

English Error Correction Feedback among Selected College Freshmen in the University of Eastern Philippines

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Abstract: *This study centered on the feedback on error correction based on the preferences of the randomly selected ninety college freshmen enrolled in the second semester of school year 2015-2016 in the University of Eastern Philippines. Specifically, it drew up the profile of the respondents in terms of age, sex, and type of secondary school they graduated from. The students' view on the importance of the various writing features such as grammar, spelling, punctuation, organization, writing style, and ideas were elicited. It also determined the students' concern for accuracy, and their preferences for paper-marking techniques. Furthermore, it looked into the significant relationship between the students' profile and their preferences then went on to find out if there was significant difference between the students' error correction preferences in their first and final drafts. Most of the respondents were 16 to 17 years old, female and graduated from public or national secondary schools. On the written exercise, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary choice were the most important features of writing that the students wanted to be responded to by the teachers both in the first and final drafts. The students were greatly concerned with accuracy since they agreed that it is important to them to have as few errors as possible in their written work. As for paper-marking techniques, the findings revealed that the students preferred their teachers to use correction or proof-reading symbols to point out errors in both first and final drafts. In addition, they chose the teachers' technique of crossing out the error and writing in the correction as the best response to a first draft. For the final draft, the students chose showing where the error is and giving a clue about how to correct it. The majority of the students preferred their teachers to correct all errors, major and minor when responding to a first draft than to a final draft. As to the relationship between the profile of the students and their preferences, the findings showed that age, sex, and type of high school graduated from were significantly related with preferences. No significant difference, however, was found between the students' preferences for error correction in the first and the final drafts. On the whole, the research participants' feedback on the paper-marking techniques of the freshman English teachers is a good input to the teaching of writing. This investigation's significance lies in its being able to improve the teaching of writing. The final recommendation, therefore, is for all writing students and teachers to read this study's results that they may know that students have paper-marking preferences which they could use as effective springboards for teaching writing.*

Keywords: English, Error, Correction, Feedback, Writing Features

1. Introduction

Improving grammar among English language learners is one of the major problems among language teachers teaching English. The majority of English learners in the written aspect of the English language have difficulty in expressing their ideas because they lack a good stock of vocabulary. Students are also lazy to write because they are afraid that their errors are too many to be corrected by their teachers. Students are afraid of committing mistakes, and do not want to be embarrassed by their teacher. They have yet to know that it is through giving of feedback by their teachers regarding their write-up will lead to the discovery and correction of their mistakes, thus improving their command of the language.

Since elementary days, the students had been used to getting back their papers usually marked for grammatical errors only. Some papers are graded but do not have comments and evaluation remarks. Teachers may do a poor job in recognizing and correcting errors because they lack time in correcting it. Add to this the fact that research has not shown grammar correction to be effective -the very reason why this research had been conducted.

2. Objectives of the Study

Inasmuch as this study dealt with feedback on error correction, the researcher intended to:

- 1) Describe the profile of the selected college freshmen taking English as regards age, sex, and type of high school graduated from;
- 2) Get the students views about the relative importance of various features of writing such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, choice, punctuation, organization, writing style, and ideas or content;
- 3) Find out the students concern with accuracy in their writing;
- 4) Identify the students preferences for teacher feedback on their writing as regards their first draft and their final draft;
- 5) Find out the significant relationship between the students' demographic profile and their preferences;
- 6) Find out the significant difference between the students preferences in their first and final drafts; and
- 7) Identify inputs for teaching writing can be derived from the study.

3. Methodology

This descriptive-correlational research used a questionnaire to obtain the necessary information from the respondents. The data gathered were tabulated, analyzed and treated using frequency counts, percentages, ranking, weighted mean, multiple regression analysis to test the significant relationship, and t-test for significant difference. Using 10% margin of error, the study involved 90 randomly selected college freshmen enrolled in English, from different courses in the University of Eastern Philippines.

