A Study of the Impact of Direct and Indirect Error Correction on Undergraduate Writing at the Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna.

Submitted to the Post Graduate Institute of English, Open University of Sri-Lanka in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Teaching English as a Second Language

by

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The Abstract

This study presents the findings of a small-scale classroom research carried out to investigate the effect of written error correction feedback on undergraduate writings. Although effective writing skills are significant to the success of university-level students, second language (L2) writers in the research context (The University of Jaffna) face challenges in developing writing skills. The ability to produce linguistically accurate writing need to be developed among these undergraduates. However, due to their grammatical inaccuracies, many of the writings are difficult to understand. Thus this study was designed to investigate a suitable feedback technique to improve these students’ L2 writing. There has been a longstanding controversy in the L2 literature regarding the effectiveness of error correction and direct and indirect error correction feedback in particular. Hence this study attempted to find out the effect direct error correction feedback and indirect error correction feedback had on students’ writing. Hence, twenty four third year undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna who were specializing in social sciences were randomly selected among a total population of ninety seven students. The group was treated with both direct and indirect error correction feedback in two ‘three day sequences’ of composition writing, comparison of original texts with feedback and revision. The results revealed that both feedback types had a positive impact on students’ writings. There was no significant difference observed on the impact of the two feedback types. Irrespective of gender both male and female students were able to correct their grammatical inaccuracies. The study has important implications for ESL teachers who teach writing at the University of Jaffna in particular and at other universities across the island.
Declaration

“I certify that this dissertation does not incorporate without acknowledgement, any material previously submitted for a degree or Diploma in any University: and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text”

( Mrs. K. Sivaji.)

Registration No: 30589519.
Dedication:

Dedicated to Mrs. Shanthi Vignarajah, my boss, friend and colleague in the first batch of M.A in TESL who encouraged me and gave me the initiative to follow this course and departed from this world.
Acknowledgement

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CHAPTER-1

Introduction

1.0. Overview of the Chapter

This research study on the topic “A Study of the Impact of Direct and Indirect Error Correction on Undergraduate Writing at the Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna” is an exploration of the effect of two types of written error correction feedback on the improvement of English as Second Language (L2) writing. It begins with the background information which focuses on the research problem and continues with definitions of L2 writing by different scholars. The study investigates the characteristics and significance of L2 writing and the difficulties faced in the teaching contexts. It then deals with different approaches to ESL writing instruction in order to interpret the development in the pedagogical context of L2 writing over the past. The chapter then focuses on feedback and its importance in promoting L2 writing. The next section which contains the working definition of ‘error’ in view of this study explains the types of error correction feedback involved in this study with examples. Finally, the chapter attempts to provide a description of L2 pedagogy and teaching writing in Sri-Lanka in general. It concludes with the purpose and the overview of this thesis.

1.1 Background of the study

Jaffna where the present study takes place is an area dominated by Tamil language where militant monopoly predominated for about three decades and a pure Tamil or only Tamil movement prevailed. As a result, the glory Jaffna enjoyed in English education during the American missionary era came to a standstill and worsened during the monopoly of militants.

It has been often observed by the English Language Teaching (ELT) practitioners at the University of Jaffna that great attention has to be paid to develop students’ writing ability. Although effective writing skills are vital to the academic success of university students, second language (L2) writers face unique challenges in developing these skills. The students in the Faculty of
Arts, University of Jaffa, though competent enough to get through the ESL examinations are unable to use English or function in English. This observation is supported by the statement “students in all the provinces of Sri-Lanka have reached adequate levels of competence…. although the students possess knowledge about the language, when they are required to use it they are unable to do so” (Raheem and Ratwatte, 2001). Further, De Silva (2001) in her research study states that classroom activities and related factors do not equally influence or motivate all the learners in the English classroom and that therefore there should be a balance of communicative type activities as there are different kinds of learners. It is therefore the responsibility of ELT practitioners to adopt various types of activities which suit the varying types and abilities of students.

Canagarajah (1993) in his article “Critical Ethnography of a Sri Lankan Classroom” speaks about the Jaffna University Students as a set of students whose desire is learning only the grammar of L2 in a product oriented manner in order to pass the ESL course and fulfill a socio-economic necessity. As grammar was their main concern, grammatical accuracy in their L2 writing seemed to be at a satisfactory level. Though this was the situation in early 1990s, L2 learners in the present context, according to the response to the questionnaire given to them, seem to have strong positive attitude towards learning English as a second language. However, in contradiction to the situation in 1993, present teachers at the University of Jaffna observe a high percentage of grammatical inaccuracy in the L2 writing of their students. Thus this study investigates the effects of error correction feedback to overcome the grammatical inaccuracy in the L2 writing of the above students.

In order to understand the issues and to guide the students to be aware of what is expected of them, to help them practice it to attain confidence and competence, one should first understand the pedagogical background of the context.

Thus let us begin with the definitions of L2 writing
1.2 Definitions of second language (L2) writing

Writing in general has been defined in various ways in order to suit the different needs and purposes of different groups of people. Even the scholars involved in the field of L2 Teaching are no exception.

Zamel (1982) who views L2 writing as a product of a person’s search for meaning, points out that writers start the process of writing not knowing what they are to say at all and go through the process and finally create meaning.

Hedge (1988) in her definition states that without a well-established model of L2 writing, teachers tend to have different ideas about its role in the classroom.

Harris and Silva (1993) make the point that writing is a complex activity in the L2 context and that L2 writers are faced with differences between the conventions of first and second language writing.

Grabe and Kaplan (1996) on the other hand explore the meaning of L2 writing in terms of the rhetorical triangle set out in their model. The triangle consists of the reader, the writer and the text. Each one plays a significant role in the journey towards meaning.

Campbell (1998) who considers writing as a form of creative release in second or foreign language defines it as one of life’s greatest releases to express oneself.

These definitions underpin the idea that L2 writing is of fundamental significance to learning. Increasingly educational contexts especially at University level have begun to demand that learners produce written work in the English Language. Teachers therefore need to assist their students in the search to fulfill their writing needs.
1.3 Significance and Difficulties of L2 Writing

Though the development of writing skills is an integral part of learning English as a Second Language (ESL), most teachers would agree that it is a time consuming process, requiring good planning and preparation. It would therefore be useful to look closely at L2 writing and its significance in the classroom.

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) claim that Second Language writing is best viewed as a continuum of activities that range from the more mechanical or formal aspects of "writing down" on one end, to the more complex act of composing on the other end. Considering the complex act of composing, it has been observed by Silva (1992) that First and Second Language writing reveal salient and important differences and according to him these differences are drawn from the intuition of ESL writers. It is the act of composing, which can create problems for ESL writers.

It has been generally observed due to the above reasons that teaching writing to learners of ESL is one of the most challenging tasks. In a second Language context, Kroll (1990) claims that becoming a writer is a complex and ongoing process, and becoming a writing teacher is no less complex. Myles (2002) on the other hand states that the ability to write well is not a naturally acquired skill; it is usually learned or culturally transmitted as a set of practices in formal instructional settings or other environments. Thus writing skills must be practiced and learned through experience due to its complex nature. As stated earlier, one of the reasons for these complexities is that writing involves composing, which implies the ability either to tell or retell pieces of information in the form of narratives or description, or to transform information into new texts, as in expository or argumentative writing (Myles 2002).
1.4 Teaching L2 writing

Research in L2 writing reveals the strategies and processes which L2 writers adopt when composing. In the sixties, the theory and practice in writing pedagogy was focused on form. It was influenced by Audio-Lingual method which saw the role of writing as reinforcing oral patterns of language. From the late seventies and in the eighties, L2 writing caused a shift from formal accuracy to what writers actually do when they compose. Raimes (1983) classifies approaches to teaching writing into five types: controlled to free, free writing, paragraph pattern, grammar-syntax-organization, communicative, and process approaches. In the controlled to free approach, students are first given sentence exercises, then paragraphs to copy or manipulate grammatically by changing questions to statements, present to past, or plural to singular, etc. They might also change words or clauses or combine sentences.

In the free writing approach, students are asked to write freely on any topic for five or ten minutes without concentrating on grammar and spelling. The teachers do not correct these short pieces of free writing but they simply read them and comment on the ideas the writer expressed. In the paragraph pattern approach, students copy paragraphs, analyze the form of model paragraphs, and imitate model passages.

In the communicative approach to writing, students are asked to assume the role of a writer who is writing for an audience to read. Whatever is written by a student is modified in some way by other students for better communicative effect.

