commenting orally one by one by collecting every writing piece and reading it in front of class without naming the writer |
Collective Feedback  
- Teachers look into each student’s work and take note the points which need feedback.
- Later on, teachers would highlight them orally or written on paper or board.
- It can be followed by a session in which students pick any aspect of the feedback highlighted earlier to be discussed by the whole class

Feedback Sheet  
- Teachers write comments on the individual samples in the sheet provided.

Checklist  
- Teachers move around monitoring students’ progress.
- Any comment gained from the monitoring will be written in a list of points on board. After students finish their writing, the list of points will be used to evaluate their works.

Table 2: Common Types of Teacher Feedback in Writing.

Since the practice of teacher feedback has dated very long ago, its importance in writing class is undeniable in a way that it is the most anticipated kind of feedback by students. Vengadasamy (2002:2) highlighted that teacher feedback should be continuous throughout teaching and learning process of writing. Its strength lies in the fact that teacher can personalize the comments offered and vary them according to students. Due to that, it is important for teachers to fully understand the role of feedback so that they can provide the kind of feedback which is meaningful to students; the ones which they would bear in minds and improve their writing. Reid (1993:218) stated that there are two types of feedback that teacher can imply which are seen to be ‘genuine, effective and long-lasting’. They are summative and formative feedback. Summative feedback refers to response that is an overview of general consideration in an essay. This means teacher summarizes the points in every paragraph of the writing and give a whole brief comment at the end of it. Formative feedback on the other hand involves immediate intervention in discrete parts of an essay. The discrete parts can be the grammatical points, content or the mechanics of the essay itself.
Where effective feedback is concerned, Burnham (1986, cited in Reid, 1993:218) mentioned that there are three circumstances which must be carefully noted by teachers when giving feedback. They are:

1. The student does not comprehend the response,
2. The student understands the response but does not know how to implement it,
3. The student understands the response and implements it, but the writing is not improved.

Therefore, when giving feedback to students’ writing, teachers must take a very careful consideration. It must be noted that in order for teacher feedback to be effective, the feedback itself should be clear and concrete in assisting students’ revision. A text analytic study done by Ferris (1997, 2001, cited in Kroll, 2003:124) which links varied comments from teachers and the effectiveness of students’ revision reveals that teacher asking detailed questions or giving concrete suggestions has led to more-effective revisions for students than general or abstract comments. Due to that, regardless of different types of teacher feedback given, teachers should be clear and distinct on what students need to improve so that students will not be misled which can result in students being frustrated and demotivated to express themselves in the written language.

2.5 Corrective Feedback

Before corrective feedback is discussed further, it is better to firstly define corrective feedback in the context of ESL/EFL learning. Mounira El Tatawy (2002) pointed out that there are various definitions from which corrective feedback can be referred to. One of the definitions comes from Chaudron (1988, cited in Tatawy, 2002) that pointed out, “treatment of error may simply refer to any teacher’s behavior following an error that minimally attempts to inform the learner of the
fact of error. The treatment may not be evident to the student in terms of the response it elicits, or it may make a significant effort to elicit a revised student response. There is true correction which succeeds in modifying the learner’s inter-language rule so that the error is eliminated from further production. In addition, Light & Spada (1999, cited in Tatawy, 2002) stated that corrective feedback is “any indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect. This includes various responses that the learners receive.” From both definitions given, it is understood that corrective feedback is teachers’ responses towards learners’ incorrect use of the target language; be it explicit or implicit with the aim to eliminate the errors from being produced onwards.

Corrective feedback has been a controversial issue in second language learning ever since Truscott published an article with the title “The Case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes” in 1996 which questions the role of grammar correction in ESL writing courses. He proposed that grammar correction or corrective feedback should be discarded based on two reasons; 1) corrective feedback neglect the complex process of acquiring language forms and structures, 2) practical problems on teachers and students’ ability and willingness to give and receive error correction.

Another point of view which opposed the one made by Truscott is Ferris. Ferris (2004) argued that corrective feedback does have its own significance in ESL writing. She pointed out that there are growing research evidence that shows corrective feedback is effective given it is selective, prioritized and clear. Due to that, she maintained that teachers should continue giving corrective feedback to students.

The controversy of corrective feedback has brought upon an increasing number of studies with regard to its effectiveness in ESL teaching and learning. Studies conducted by Lee (1997, cited in Bitchener) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) shows that there is difference between feedback group and no-feedback in which the feedback group performed much better. The studies totally opposed the ones mentioned conducted by Kepner (1991, cited in Ferris 2004), Semke (1984, cited

2.6 Types of Corrective Feedback and Common Techniques Applied

From several studies conducted, the distinctions have been made to the types of corrective feedback used in ESL writing class. The main distinction is between direct and indirect feedback (Ferris, 1995, Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998, Lalande, 1982, Robb, Ross & Shortreed, 1986, cited in Ferris, 2004). Direct feedback refers to identifications of the errors by teachers together with the provision of correct form. Indirect feedback on the other hand refers to situations in which teachers indicates there are particular errors were made but provide no corrections to students. Students are asked to diagnose the errors and correct them all by themselves. Through the studies, direct and indirect feedbacks are then categorized into oral and written direct/indirect feedback.

