

Chapter 1

Error Treatment in L2 Writing: Fostering Social Justice by Using Active Self-Correction With Multilingual and Multicultural Students

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ABSTRACT

Providing feedback is considered to be an ethical and professional responsibility of the lecturer in higher education institutions (HEI). However, students—especially low-achieving multilingual and multicultural students from minority groups—seldom make good use of the feedback and often repeat the same mistakes in subsequent writing assignments. The current study investigated the impact of lecturer e-correction (digital pen – DP) and students’ active self-correction (ASC) on multilingual and multicultural undergraduate students’ writing performance in a HEI in the UK. Findings indicated that self-correction improved students’ writing performance. Students also found the self-correction method difficult but rewarding. The chapter provides recommendations for further research and highlights implications for theory and practice.

INTRODUCTION

The current chapter will examine two of the most popular methods of error treatment lecturers employ in their classes, lecturer e-correction or the so-called Digital Pen Method (DPM) and the active self-correction Method (ASM). In DPM, the lecturer writes notes through which he/she draws students’ attention to errors and asks for revision. A new alternative method to the previous one is the active self-correction method, in which the lecturer indicates students’ errors without actually correcting them and asks them to correct them under his/her guidance.

In education, corrective feedback is seen as vital for motivating students and supporting their learning. A growing body of research on corrective feedback highlights its significance for the process of language

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and content acquisition in English as a Medium of Instruction (EMI) classes. Corrective feedback (CF) has been acknowledged by many scholars to be crucial in supporting international students' writing development. Several studies (Mao & Lee, 2020) claim that CF is beneficial for all students, because it helps them detect their own mistakes and adopt an improved writing style after careful reflection on their performance. CF raises students' awareness of their own writing performance and indirectly supports them as they try to improve their writing during their learning journey.

Although mistakes and errors are considered to be part of the learning process, lecturers and students spend an enormous amount of time correcting them. Scholars and practitioners have spent decades expressing concerns and discussing errors and error treatment. As a result, many researchers have examined CF role in language and content learning. Although numerous scholars highlight its significance for the process of language and content acquisition, many experts disagree on issues related to error correction and its impact on students. Previous research (Heift & Hegelheimer, 2017) indicate that lecturers should aim at error correction and include it during their seminars to support learning. Ferris provides a handful of reasons for error correction in the classroom. Students should aim not only at acquiring a set of automatic habits, but also at discovering the underlying rules, categories, and systems of choice in the language taught in class by the lecturer while also working on content (Kennedy, 2016).

Many lecturers provide corrective feedback to correct learners' mistakes and errors in language usage and to help them understand and benefit from making those mistakes and errors. Therefore, the lecturer's part seems to be vital in corrective feedback. Nevertheless, there is not enough proof that language and content acquisition is associated with direct error correction. Some scholars support that error correction is in fact harmful to students and that highlighting mistakes and correcting them as a standard procedure in every one of our classes discourages students from participating in class, experimenting, and trying out new things in language and content learning (Wang et al., 2015). Since all writers make errors at some point as part of their learning, one of lecturers' main goals should be to discover how students view error correction and its impact on their language and content learning. Lecturers should focus on students' stances and views to sustain students' motivation and improve their writing performance by raising their self-awareness regarding their errors and mistakes. Lecturers and students should communicate clearly and purposefully to find out what kind of approach to error correction supports students and their language and content acquisition the most. Scholars assert that the most important contribution of error analysis lies in its success in changing the status of errors from undesirability to that of a guide to language and content learning. Therefore, experts believe that errors showcase students' positive contribution to foreign language learning rather than act as an indication of students' inability to master the new language and/or new content, as many lecturers believe. Consequently, error correction is thought of as one of the most crucial aspects of learning and teaching ESL writing that requires even more research. The main aim of the current study was to answer the following question:

- Which of the two methods of error treatment is more effective with multilingual and multicultural undergraduate students, DPM or ASM?

The current study will explore the impact of these two types of error treatment on multilingual and multicultural undergraduate students' writing performance and attitudes towards learning to unravel the benefits and challenges of these two methods and provide insights into students' views regarding the use of these two approaches towards error correction in HEI classrooms with the aim of improving student academic writing achievement and eagerness to improve their writing skills. In terms of this chapter,

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