In the process approach to writing, students move away from a concentration on the written product to an emphasis on the process of writing (Raimes 1983). She further states that they ask not only questions about purpose and audience, but also the crucial questions: How do I write this? How do I get started?” (Raimes 1983 p.10). Thus, process approach follows steps of the writing which are generally defined as prewriting, writing, revising, editing, and publishing. Each of these steps is important to have a successful writing. It is believed that
when a writer follows these steps he/she will achieve the goal of an interesting and successful writing.

Silva (1993) on the other hand, states that L2 composition writing has been a succession of approaches or orientations to L2 writing, a cycle in which particular approaches achieve dominance and then fade, but never really disappear. Focusing on the origins, principles and methods Silva identified four influential approaches: controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approach and English for academic purposes.

The controlled composition approach, according to Silva, preferred practice with previously learned discrete units of language to express original ideas, organization, and style. The methodology involved the imitation and manipulation of model passages constructed and graded for vocabulary and sentence pattern. The manipulation involves substitutions, transformations, expansions and completion. Thus in this approach the writer becomes a manipulator of previously learned language structures.

Silva speaks about current-traditional rhetoric as an awareness of students’ needs with regard to producing extended written discourse. This awareness led to suggestions that controlled composition was not enough; that there was more to writing than building grammatical sentences. (Silva, 1993). He further states that what was needed was a bridge between controlled and free writing. The gap was filled by the ESL version of current-traditional rhetoric. Logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms are the central concern of this approach. From the perspective of this approach writing is basically a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns and attention was given not only to its elements, but also to various options for its development (Silva, 1993).

The introduction of the process approach to ESL composition, according to Silva, was motivated by dissatisfaction with controlled composition and the current-traditional approach. He quotes Zamel’s (1983) statement that the
assumptions and principles of process approach were enunciated and composing process was seen as a non-linear, exploratory, and generative process in which writers discover and re-formulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning. Thus process approach provides a positive, encouraging, and collaborative workshop environment within which students, with ample time and minimal interference, can work through their composing processes (Silva 1993). He further states that the writer who is the center of attention in this approach is engaged in the discovery and expression of meaning. The text, Silva points out, is a product of secondary and derivative concern and the form is a function of its content and purpose.

However, although the process approach has been widely received in ESL composition, it is not without its critics. Silva quotes Horowitz (1986) who said that a process-oriented approach gave students a false impression of how university writing will be evaluated. Though not completely agreeable Horowitz’s statement may be a counter reaction as Raimes (1983) pointed out. Raimes pointed out that with the radical call for a change to the process approach in the classroom there was a counter-reaction from writing teachers who went back to what existed previously. She also states that those who perceived the new approach as an obsession inappropriate for academic demands and for the expectations of the academic readers shifted their focus from the process of the writer to the content and to demands of the academy. This brings us to the notion of ‘academic writing’. This type of writing and its characteristics are discussed below.
1.5 Academic writing

As can be understood from the point of view of scholars, teaching second language writing in general needs much concern and effort. Let us now examine what is academic writing and the measures to be taken to teach it as it is one of the major skills that undergraduates need to master. Swales and Feak (1994) and Bruce (2008) list a number of characteristics which explains what academic writing is. According to them the objective of academic writing is to inform rather than entertain. It is always complex, formal and explicit and uses language precisely and accurately. It is clearly defined by having an obvious audience, a clear purpose and clearly structured in itself. Academic writing is also considered a social practice because it is always written with a readership in mind. A very rigid organizational pattern is followed. The way language is used in an academic context is the way it has been developed through centuries of use by writers. Thus, because of the above characteristics academic writing must be learned by observation, formal instruction and experiment. Myles (2002) explains that “academic writing requires conscious effort and practice in composing developing and analysing ideas. It requires efforts and constant practice in formulating and explaining ideas contained in one’s argument.”

Thus L2 writing in an academic context depends on the variety of background experience, needs, interests and purposes for writing and these aspects play a role that is more important in second language writing situations than in first language writing situation. (Weigle, 2002).

Being a recursive process and a difficult skill, Second Language (L2) Writing in an academic context needs time so that learners could revise their work before the submission of their final draft. (White and McGovern, 1996). It is also pointed out by many researchers [Ferris(2002)Harmer(2001) Krashen(1987) and Kroll(2001)] that learners need feedback and comments that would help them to compose an essay in L2 with minimal errors as well as maximum accuracy and clarity. Feedback is thus an important aspect of academic writing.
1.6 Feedback and (L2) writing

Feedback is the term used to denote the information that is given to the learner about his or her performance by the teacher. One of the objectives of assessment is to provide guidance and feedback to the learner. Penny Ur (1996) defines feedback as information that is given to the learner about his or her performance of a learning task, usually with the objective of improving this performance. Thus feedback is provided to ask for further information, to give directions, suggestions, or requests for revision, to give students new information that will help them revise, and to give positive comments about what the students have done. Feedback also comes in various linguistic forms, may be in questions, statements, imperatives, or exclamations and comments can be softened through the use of a variety of hedging devices (Ferris, 1997).

Since teacher responses to student writing are expected to help students develop their ideas fully and present them effectively, feedback needs to cover all aspects of students’ written texts, including issues of content, organization, style, grammar, and mechanics (Ferris, 1997).

Ypsilandis (2002) comments on the new concept of feedback as that the recent and welcome shift of interest from language teaching to language learning affected the way feedback is perceived by both learners and teachers. Consequently, feedback is now recognized as an assistance mechanism, a key factor for successful learning offering support to the learning process.

Feedback as viewed by Furnbrough and Truman (2009) entails the existence of gaps between what has been learned and the target competence of the learners, and the efforts undertaken to bridge these gaps.

As errors are considered as evidence of processing the language, let us now examine the consequences of error correction as feedback on students’ writing. It is pointed out by Stern (1992) and Littlewood (1995) that with regard to academic writing, some of the students repeatedly commit certain errors and teachers realize that it is arduous for the learners to achieve accuracy which is
grammatically demanding. Stern (1992) includes error correction as a part of the learning processes of grammar. Therefore error correction has a significant role in improving students’ writing as errors are integral part of language learning.

1.7 Error correction as feedback

Errors as Krashen (1987) points out are inherent to students’ works and the feedback teachers provide play a vital role in developing their writing skills. However, care should be taken when providing feedback on error correction as error correction deals not only with the cognitive skills but also the affective aspects of language learning which includes feelings and attitudes. (Ellis 1994). Raimes (1998) points out that feedback has a significant impact on students’ attitude to writing and thus it is important that teachers should reflect on the manner in which corrections are made.

Myles (2002), in an attempt to explore error in writing in relation to aspects of second language acquisition and theories of the writing process in L1 and L2, concludes that feedback is utmost importance to the L2 writing process. She further states that without individual attention and sufficient feedback on errors, improvement will not take place. Myles in the same article points out that teachers must accept the fact that L2 writing contains errors and it is the teachers’ responsibility to help learners develop strategies for self correction and regulation. Further, L2 writers require and expect specific overt feedback from teachers not only on content, but also on the form and structure of writing.

1.8 Teachers’ role

Crème and Lea (1997) state that teachers have the right to set standard of what the students have to achieve in the writing process. However according to Ferris (2003) the students’ level should be taken into consideration to achieve these expectations. Thus teachers should always adjust both their expectation
and teaching method to suit the level of their students. Therefore, teachers should first identify the common errors students make so that they could adjust their teaching methodology. Further, Leech (1994) states that teachers should be equipped with knowledge of the target language to provide correction to students’ and put themselves in the students’ position to understand the sources of errors. Leech further states that teachers should implement the ‘process of simplification’ to transfer their knowledge to students who are at different levels of proficiency and act as motivators.

1.9 Error correction research

It has been observed that the focus of classroom instruction has shifted from an emphasis on language forms to functional language within communicative context over the past few decades and the question of the place of error correction has become more and more important (Brown, 1994). However, over the last few years, the role of corrective feedback in second language acquisition has become a highly controversial issue. One group holds that corrective feedback is necessary (e.g. White and Arndt, 1991) while another group maintains that changes in the learner’s competence can only be initiated by primary linguistic data, not by corrective feedback (Schwartz, 1993) and some researchers even advocate that corrective feedback in classroom interaction should be abandoned due to many problems. (Truscott, 1999). The controversies are described in greater detail in the literature review of this study.