4. Findings

Most of the respondents were 16-17 years old, female and graduated from public or national secondary schools. On the written exercise, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and vocabulary choice were the most important features of writing that the students wanted to be responded to by the teachers both in first and final drafts. The students were greatly concerned with accuracy since they agreed that it is important to them to have as few errors as possible in their written work.

As for paper marking techniques, the findings revealed that the students preferred their teachers to use correction or proof reading symbols to point out errors in both first and final drafts. In addition, they chose the teacher's technique of crossing out the error and writing in the correction as the best response to a first draft. For the final draft, the students chose showing where the error is and giving a clue about how to correct it. The majority of the respondents/students preferred their teachers to correct all errors, major and minor when responding to a first draft than to a final draft.

As to the relationship between the profile of the respondents and their preferences, the findings showed that age, sex, and type of high school graduated from were significantly related with preferences. No significant difference however, was found between the students' preferences for error correction in the first and final drafts.

5. Conclusions

Based on the salient findings, these conclusions were drawn:

That the respondents were young, in their mid-teens, mostly female and from public high schools, imply that they already have some knowledge of English from their basic education in public schools. That most of the respondents strongly agreed that teachers should point out errors in grammar, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, writing style, organization, and content both in the first and final drafts imply that they expect surface-level error correction in addition to the teachers' correcting the writing style and organization of ideas. These feedbacks from the students are important considerations for teaching compositions.

Because the students agreed that it is important to have as few errors as possible in their written work, it implies that these college freshmen wanted to acquire flawless English, accurate in the use of the features of grammar and the

mechanics of language. Moreover, they expected that if they give this feedback to their teachers, they could get their needed help. They want their compositions to be error-free as possible with the help of their teachers.

The feedback from students on the paper marking techniques of their teachers emphasized that in addition to using a set of correction or proofreading symbols in the first draft, teachers should use a red colored pen when responding to their written compositions, implying that if their teachers do these they could readily see their errors and identify which error they committed. When their errors are crossed out and the correction is written in the first draft, it becomes a clear guide as to what to do with their errors. Students will have enough clue as to how to correct errors in their final draft. This is a sign that some learning is taking place.

On the relationship between profile and preferences, that age, sex, and type of high school graduated from were significantly related implies that these three have a bearing on or influence their preferences. Furthermore, their basic composition training has made them understand better what their preferences are for paper-marking techniques.

That there was no significant difference in the preferences for paper-marking techniques in the first and final drafts can be an implication that students were consistent from the first to the final drafts, that is, the amount of feedback on the first draft were also the same feedback that students have on the final draft of their composition. It can be inferred that students seem not to have fully understood their teachers correction on the first draft, that is why they repeated the errors on their final draft.

On the whole, the research participants' feedback on the paper-marking techniques of the freshman English teachers is a good input to the teaching of writing.

6. Recommendations

- 1) Since most of the students were young, female, and graduates of public high schools with some writing skills, it is recommended that teachers apply the findings of this study to better meet the writing needs of the students;
- 2) Language teachers should concentrate on teaching grammar to improve grammatical competence of the students;
- 3) The University should strictly impose a policy that in every class only a maximum of 30-35 students should be accommodated so that teachers will be able to attend to all the errors of the students;
- 4) It is suggested that teachers incorporate error correction and the feedback from the students on their paper marking techniques in their class discussions. Since students wanted their teachers to use a set of correction or proofreading symbols, teachers should explain what these symbols mean or represent;
- 5) Teachers should cross out errors and write the corrections in their composition writing;
- 6) Teachers should always correct the written tests, assignments, and compositions of the students because they would be useless without evaluation and assessment; and

- 7) Teachers should utilize varied techniques in teaching composition writing. Story telling is the best motivation for students to write.
- 8) This investigation's significance lies in its being able to improve the teaching of writing. The final recommendation, therefore, is for all writing students and teachers to read this study's results that they may know that students have paper-marking preferences which they could use as effective springboards for teaching writing.

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