Based on the studies mentioned earlier, related to written corrective feedback, indirect feedback is further defined into two main types; coded and uncoded feedback. Coded feedback tells students the location of the errors and the types of errors involved where as un-coded feedback refers to the underlining or circling the error without information on what types of errors they are; leaving students to diagnose and correct them by themselves. In the studies done by Ashwell (2000) and Ferris & Robert (cited in Bitchener, 2005) on ‘correction against no-correction’, the common techniques used in giving indirect feedback are underlining or circling the errors with particular code used as well as underlining or circling the errors without the code. Meanwhile, where the direct written feedback is concerned, the common ones applied in the writing class are as follows (Mi-mi, 2009):
1. Crossing out an unnecessary morpheme/word/phrase,
2. Insertion of a missing morpheme/word/phrase,
3. Provision of the correct form of structure,
4. Written meta-linguistic explanation- teacher conducts mini-lesson where rules and examples are presented at the end of students’ essays with reference to the places where the errors have occurred.

With reference to direct and indirect oral feedback, Lyster and Ranta (1997, cited in Tatawy, 2002) had listed several techniques which include recasts, clarification requests, meta-linguistic, elicitation and repetition of error:

1. Recasts- it is an implicit corrective feedback which reformulates and expands an ill-formed or incomplete utterance without being totally realized by students.
2. Clarification requests- it is a reformulation or repetition from students with respect to the form of the students’ ill-formed structure.
3. Meta-linguistic- it consists of comments, info or questions related to students’ ill-formed structure without explicitly providing the correct answer.
4. Elicitation- it is a self-correction in which teacher: pauses and let students complete the utterance; asks an open question; or requests a reformulation of the ill-formed structure.
5. Repetition of error- it is when teacher repeats the ill-formed structure aiming at making students aware that there is error in the structure.

2.7 Conclusion

The changing views of errors have changed the role of teacher in ESL/EFL writing class. Teacher’s response towards students’ writing is more than hunting for errors; which is to tell them their progress in writing in several aspects; grammar,
content, mechanics, rhetoric and so forth. As for grammatical aspect, the role of corrective feedback in improving students’ language accuracy cannot be denied regardless if only slight difference is made.
CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter includes descriptions of the research design, respondents of the study which consist of EFL learners and their teacher, instructional context involved, research instruments used in gathering data; observation list and interview and research procedures.

3.1 Research Design

The study was designed to be descriptive and qualitative in nature in a way that all the intended data was gathered through a series of observations in the class as well as interview with the teacher in charge. Aside from that, there was also analysis done on students’ writing scripts by which was descriptively interpreted and presented in tables.
3.2 Participants

The study comprised 23 UTM foreign undergraduates who were in the second semester of UTM English Language Programs called IEC (Intensive English Course) and an EFL teacher who taught the class organized by SPACE (School of Professional and Continuing Education), UTM’s long-life learning institution. IEC is an English preparation course for foreign students who intend to pursue undergraduate studies in UTM, aimed at equipping learners with language skills; reading, writing, listening and speaking, for academic and social purposes. It is a requirement for foreign students who want to apply to UTM, to have a TOEFL score of 550 above or an IELTS Band 6.0, starting from Semester 1, 2009/2010 Session. Those who scored lower will be enrolled in IEC for at least one to two semesters depending on their score in TOEFL or IELTS. Therefore, the participants of the study are foreign students whose scores are lower than 550 for TOEFL or under Band 6.0 for IELTS. Due to that, they are required to attend IEC for at least one semester (14 weeks) and pass at the Intermediate Level before they are allowed to register for their undergraduate programmes. Since most of the participants did not pass the Intermediate Level in the first semester, they are required to attend the course one more time. By the time the study was carried out, the participants were in their second semester where most of them had improved from Lower Intermediate to Intermediate Level.

3.3 Instructional Context

IEC which is a 14-week course consists of four modules; Reading, Writing, Listening and Speaking, and Self-Access Language Learning outlined within 22 contact hours a week. Of the total 22 contact hours, 8 hours will be contributed to writing class. IEC implements skill-based approach in its lesson thus compliments its main goal in which to further develop students’ English proficiency. Due to that,
regardless which module is used to teach the particular group of students, it is adequatel
supplied with well-designed materials, tasks and activities; giving students lots of opportunity to improve their understandings of English. With regard to the writing class which is the focus of the study, the aim of the class would be to foster communicative ability through writing. Since the respondents would be taking undergraduate studies afterwards, they were mostly exposed to academic form of writing. In the course, there are three main type of writing by which students are expected to learn throughout the semester: ‘Compare and Contrast’, ‘Cause and Effect’ and ‘Problem and Solution’. Students are expected to be able to construct complete sentences on the ideas as well as appropriately connect the ideas in paragraphs. The main focus and concern of the class would be to help students produce the piece of writing that are clear, coherent and well-written; meeting up the standards set for academic form of writing.