1.10 Types of error correction feedback

According to Ferris (2002) direct error correction feedback and indirect error correction feedback constitute the most important dichotomy. In direct error correction, correct forms are offered by the teacher. Indirect error correction which is also called coded feedback needs the equal involvement of both teachers and students in the error correction process as teachers indicate the errors using a code and students correct the errors. Ferris (2002) spells out that
direct error correction gives learners right answers and learners, especially those with low proficiency find it less threatening. Nevertheless it is also important to note what Hedge (2000) reports that the danger of direct error correction’s spoon-feeding effect is that learners overlook their own role in the correction process and become passive. On the other hand, Harmer (2001) points out that coded feedback makes correction effective if simple and systematic codes are used. Further Ferris (2002) states that indirect error correction arouses learners’ responsibility in correction and improves their writing accuracy in the long run. Reformulation is another error correction method in which, as Cohen (1990) suggests learners should revise their writing until it is well formed and comparison should be made with the native-like expression of the same idea.

Though a number of error correction feedbacks are used in different contexts, this study explores only the uses of direct and indirect error correction feedback.

1.10.1 Direct Error Correction feedback

The central focus of this study is the distinction between the strategies of direct and indirect error correction feedback. Direct error correction feedback is an overt correction strategy in which the error is underlined and the correct form is written by the teacher on students’ writings. An example from students’ draft and the type of correction are given below:

Eg: Student’s writing:  *Land break it is one of the most important dangers in our life.*

Direct correction: *Earthquake is one of the most dangerous disasters in our life.*
1.10.2 Indirect Error correction feedback

Indirect error correction feedback on the other hand is provided by indicating the location of the error by underlining and the types of error by writing codes on top of each error.

Eg: Students’ writing:

*On 26th December 2004 I was attended the class at 9.00 a.m.*

Indirect correction: w.v.f (wrong verb form)

*On 26th December 2004 I was attended the class at 9.00 a.m.*

Students errors in written sentences are usually classified broadly into three categories such as grammatical errors, usage errors and mechanical errors. Among these errors the functional aspect in this study is the grammatical errors. Thus the working definition of error in this context is as follows:-

“Unwanted grammatical elements in students’ writings which tend to disrupt the comprehension and make their writing inaccurate.”

Let us now move on to the development of L2 pedagogy and second language writing in Sri Lanka.

1.11 Development of L2 pedagogy and second language writing in Sri Lanka.

1.11.1 L2 pedagogy in the Sri-Lankan context

The socio-historic context of English as L2 in Sri-Lanka is subjected to the influence of political and commercial factors as these factors have had controlling effects on the language policy and practice of Sri-Lanka. As observed by Passe (1963) the ‘phasing out’ of English medium education in
1960s paved way to the focus of special attention on the recruitment and training of Sinhala and Tamil medium teachers and automatically there had been a fall in the number of English medium teachers as well as teachers of English. English which had been the medium of education of this country became the second language. It is said that as a result of the above switch, there had been a greater focus on the development of reading skills in the English language classroom. This is reinforced by the 1974 report of the committee appointed by the Vice Chancellor of the University of Colombo to review on the Intensive course in English in the campuses of the Universities. The report stated that the main target of English Language teaching in the Universities was reading with comprehension and courses at all levels were grammar-oriented and structurally based which emphasized reading.

As advisors to the government argued that grammar-oriented approach did not support the achievement of objectives, communicative activities were introduced in L2 teaching contexts with the help of cultural agencies such as the Asia Foundation and British Council. Thus communicative approaches were introduced in schools in 1980s. Raheem and Gunasekara (1994) add that given the pace of technological innovation, it has become extremely difficult for the indigenous languages of this country to cope with the demands of the communicative needs of modern day science and technology.

When describing more recent trends in ESL in Sri Lanka, Raheem and Ratwatte (2000) point out that English has been introduced from grade one, extensive revisions have taken place in the ELT syllabi and a comprehensive programme of Sri-Lankan English has been introduced as a subject in the Advanced Level classes. However Raheem (2004) indicated many pitfalls in the teaching of General English Course for the Advanced Level, in an analysis of student profiles of those who had successfully completed the above course. One of the chief causes for these pitfalls is that many teachers did not have either the necessary language skills or the pedagogical competence to teach the course.
1.11.2 Teaching L2 writing in Sri-Lanka

Medawattegedera and Devendra (2004) on the issue of the use of Sri-Lankan English in the second language classroom revealed the choices that L2 teachers in Sri-Lanka make regarding the use of Sri-Lankan English in speech and writings. Their findings showed that the acceptance of various forms of Sri-Lankan varieties in the context of writing is very low. They further state that there is high acceptance of hybrids, meaning change and loan words only when used in speech to describe people. The interesting point the researchers note is that a higher percentage of teachers would adopt these various characteristics of Sri-Lankan English in their own speech rather than in the speech of their students. Though what Medawattegedera and Devendra (2004) revealed was not directly related to this study, it is relevant to point out the conclusion. They conclude that these choices L2 teachers in Sri-Lanka make echo the claim made by Raheem and Ratwatte (2000) that we need to create a consensus on what we should teach and why. (Medawattegedera and Devendra (2004). Thus this consensus should be created on L2 writing too.

1.11.3 Feedback studies in Sri-Lankan context

To my knowledge there are research studies found in error correction and error analysis in second language teaching/learning contexts in Sri Lanka. However, studies on the view of using different types of error correction as feedback technique to improve students’ L2 writing seem to be limited. The recent study on Classroom Interactional Feedback by Jayatilake (2009) reveals that four types of classroom interactional feedback namely recasts, elicitations, clarification requests and conformation checks are preferred by the teacher in the Sri-Lankan classroom and that elicitations are considered to be the best in supporting the Sri-Lankan learner. Though this study specifically deals with different types of oral feedback preferred by learners and teachers, it indicates the fact that feedback is used in the Sri-Lankan learning context. Jeyatilake’s work demonstrates in general that there seems to be a desirous condition for feedback in Sri-Lankan learning context.
1.11.4 Feedback in the research context

Though there are no specific research studies which investigate the attitude of the university-level learners to feedback, the questionnaire administered by the researcher at the University of Jaffna and the pilot study conducted in the same context in order to proceed with the research study reveal that the learners at this University consider corrective feedback from the teacher as an essential tool to improve their L2 writing skill.

1.12 Purpose of the study

There is research evidence that written error correction feedback facilitates internalizing language elements. Thus this study explores the effects of two types (Direct and Indirect) of written error correction feedback on students’ writings in relation to selected theories of language acquisition.

1.13 Overview of the thesis

This thesis contains five chapters. This chapter which is the introduction to the thesis begins with the general observation found in the research context in relation to the L2 writing performance of the students and presents an overview of Teaching English Language in Sri Lanka. It defines and describes written error correction feedback which is the central focus of this study and concludes with the aim and objective of this study. Chapter 2 deals with the literature review which describes the theoretical underpinning and the longstanding controversies in written error correction feedback and its effects on L2 writing. Chapter 3 moves on to the research methodology which was used in this study. Results obtained from quantitative analysis and the interpretations of data are provided in Chapter 4. This dissertation concludes with comments on the use of feedback in the classroom and suggestions in relation to the improvement of students’ L2 writing.
1.14 Conclusion

The purpose of this study is to investigate the possible effects of direct and indirect error correction feedback on the performance of students’ L2 writing in the University of Jaffna. Thus while examining the role of error correction feedback, this study also comments on issues related to the improvement of L2 writing skills particularly in an academic context.
CHAPTER-2

Review of Literature

2.0. Introduction

Researchers in the area of second language writing [Nystrand, Green & Wiemelt, (1993); (Raimes, (1991); Tribble, (1996)] claim that writing and its teaching emerged as scholarly disciplines during 1970s and ideas about how second language writing develops and how it should be taught have been changing since then. In the 1970s second language writing programmes were mostly grammar courses in reality. According to Reid (2001), in the early 1980s there was a shift from strictly controlled writing to guided writing. Writing was limited to structuring sentences, direct answers to questions, or combining sentences – the result of which looked like a short, piece of discourse. Reid further points out two reasons for the slow but significant shift from language based writing classrooms to the study of composition techniques. One was researchers’ recognition of the newly developing field of Native English Speakers (NES) composition and the other, teachers’ realization of the needs of the students who learn English as a second language. Grammatical accuracy, which was supposed to be the ultimate goal in traditional writing classrooms, became secondary to communication, as errors were considered to be productive and developmental. As a result, English as a Second Language text books too reflected the shift from language based writing to composition writing which focuses on organizational patterns and essay modes such as process, comparison and contrast and cause and effect. (Reid2001). However the focus of writing was primarily on the end product, which is the essay. A decade after the above approach became prominent in NES (Native English Speakers) composition writing, it entered the second language classroom as the Process movement (cf. Chapter 1). Interestingly, Reid speaks about the ‘false dichotomy’ which arose between process and product classrooms. It is said that process teachers neglected accuracy in favour of fluency and product teachers focused solely on accuracy. However a more balanced perspective was achieved in the early twenty first century (Reid 2001). In this balanced context of L2 writing, Matsuda’s (2002) article which
was presented at the colloquium on Second Language Writing at the 2002 meeting of the American Association for Applied Linguists proposed that the field of Second Language (L2) writing had come of age. Matsuda stated that

“…research on L2 writing has grown exponentially over the last 40 years and during the late 1980s and the early 1990s second language writing began to evolve into an interdisciplinary field of inquiry with its own disciplinary infrastructure - replete with a journal, monographs, edited collections, a book series, annotated bibliographies, graduate courses and conferences as well as symposia”

Matsuda thus reflects the currents that continue to shape and reshape the field of L2 writing. However researchers of the recent past who analysed the ways and means of improving students’ writing performance [Zimmerman, (2000); Archibald, (2001); Reid, (2001); Cumming, (2001); Sache and Polio, (2007); Bitchner and Knoch, (2008); Hyland and Hyland, (2008); Noroozizadch, (2009)] seem to support the notion that writing and teaching writing in the second language context are still being shaped and that they continue to be the subjects of considerable amount of research and are an important educational endeavour.

2.1 Development of writing in L1 and L2 contexts

2.1.1 Writing as skill

Writing has a crucial and valuable role in language learning as it bears a close relationship with the process of thinking. Raimes (1983) emphasizes that writing helps students to learn because it reinforces the grammatical structures, idioms and vocabulary that are taught to them, provides chances for the learners to be adventurous and necessarily to become involved in the language and gain the effort to express ideas. She further indicates that the constant use of eye, hand and brain is a unique way to reinforce writing. Leki (1990) on the other hand, views writing as an academic skill in which students develop
strategies such as producing texts and preparing and polishing them for readers who are in academic setting. Effective academic writing emerges as a product of the combination of several skills. Some of these skills are writing for an audience, purpose, organization, style, flow and accuracy. Like Raimes, Tribble (1996) views writing as a “language skill” that involves “not just a graphic representation of speech, but the development and presentation of thoughts in a structured way” (p.3). Tribble also states that writers not only need to have ideas in their minds but also know how to put their ideas in a logical and structured order. This definition covers all aspects of writing as a skill emphasizing the aims of writing as well as the organization of writing. Further, extending Leki’s view Jordan (1997) asserts that as academic writing is so important for students of all kinds, and as it is such an umbrella term, it is hardly surprising that there is range of approaches and types of practice for it.(p.164)

2.1.2 Second Language (L2) writing in the global context

While the skill of writing is viewed differently in different contexts, it is important to note how this skill is regarded in the framework of second language learning. In second language learning, the Grammar Translation method views writing as a ‘support skill’ (Reid, 2001) that should reinforce the acquisition of grammar whereas the Audio Lingual method views writing as a support to memorize the correct language structure. Communicative approaches too, with their focus on oral proficiency tended to de-emphasize writing. Writing however is viewed differently in the current context. Movements such as writing across the curriculum and writing for specific purposes emphasize the place of writing in second language learning as having both linguistic and sociological impact and value. Researchers [Dvorak, (1986); Richards, (1990); Leki, (1990)] on how second language writing can best be developed provide non-conclusive ideas and controversial findings. Dvorak (1986) for example, states that with the shift towards Audio-lingualism, oral language took precedence in the classroom over all the modalities. Dvorak also claims that foreign language text books in the last
twenty five years have linked written composition to advanced grammar or to conversation rather than focusing on compositional skills such as organization, clarity and manipulating various functions such as describing, informing and persuading. The researcher also asserts that writing as a developmental process fits into Krashen’s language acquisition/learning model. Like Dvorak, Richards (1990) too sees writing in second language teaching/learning context as being of underestimated value. In Foreign Language (FL) teaching classes writing has always been identified with teaching grammar and sentence structure. On the other hand, we need to note what Leki (1990) points out about the issue of how teachers should respond to student writing. Leki emphasizes that questions should be raised first about why writing is taught to second language learners. Leki’s question is, which aspect should be considered as the primary goal for second language learners—grammatical accuracy or global comprehensibility.

2.1.3 Sociolinguistic view of L2 writing in the global context

Though second language writing is contemplated as a continuum that ranges from a support skill on one end and to the more complex act of composing on the other, it takes a different dimension in the view of socio-linguists. Hamp-Lyons and Kroll who consider writing as “a social” act state that “writing is an act that takes place within a context, that accomplishes a particular purpose, and that is appropriately shaped for its intended audience” (Hamp-Lyons and Kroll, 1997:8, cited in Weigle, 2002) whereas Canagarajah (2002) strongly expresses his ideological position and the rationale for how writing becomes a social act, a mediated construct between writer, reader and the community. By “critical” Canagarajah means the development of “an attitude and perspective that enable us to see some of the hidden components of text construction and the subtler ramifications of writing” (p.1). Canagarajah points out the “structuralist bias” of applied linguistics and states that in ESOL (English Language for Speakers of Other Language) writing, much attention is paid to product oriented studies on linguistic and textual structures and process-oriented studies on cognitive strategies of text production. He further argues that conflicts experienced by
multilingual writers have become a rich and complex resource for researchers on ESOL writing. He firmly spells out the situation as “the poetics and politics of writing” (p.26).

Canagarajah (2002) further quotes Raime’s (1991) identification of four major approaches in TESOL writing- the form focused approach, the writer focused approach, the content focused approach and the reader focused approach and analyses how these approaches related to the socio political contexts of academic writing. In Canagarajah’s view, grammar and form are ideological and to be independently expressive, students need to develop a sensitivity to this ideology. He considers the place of functional grammar in text structure a crucial aspect. He argues that students engaged in negotiating with grammar understand grammar as being contextual, ideological and negotiable. He further claims that multilingual writers can use their own cultural and linguistic experiences as resources in academic writing. He proposes a ‘contact zone’ model of academic writing where students bring into their writing the values and discourses of their native communities to create ‘multivocal’ genres. Further he criticizes Swales (1990) for not identifying power relation within discourse communities where academic writing is considered and Silva (1993) for constructing a deficient image of L2 writers. Canagarajah (2006) interestingly introduces ‘code meshing as a strategy for merging local varieties with standard written English in a move towards gradually pluralizing academic writing. However he states in the same article that “the moment is ripe to extend my argument of pluralizing English and academic writing into the ‘deep structure’ of grammar. Still, I must confess that I am myself unsure how to practise what I preach”.(p.46)
2.1.4 Cultural aspects of second language writing

The cultural aspects of writing have also been a controversial issue in second language writing. Kaplan (1996) analyzed a large number of ESL essays and pointed out distinctive differences in the written discourse of students from different cultures, which he symbolized in clear diagrams. Though Kaplan’s original thesis has been subjected to a number of criticisms, it is now accepted as the idea of contrastive rhetoric which has been regaining respectability in the field of second language writing (Weigle, 2002). Weigle further says that it has now become clear to researchers that many aspects of writing are influenced by culture.

2.1.5 First Language (L1) writing and Second Language (L2) writing in the global context

Although L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in many ways from L1 writing (Silva, 1993) much of the research on L2 writing has been closely dependent on L1 research. Hence it is crucial to note how researchers view both L1 and L2 writing in the global context. An early view is that of Cumming (1989) who suggests that the relative proficiency of the writer in the target language is a source of difference in both L1 and L2 writing in the global context. Swales (1990) adds a further dimension and associates socio-cultural expectations as a source of difference. Silva (1993) however points out that even though there is evidence to suggest that L1 and L2 writing are similar in their broad outlines, closer examinations of L1 and L2 writing reveal salient and important differences drawn from the intuition of English as a second language (ESL) writers. Cope and Kalantzis (1993) and Pennycook (1996) on the other hand identify the interaction between the writer’s L1 experiences and the meaning of literacy in the target language culture as sources of difference. Silva (1997) shows salient differences between L1 and L2 writing with regard to composing processes including planning, transcribing, and reviewing and features of written texts such as fluency, accuracy, quality and structure. He further claims that if such differences exist, then to make intelligent decisions
about adopting and / or adapting L1 practices, ESL writing practitioners need to have a clear understanding of the unique nature of L2 writing, of how and to what extent it differs from L1 writing. Silva concludes in his findings that L2 writing is distinct from and simpler and less effective than L1 writing. Further, though general composing process patterns are similar in L1 and L2, it is clear that L2 composing is more constrained, more difficult and less effective [Silva, (1993); cited in Weigle (2002); pp.36] L2 writers did less planning (global and local) and had more difficulty with setting goals and generating and organizing material. Another claim is that L2 writer’s transcribing was laborious, less fluent and less productive perhaps reflecting a lack of lexical resources. More importantly Silva states that L2 writers reviewed, reread and reflected on their written texts less, revised more but with more difficulty and were less able to revise intuitively (Silva 1993 cited in Weigle 2002). As implications Silva thus concluded that no coherent comprehensive theory of L2 writing exists and L2 writing specialists need to look beyond L1 writing theories to better describe the unique nature of L2 writing and into cognitive, developmental, social, cultural, educational and linguistic sources for potentiality (Silva 1993 cited in Weigle 2002).