3.4 Research Instruments

Two research instruments were employed in the study. The first one was the observation list used when observing the writing lessons in IEC class and the second one was the interview questions intended to be asked to IEC teacher.

3.4.1 Observation list

Observation list was used to gather data through a series of observation conducted in the EFL writing classes involved in the study. The criteria listed in the observation list are focused on the types of corrective feedback given during
the writing lessons, be it oral or written, direct or indirect, as well as the strategies applied in giving feedback.

3.4.2 Interview

Interview was done between the researcher and the IEC teacher with the intention to gather more details regarding the corrective feedback applied in the writing class itself. It was to support the findings obtained from the observations and the analysis of students’ scripts.

3.5 Research Procedures

The intended data was firstly gathered through a series of observation in the IEC writing class itself. The respective IEC teacher was approached to ask for permission related to conducting the observations in her class. Since there are 22 hours allocated per week to teach the four modules stated earlier, it is estimated that 5-6 hours spent in teaching the writing module itself. With the teacher’s permission, the class was observed for four times with the time allocation of 11 hours. During the observations, researcher used the observation list to guide her in obtaining the intended data. Attention was given to any verb error done in the class and the type of correction received for the error. After the observations were done, researcher asked the teacher’s permission to conduct an interview with her. The interview was recorded only after the teacher had given her consent.
3.6 Data Analysis

In analyzing the data gathered from the observations, attention was given to the main points included in the observation list. This included the existence of corrective feedback in the writing class as well as the types of corrective feedback applied with relation to verb errors. As for writing analysis, the scripts which had the most errors were chosen. In the writing scripts’, all common verb errors were analyzed. For each verb error, there would be particular traits or characteristics. These traits were looked at, once there was a verb error suspected. Then, verb errors with the similar traits would be categorized together. Attention was given to the verb errors marked by teacher in order to analyze the types of corrective feedback given in correcting the errors. As for the interview, the findings were analyzed based on the research questions as well as the interpreted data from the observations and writing analysis.

3.7 Conclusion

The study implies the method of observing which deals with lots of descriptive interpretation on the part of researcher. Where the participants are concerned, they are UTM foreign undergraduates who are taking IEC as the preparation for their further studies in UTM as well as the IEC teacher. The instructional context studied is the writing class which employs a particular writing module including academic form of writing within the allocated six-hour time per week. The research instruments utilized are observation lists as well as the interview questions.
REFERENCES


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>QUESTIONS</th>
<th>YES</th>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NOTES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Does the teacher give corrective feedback in the EFL writing class?</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. If yes, when is it given:</td>
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<tr>
<td>a) during writing tasks in class?</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) during discussion of the writing tasks in class?</td>
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<tr>
<td>c) when marking the writing tasks?</td>
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<tr>
<td>d) after returning the marking tasks in the next lesson?</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Is it given:</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a) individually?</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>b) to the whole class?</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>4. Are the following types of corrective feedback given in the EFL writing class?</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>a) Direct/explicit/focused feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>b) Indirect/implicit/unfocused feedback</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>c) Direct/explicit/focused written feedback</td>
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<td>d) Direct/explicit/focused oral feedback</td>
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<tr>
<td>e) Indirect/implicit/unfocused written feedback</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>f) Indirect/implicit/unfocused oral feedback</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>5. Is/Are the following technique(s) for each types of corrective feedback given in the class:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
a) Direct written feedback:
   i. crossing out unnecessary word/phrase/morpheme
   ii. inserting missing word/phrase/morpheme
   iii. providing correct form of structure
   iv. providing explanation on rules and examples at the end of students’ scripts with reference to where the error is and its type.
   v. others

b) Indirect written feedback:
   i. underlining/circling the error
   ii. underlining/pointing to the exact location of the error with standard code on the type of error done
   iii. others

c) Direct oral feedback:
   i. conducting mini lesson where rules and examples are presented, practiced and discussed either one-to-one or one-to-small group
   ii. others

d) Indirect oral feedback:
   i. recasts
   ii. meta-linguistic feedback
   iii. elicitation
   iv. others
APPENDIX B

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. How many years have you been teaching EFL writing class?
2. How do you view the role of feedback in teaching EFL writing?
3. Which should be focused more when giving feedback: language form or content?
4. Do you think that corrective feedback is necessary in improving writing in the form of language accuracy? Why?
5. Which one do you prefer more; direct or indirect, oral or written corrective feedback? Why?
6. Which types of corrective feedback mentioned earlier are used when you correct subject-verb disagreement in your EFL writing classes? Why?
7. What are the techniques which you have often used when giving corrective feedback on subject-verb disagreement in your EFL writing classes? Why?
8. Are they the common techniques applied by other EFL teachers or are they the unfamiliar techniques used only in your own teaching classes?
9. Do you think the feedback and its techniques given in your class are effective in improving your students writing regarding subject-verb agreement?