Zimmerman (2000) however confirms that the differences between L1 and L2 writing clearly exist and he comments that the differences can be prominently observed in writers with low levels of proficiency in their L2 who rely on their first language resources for their L2 writing. Although L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in many ways from L1 writing (Silva, 1993), L1 models have remarkable influence on L2 writing instruction and the development of a theory of L2 writing. However, the two popular L1 models namely the Flower and Hayes model (1980, 1981) and Bereiter and Scardamalia model (1987) will give us some insight into the problem of developing a distinct construct of L2 writing.

The Flower and Hayes (1980, 1981) model focuses on what writers do when they compose. It examines the rhetorical problem in order to determine the difficulties a writer could experience during the composing process. The
“problem-solving activity” is divided into two major components: i) the rhetorical situation such as audience, topic, assignment, and the writer’s own goals such as the construction of meaning, and ii) the production of the text. By comparing skilled and less-skilled writers, the emphasis here is placed on “students’ strategic knowledge and the ability of students to transform information to meet rhetorically constrained purposes” (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996, p. 116). However, the social dimension is important too. Indeed, writing “should not be viewed solely as an individually-oriented, inner-directed cognitive process, but as much as an acquired response to the discourse conventions within particular communities” (Swales, 1990, p. 4).

Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) on the other hand, propose a model that suggests reasons for differences in writing ability between skilled and less-skilled writers. The basic difference is revealed in their two models of writing namely the knowledge-telling model and the knowledge-transforming model. The basic structure of the knowledge telling model depends on the processes of retrieving content from memory with regard to topical and genre cues, and the knowledge-transforming model involves more reflective problem-solving analysis and goal-setting. As Weigle (2002) indicates, the latter model is important because it deals with the idea of multiple processing which is reflected in writing tasks and also the varying processing complexity. The author’s main concern is the notion of mental representation as a writing strategy.

Thus both the Flower and Hayes, and the Bereiter and Scardamalia writing process models have served as the theoretical basis for using the process approach in both L1 and L2 writing instruction. However, in the international arena, although L1 and L2 writing are reviewed differently, there has been no conclusive agreement as to how instruction could best be imparted to improve this skill.

In the next section we shall look more closely at writing as a skill taught in the ESL/EFL class room.
2.1.6 Why writing is considered as a difficult skill

The problems related to teaching writing probably stems from the fact that writing is a difficult skill. Silva (1993) points out that while writing in a first language is a challenging complex task, it is more so in a second language. Weigle (2002) supports this by commenting that because of the constraints of limited second language knowledge, writing in a second language may be hampered because of the need to focus on language rather than content. Further in addition to limited linguistic resources, second language writers may be disadvantaged by social and cultural factors: they may not have awareness of the social and cultural uses of writing in the second language, the appropriate ways in which various functions can be expressed in writing, or the expectations of readers from a different culture (Weigle 2002). Other aspects which make second language writing difficult are motivational and affective factors. Grabe and Kaplan (1996) provide a number of motivational factors such as grades, higher proficiency, learning new information, future job/promotion and impressing teacher or other students that affect L2 writing. Constraints of time are also a crucial issue for second language writers because they find it difficult to write as fluently and quickly as their native speaker peers. (Weigle 2002)

2.1.7 Writing Pedagogy

As understood from the point of view of the above discussions, it is clear that writing is a highly complex activity in L2 context. Various methodologies have been adopted to promote the ability to write confidently in the second language. Internationally, methodologies such as task repetition, process approach, providing corrective feedback, and self assessment techniques have been tried out and implemented to promote ESL writing. At the same time, research on how L2 writing can best be developed report controversial findings and do not provide conclusive methods to be followed in the L2 classroom. It is therefore imperative that further research be conducted so that this important skill could be developed pedagogically.
2.2 Feed back in writing

2.2.1 Feedback and L2 writing

Corrective feedback refers to “any action of the teacher which clearly transforms, disapprovingly refers to, or demands improvement of the learner utterance” (Chaudron, 1977 p.31). Further the definition by Penny Ur (1996) and Ypsilandis (2002) which were described in the introduction of this study, explain that the recent and welcome shift of interest from language teaching to language learning affected the way feedback is perceived by both learners and teachers. Consequently, feedback is now recognized and as a result, understood to be provided not only by the teacher but also by other learners (peers), or generated by the learner himself or herself. According to the above definitions and explanation the concepts of teacher correction, peer correction, self assessment, repetition and revision can be categorized as feedback techniques.

2.2.2 Theoretical Support

When corrective feedback is considered a helping tool from the point of view of the teacher, it plays a dominant learning role as ‘input’ for the learner. Thus both direct correction and indirect correction play a role in learning. Direct corrections by the teacher which are actually messages to learners act as comprehensible input in learning. Hence this view of direct correction can be seen to support Krashen’s Input Hypothesis (1982). Indirect error correction on the other hand, not only acts as messages but also induces the learner to become self activated and to be responsible for the learning process and thereby seem to support the theory of Learner Autonomy by Holec (1980). Schmidt’s theory of Noticing (1995) supports feedback as tool for ‘noticing’. In addition, the Social Learning theory of Bandura (1997), which posits that human behavior is learnt through observation, provides theoretical support for the view that teachers’ error correction may be one of the observations which learners become conscious of. These supporting theories are further analysed below.

2.2.3 Theory of Input Hypothesis
The Input Hypothesis is the key to Krashen’s (1982) Monitor Model which consists of five interrelated hypotheses—the acquisition-learning hypothesis which makes a distinction between acquiring and learning, the Natural order hypothesis which states that language is acquired in a natural order, the Monitor hypothesis which helps to explain the different functions that acquisition and learning play, the Input Hypothesis which asserts that people can only acquire a language when they receive oral or written message in the form of a ‘comprehensible input’ and lastly the Affective Filter Hypothesis which explains the role of affective factors in the process of language acquisition. Input Hypothesis asserts that people can only acquire a language when they receive oral or written messages they understand and these messages provide what Krashen calls comprehensible input. In order for acquisition to take place, learners must receive input that is slightly beyond their current ability level. If the input contains no structures beyond current competence or it is too far beyond it, no acquisition takes place. For Krashen, comprehensible input is the source of all acquired language; only input and not output leads to acquisition.

The theoretical support that underlie this study of feedback is that teacher’s error corrections both direct and indirect act as written messages providing the source of comprehensible input to the learner and forming the base which helps them to acquire more competence and hence to improve their writing. Thus through input learners become competent writers who are able to manipulate L2 more skillfully.

2.2.4 Learner autonomy.

Unlike direct correction, indirect error correction is a kind of coded feedback which demands the learner to self activate and generate ideas from the feedback. Holec (1980) defines autonomous learning as the process of taking charge of one’s learning process. The ability of students to self educate allows the learner to become more responsible for the learning processes. This becomes extremely important in applied areas of education due to the reason that the focus of curriculum design itself has been turned towards more learner centeredness. As Little (1991) points out autonomous learners are expected to assume greater responsibility for and take charge of, their own learning. Autonomous learners
take an active role in the learning process, generating ideas and availing themselves of opportunities rather than simply reacting to various stimuli provided by the teacher [(Knowles, (1975); Bond, (1988); cited in Thanasoulas, (2010)]. Learning is seen as the result of one’s own self initiated interaction with the world. [Omaggio, (1978); Wenden, (1998); all cited in Thanasoulas, (2010)]. According to Thanasoulas, (2010), autonomous learners have seven main attributes such as having insights into their learning styles and strategies, taking an active approach to the learning task at hand, willing to take risks, guessing, attending to form as well as to content, placing importance on accuracy and appropriacy, developing the target language into a separate system and willingness to revise and reject hypotheses, having tolerance and an outgoing approach to the target language. When feedback is given as indirect error correction, the learner becomes self activated and attentive to correct forms of the language by guessing and revising the target language and also learns to reject the inaccurate forms. Thus the theory of learner autonomy seems to indicate plausible validation for the study of feedback.

2.2.5 Noticing hypotheses

While the theory of learner autonomy explains how learners assume greater responsibilities for and take charge of their own learning, Schmidt’s theory of Noticing (1995) deals with the relationship with noticing and conscious learning. The role of noticing” and “noticing the gap” in second language acquisition has been widely debated in the general field of cognitive psychology. Empirical research has been carried out to define the theoretical constructs that underlie the role of noticing and to assess the validity of the assumption that noticing enhances language acquisition.

Schmidt (1990, 1993, 1994, 1995) offers a hypothesis related to conscious learning. Schmidt’s hypothesis which is known as ‘Noticing hypothesis’ focuses on “the crucial concept of noticing [Skehan (1998); p.48 cited in Cross, (2002)]. The purpose of Schmidt’s paper is to consider the theoretical constructs that underlie the role of noticing and assess the validity of the assumption that noticing enhances language acquisition (Cross, 2002).
Schmidt identified three aspects of consciousness involved in language learning - awareness, intention and knowledge. What Schmidt (1995) states in his noticing hypotheses is that the input learners notice becomes the intake for learning. According to Schmidt (1990, p.136) if consciousness is indeed equivalent to the short term store, this amounts to a claim that where there is storage without commission, awareness is impossible.

2.2.6 Social Learning Theory

Schmidt’s theory provides a base for understanding how an individual student learns. Bandura, (1997) on the other hand looks at learning not from an individual viewpoint but as a social act. Bandura, (1997) states, ‘learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, human behaviour seems to be learnt observationally through modeling; from observing others, one forms an idea of how behaviours are formed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action’ (Bandura, 1997, p.22). In a pedagogical context, feedback can be considered as coded information. Hence teacher feedback in a writing class could be perceived as a guide for action.

2.3 Recent research on Corrective Feedback.

2.3.1 Research evidences which do not support error correction on improved accuracy.

There has been controversy among L2 writing researchers as well as teachers about the provision of feedback in grammar correction and its effects on learners’ L2 writing.

In his early study Cohen (1987) investigated the ineffectiveness of grammar correction. The researcher argues that ‘the ineffectiveness involves the practicalities associated with teachers’ comments and students’ understanding of these comments. Research shows that corrections made by second language writing teachers are ‘frequently arbitrary, not consistent and greatly dependent upon the age and amount of time the teacher has with L2 students’ (Cohen1987).
According to Zamel (1995), teachers also commonly misread student texts and evoke abstract rules and principles in their comments. The researcher further states that the students often find teachers’ remarks vague, confusing and contradictory and feel that teachers do not provide sufficient grammatical explanations about their writing mistakes.

In agreement with Cohen (1987) and Zamel (1995), Truscott (1996) argues strongly against the concept of grammar correction. He finds no positive effects in his research findings for correction in L2 writing. He further suggests that the time spent on correction is actually harmful to L2 writers for the reason that the time and energy which are important writing concerns are taken away from the writers. In his strong argument against grammar correction Truscott (1996) states as follows:-

“Veteran teachers know there is little connection between correction and learning; often a student will repeat the same mistake over and over again, even after being corrected many times. When this occurs, it is tempting for the teacher to say the student is not attentive or lazy; however, the pervasiveness of the phenomenon, even with successful students, argues against any such explanation rather the teacher should conclude that correction simply is not effective.”

Though Truscott’s argument is controversial there are research findings in favour of Truscott’s view. They are discussed below

Fregeau (1999) argues that the outright correction of surface errors has been found to be inconsistent and unclear and often over emphasizes the negative aspect of L2 learning. The argument is that having students merely copy teacher corrections into revisions is a passive action that does not teach students how to recognize or correct errors on their own. Fregeau discovered that the method by which teachers indicated the presence or types of errors
without correction is also ineffective. Students do not understand why the errors were indicated and simply guess the corrections as they rewrite. He also states that the marking of student errors causes students to focus more on surface errors than on the clarity of their ideas.

Gray (2000) points out that the research conducted on grammar correction in writing classes has largely consisted of comparative studies measuring the effectiveness of different types of feedback on students writing abilities. In the research study of Robb, Ross and Short reed (1986) cited in Gray (2000), four kinds of grammar corrections used on the surface errors of Japanese students were compared to see if they had an influence on the students’ writings over time. These types were a) explicit correction where errors were pointed out and correct forms offered b) marking errors with a yellow pen without explanation c) a tally kept in the margin of number of errors per line and students told to examine the line and find and correct errors d) the use of a correction code which showed both the location and kind of errors.

In all these cases, the students were told to write their essays again, making the necessary corrections. Results showed that at the end of the course, no significant differences existed between all the groups in terms of accuracy. Consequently the researchers concluded that comprehensive treatment and overt corrections of surface errors are probably not worth the trouble for teachers. Gray (2000) further states that though writing teachers strongly agree with the statement that teacher correction feedback is a necessary part of any writing course, research over the last twenty years has revealed that this is ineffective.

2.3.2 Research evidence on error correction and comments on content as feedback.

The studies discussed above focused on the impact of error correction. Accuracy of language is only one aspect of writing. Content and organization too contribute to the effectiveness of writing. In this section therefore research on comments on content as feedback will be explored.
In an earlier study on the other hand investigated teacher impact on content. Semke’s (1984) claim is that students receiving comments from teachers only on content did much better and spent more time working on their essays than those who received criticism only on grammar. This in turn suggests that teachers should devote their time to areas like organization and content. Additionally according to Zamel (1995), as quoted in section 2.8.1. of this chapter teachers do not provide sufficient grammatical explanations about students’ writing mistakes as students often find them ‘vague, confusing and contradictory.

In Fathman and Whalley (1990) the two conditions subject to research study were grammar correction and grammar correction plus feedback on content. Findings in both cases indicate that students were able to correct only about half of their errors.

Ashwell (2000) compared the effect of correction of form and comments on content as two experimental conditions in his study to determine if there was an optimal order in the provision which induces improvement in writing. In one condition comments on content were given first and error correction was given later. In the other condition error correction was given first and the comments on content were given later. The results in both conditions showed that the students were able to correct only about one third of their errors.

2.3.3 Research evidence supporting error correction

Most of the studies on grammar correction and comment on content emphasize a notion of anti grammar correction activity. Some research findings however [Lalande, (1982); Daughty and Williams, (1998); Qi and Lapkin, (2001); Vickers and Ene, (2006); Sachs and Polio, (2007); Noroozizadch, (2009)] highlight the effectiveness of indirect error correction and teacher reformulation. In indirect error correction the errors are coded using an error code and direct correction is avoided. In reformulation the teacher provides a correct alternative for students instead of indirectly correcting errors using a code. The above studies are analysed below.
Research findings of Lalande (1982) highlight the effectiveness of indirect error correction. As the errors are coded using an error code and direct correction is avoided, an implicit way of finding the error is established. Lalande reported that students who received indirect feedback corrected their errors over time and those who received direct feedback did not correct. Lalande also suggests that indirect error feedback is generally preferable because it forces students to engage in guided learning and problem solving and helps them build skills such as self-editing.

Doughty and Williams (1998) however support both types of corrections as effective because implicit tasks have the aim of attracting learner attention to avoid metalinguistic discussion and explicit tasks such as rule explanation have the ability to exploit pedagogical grammar.

Qi and Lapkin (2001) on the other hand, suggest that error correction using a code does not provide optimal conditions to help learners notice their errors. This study points out that learners are unable to notice the gap between their inter-language (IL) and the target language (TL) when they receive and process the feedback. Instead, they claim reformulation as a more effective alternative. It is also suggested in the study that reformulation’s rich and positive modeling of target like writing may be more helpful to the learner than error correction (Qi and Lapkin 2001).

Vickers and Ene (2006) explored advanced ESL learners’ ability to make improvements in grammatical accuracy by autonomously noticing and correcting their own grammatical errors. Based on the comparison between their own written output and the native like text, samples corrected their grammatical errors. Results suggested a positive conclusion that learners made gains through such comparison. The specific feature in this study is that learners were provided a native like model writing to compare with their own written output.

A very recent study by Bitchner and Ute (2008) examined the effectiveness of targeting two functional error categories with written corrective feedback in
order to see if such an approach was helpful for ESL writers. In this ten months study the researchers found that those who received written corrective feedback outperformed the group which was not given corrective feedback. The one drawback in Bitchner and Ute’s study was that it merely aimed at the correct use of articles in L2 writing.

Another contemporary investigation was that of Sachs and Polio (2009) who examined the effectiveness of written error corrections vis-à-vis reformulations of second language learners’ grammatical accuracy. Their study consists of three stages composition writing, comparison and a revision task. The specific aspect in this study is that concurrent verbal protocols were employed. The students ‘think-aloud’ during the comparison stage is recorded in order to study learners’ reported awareness of the more target like reformulations. The use of ‘think-alouds’ as a research tool was also assessed. Sachs and Polio’s original interests in designing this study was to see if it would be possible to quantitatively confirm Qi and Lapkin’s assertion that ‘the quality of noticing experienced by a learner while processing feedback could have direct implications for revisions of L2 writing’. Sachs and Polio suggest that according to Qi and Lapkin noticing with a reason might have more of an impact on learning than noticing without providing reason. The results suggest that noticing of feedback was related to the accuracy of subsequent revisions. However this study does not adequately explain the links between error correction feedback and reformulation feedback and noticing with a purpose and noticing without purpose.

Another research investigation of relevance here is Noroozizadch’s (2009) study of error correction. This study attempts to find out whether indirect feedback on certain error could have any significant effect on improving the students’ L2 writing ability. The researcher divided the students into two groups and examined the essays written by forty four Ph.D students in different engineering fields at the Toosi University of Technology in Iran. The researcher assigned eight essays on suggested subjects. One group was provided with indirect feedback and the other group was provided with direct
feedback. The results showed that the indirect feedback group properly identified and corrected the errors and displayed a performance that was significantly different from the performance of the direct feedback group.

2.4 General overview of error correction

Furthermore, apart from the research findings and the theoretical support prominence should be given to the comments made by Krashen (2000, 2004) on error correction research studies. Krashen (2000) states that another way of determining whether grammar correction is effective is to look at studies in which students are corrected on their writing and then are asked to rewrite the same paper taking the correction into consideration. Further Krashen (2004) rejects the claim that all grammar teaching is forbidden. He points out that there are two good reasons for including grammar in the EFL curriculum. The first is for language appreciation known as linguistics. The second is to fill gaps left by incomplete acquisition and places in which idiolects differ from the prestige. He concludes that grammar should not be excluded though it is no longer a star player and has only a supporting role.

2.5 The research Study.

As evidenced by the above studies, an increasing number of studies have investigated whether certain types of corrective feedback are more likely than others to help L2 learners improve the accuracy of their writing.

Research studies by Cohen (1987), Zamel (1995), Freageau (1999) and Gray (2000) reveal that there was no significant difference in the writing accuracy of the learners.

On the other hand research studies of Semke (1984), Fathman and Whalley (1990) and Ashwell (2000) investigated comments on content along with grammar correction. However they too did not find any significant difference in learners’ writing.
Lalande (1982) and Noroozizadeh (2009) clearly distinguish between direct and indirect correction as feedback and their studies are in favour of indirect correction which they claim, promotes L2 writing more effectively.

Daughty and Williams (1998) and Qi and Lapkin (2001), on the other hand provided native like models of compositions for learners to compare with their own output and found that the samples showed improvement in L2 writing. Bitchner and Ute (2008) examined two groups of students; one group receiving written feedback and the other without feedback; and concluded that the group which received feedback performed better.

The research study of Sachs and Polio (Hyland and Hyland (2008) investigated the effect of written error correction and reformulation on composition writing but also the existence of noticing in the learners through think aloud protocol. Sachs and Polio’s( section 2.3.3) three day sequence of experimenting two types of error correction has been taken as the model for the present study (Figure 3.3). During the revision the ‘think aloud’ technique was employed to gather information about students awareness about the errors they committed. They concluded that noticing of feedback led to accuracy in revision

It thus seems clear that feedback plays a significant role in improvement of L2 writing. However more research is needed, particularly in a variety of learning contexts.

2.6 Research question.

I) Does Direct Error Correction feedback (DEC) have an impact on the performance of students’ L2 composition writing in relation to specified categories of error?
II) Does Indirect Error Correction feedback (IDEC) have an impact on the performance of students’ L2 composition writing in relation to specified categories of error?

III) Is the impact of direct error correction feedback significantly different from the impact of indirect error correction feedback in relation to specified categories of error?

IV) Are there any significant differences in the performance of male students Vs the performance of female students with respect to the impact of (a) DEC and (b) IDEC?

This study therefore was established to investigate the role of feedback in L2 writing in a Sri-Lankan tertiary level classroom. In the next chapter details of the methods used in the study will be set out.

2.7 Conclusion

As discussed in the introduction, the aim of this study is to investigate feedback techniques to improve L2 writing of the undergraduates at the University of Jaffna where more than 60% of students have been found to demonstrate poor writing skills as evidenced by the marks obtained by them in the written assignments provided by the English Language Teaching Centre (ELTC), University of Jaffna for assessment. (ie: below the requirements of Bench Mark 5 of the University Bench Mark frame work.). Further studies are necessary to investigate ways and means to improve the L2 writing ability of the above students. Findings of this study would benefit classroom activities of L2 writing.
CHAPTER–3
Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter provides a description of the research methodology that seeks to discover the answers to the research questions set out in the previous chapter. As described in the previous chapter, this study aims to examine the comparative effectiveness of the uses of two types of feedback namely Indirect Error Correction (IDEC) and Direct Error Correction (DEC) on the L2 writing performance of the third year undergraduates in the Faculty of Arts, University of Jaffna.

3.1 Background of the research
3.1.1 Demographic Profile

This study took place in Jaffna, a district situated in the northern part of Sri-Lanka dominated by Tamil residents. During colonial times Jaffna was Ceylon's (Sri Lanka) second largest city.. But even in 1981 Jaffna was the largest city outside the Greater Colombo area. The population of Jaffna, like the rest of the North and East, has been heavily affected by the civil war. Many of its Tamil residents have immigrated to the western countries or moved to the relatively safe areas. As a consequence the city's population is significantly lower than it was 30 years ago. Many of the city's residents who left during the civil war have settled down elsewhere and are unlikely to return. Table 3.1 shows the population change from 1981 to 2010.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Population</th>
<th>Rank in size</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1981</td>
<td>118,224</td>
<td>4th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>149,000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>83,563</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>84,416</td>
<td>14th</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1981 Jaffna was the 4th largest city population-wise and in 2010 it is the 14th among the twenty five districts in Sri Lanka.

### 3.1.2 Location of the Study

The University of Jaffna was first established in 1974, as the Jaffna Campus of the University of Sri Lanka, offering courses in science and humanities. The first batch of 104 students was admitted in October 1974. In 1978, with the implementation of the Universities Act No. 16 of 1978, it became an independent and autonomous university as the University of Jaffna. (University of Jaffna website). There are five faculties at present: Medical, Science, Agriculture, Management Studies and Commerce and Arts.

The Faculty of Arts contains seventeen academic departments and a student population of 1861. Out of the student population, 420 students were in the third year at the time of this study. Among them 92 were in the Social Science stream in 2010 (academic year 2008/09) which is the year of this study. It is this Social Science stream which was chosen for the present investigation due to the reason that these students are expected to have good command in L2 writing. But unfortunately, ESL teachers, attached to The English Language Teaching Centre (E.L.T.C) who offer English as a Second Language (ESL courses) to these students find the L2 writing of most of the students in this stream inaccurate.

### 3.2 Participants

The third year cohort of students studying Social Sciences consists of ninety two students. Altogether fifty seven students specializing in Geography, Planning and Economics sat the selection test.
3.2.1 Selection test and Student Respondents

The selection test is a test on writing in which students were requested to write an essay of about 250 words on the topic “An unforgettable experience which you encountered in the University”. A writing test was conducted as a selection test to select a homogenous sample of students whose performance was roughly similar.

Of the above fifty seven students a group consisting twenty seven were taken as samples for this study. The sample selection was done on the marks obtained for writing in the selection test. These twenty seven students were those who obtained between 40-49 marks in composition writing. (The detail is shown in figure 3.1.)

Table 3.2 illustrates the percentage of students under each marks range.

Table 3.2: Marks range obtained by students in the writing test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Marks Range</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-09</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10-19</td>
<td>04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20-29</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30-39</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>40-49</strong></td>
<td><strong>27</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50-59</td>
<td>03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60-69</td>
<td>02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70-79</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80-80</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>89-90</td>
<td>00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.1 shows the marks range and the percentage of student number. According to the bar chart the score of 47.68% of the students is between 40 and 49. Their writings revealed a number of grammatical inaccuracies though
the content and organization seemed satisfactory. Thus these students were identified as the correct samples for this study.

![Figure. 3.1. Marks range and percentage of students](image)

To prepare a profile of students for the study, a questionnaire (appendix A) was administered among the selected sample. The six questions in Part 1 of the questionnaire dealt with personal data.

Part II dealt with the attitude and preferences of the students with regard to essay writing.

The samples were all in the age group 23-25. There were nine male students and fifteen female students. This seemed a satisfactory ratio to represent the total number of male and female students in this Social Science stream as there were altogether thirty nine female students and eighteen male students in the group which did the pre-test.

Among them nine male students and fifteen female students participated in the intervention and the percentage is shown in figure 3.2
Tamil is the first language of all the participants and they represent Tamil speaking regions such as Jaffna, Mannar, and Vavuniya. All these students have learnt English as a Second language at school.

The results obtained for English Language by these students in G.C.E(O/L) is shown in Table. 3.3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>D</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results obtained by these students in G.C.E(A/L) is shown in Table 3.4.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Grades</th>
<th>A</th>
<th>B</th>
<th>C</th>
<th>S</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Not attempted</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>16.68%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>29.32%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
All students have completed five semesters of ESL learning in the University and were in the process of the sixth semester course work when the study took place. According to the responses in the questionnaire, they had completed the module on composition writing in the fifth semester. They had not been exposed to different types of corrective feedback in writing sessions except to overall comments on content and the grammatical inaccuracies being underlined in red. However all of them responded that they would like to receive constructive feedback from teachers. Therefore in the teaching sessions before the treatment, they were provided with direct and indirect error corrective feedback whenever they were assigned writing tasks.

3.2.2 Part II of the questionnaire

This part of the questionnaire dealt with the attitude and preferences of the students with regard to essay writing and receiving feedback from the teacher. This strategy was used before the intervention in order to check whether the students have positive attitude towards receiving teacher feedback as provision of feedback may have affective effects on students. The responses of the above student samples to the multiple choice questions in the questionnaire with regard to their attitude and preferences to essay writing and teacher feedback are shown in figure 3.3.

The intervention took place after having made sure the positive attitudes of the students in receiving feedback from the teacher.
Figure 3.3: Attitude and Preferences to essay writing

A  Like to write essays in English
B  Write essays in English in the ESL class.
C  Essays are corrected by my ESL teacher
D  Received feedback from my teacher
E  My teacher uses different types to feedback
F  Like to receive feedback from my teacher
G  Can write better if I receive feedback from my teacher.

Figure 3.3 clearly shows that no students have negative attitude towards either writing essays in English or receiving feedback from the teacher. Their responses revealed that though they like to receive different types of feedback from their teachers, they were not provided enough feedback especially for their L2 writings.

3.3 Method.
This study concerning the students in the Social Science stream at University of Jaffna was based on the following hypotheses.
3.3.1. Hypotheses

As for the research questions addressed in chapter 2, this study sets out the following hypotheses in order to provide responses to the longstanding controversy regarding the effect of direct and indirect error corrective feedback on the improvement of L2 writing.

1) Null Hypothesis: (Ho) There is no significant difference in the performance of students’ L2 composition writing in relation to specified error categories when direct error correction feedback is provided.

Hypothesis (H1) - There is a significant difference in the performance of students’ L2 composition writing in relation to specified error categories when direct error correction feedback is provided.

2) Null Hypothesis (Ho) - There is no significant difference in the performance of students’ L2 composition writing in relation to specified error categories when indirect error correction feedback is provided.

Hypothesis (H2) - There is a significant difference in the performance of students’ L2 composition writing in relation to specified error categories when indirect error correction feedback is provided.

3) Null Hypothesis (Ho) - There is no significant difference between the impact of direct error correction feedback and the impact of indirect error correction feedback on students’ composition writing in relation to specified error categories.

Hypothesis (H3) - The impact of indirect error correction feedback is greater than the impact of direct error correction feedback on students’ composition writing in relation to specified error categories.

4) Null Hypothesis (Ho) - There is no significant difference in the performance of male students vs. the performance of female students when direct error correction feedback is provided.
Hypothesis (H₄) - There is a significant difference in the performance of male students vs. the performance of female students when direct error correction feedback is provided.

5) Null Hypothesis (Ho) - There is no significant difference in the performance of male students vs. the performance of female students when indirect error correction feedback is provided.

Hypothesis (H₅) - There is a significant difference in the performance of male students vs. the performance of female students when indirect error correction feedback is provided.

3.3.2 Research Design

To test the hypotheses, single group pre- post experimental design with two experimental conditions (direct error correction (DEC) and indirect error correction (IDEC) was used.

The group of student samples was instructed to perform a three day sequence of composition writing, comparison and revision as the tool to investigate the students’ ability to revise their writings accurately in the above two different conditions of written feedback.

The methodology selected is illustrated in figure 3.4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>The three day sequence of the two experimental conditions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Condition</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect correction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct correction</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.4 The three day sequence of the two experimental conditions.

Source: Sachs and Polio in Hyland and Hyland (2008), p.76
On the first day of the three day sequence students wrote a composition on given prompts. (The word ‘prompt’ is used to denote the topic given for writing by Sachs and Polio in Hyland and Hyland (2008).p.76)

These prompts are set out in greater detail in the section 3.3.3.2. On the second day students undertook the task of finding out the mismatch between their writing and the corrected version. On the third day the group was instructed to revise their original version without looking at the feedback and at the end, both the original versions and the revisions were collected. As the first condition, direct error correction feedback was provided for the first sequence of composition writing, comparison and revision in which the errors were underlined and reformulated by the teacher.

After one week, the next three day sequence of the second experimental condition was carried out with the same students providing indirect error correction feedback using the code described on page 50. Thus grammatical inaccuracies in students’ writings in both conditions were underlined and feedback was provided using both experimental conditions.

Though all the grammatical inaccuracies were corrected, only three categories namely subject verb agreement, word order and verb form were taken for analysis to avoid complexities in calculation.

3.3.3 The Research tools

3.3.3.1 Questionnaire

A questionnaire (Appendix A) was administered among the selected students to gather the demographic information and to collect data on students’ profile. There were two sections in the questionnaire. Part 1 dealt with personal data. Part 2 dealt with information related to feedback
3.3.3.2 Prompts for Treatment

The two prompts are the topics given for composition writing under the two different conditions. As the same group of students was targeted for treatment, different prompts were selected. Both prompts reflected topics familiar to the students.

1. **Prompt-1** How Global warming affected the world during the past.

2. **Prompt-2** When Tsunami waves hit the Sri-Lankan coast.

3.3.3.3 Error code used to perform indirect error correction

The following figure sets out the details of the code used to correct errors in student writing.

This study focuses only on grammatical accuracy in view of time scale of experiment.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Error type</th>
<th>code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Word order *</td>
<td>wo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verb form *</td>
<td>vf</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tense</td>
<td>t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>article</td>
<td>art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pronoun</td>
<td>pro</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>preposition</td>
<td>prep</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Subject verb agreement *</td>
<td>s/v</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number error</td>
<td>num</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negation error</td>
<td>neg</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spelling error</td>
<td>sp</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 3.5. Error Code.**

(Adapted from Tribble (1996); P.154. and modified)

Though every error was corrected in the script, only the marked (*) categories in the above code were taken for analysis to avoid complexities in analysis.
3.3.3.4 An informal post study interview

An informal post study interview (see Appendix G) was conducted in order to gather information on the perceptions of the students as well as of the teachers (Appendix H) who handle writing lessons with third year undergraduates, about the contribution of feedback to the improvement of L2 writing.

3.3.3.5 Rationale for the selection of instruments

In both conditions prompts reflected subject oriented themes (social science) which are familiar to the students in order to make the content of the writing easy for them.

Both prompts demanded similar grammatical aspects (for eg: past tense) and similar style to avoid complexities in comparison.

3.4 Procedure

3.4.1 The pilot study

A pilot study was carried out in order to check the possibility of using Direct Error Correction Feedback and Indirect Error Correction Feedback as research tools. A group of ten third year Arts students from Humanities stream were selected from a class which the researcher handled. The selection was done on the marks obtained by the students in a test which was an assignment on writing. Usually the students are expected to do three assignments per semester. Composition Writing, Test on Usage (This is a vocabulary test where words/phrases are given and students are expected to write meaningful sentences using these words/phrases) and Oral Presentation are the three assignments which are undertaken by ESL students. All the ten students in the group obtained marks in the range of 42 to 49. There were seven girls and three boys in the group. Though the overall organization of their assignments seemed satisfactory, certain errors such as subject verb agreement, word order, tense,
verb form, article, preposition, voice and spelling could be detected in the works of these students. Hence the group was considered appropriate as a sample for the pilot study. For the pilot study the group was first requested to write a composition of 250 words on the prompt 'My first day at the University'. The time allocated for this task was 45 minutes. The scripts were then collected and photocopies taken. The original compositions were not subject to any correction. All errors were corrected on the photocopies.

The first tool used for correction was Direct Error Correction Feedback in which all the grammatical inaccuracies were underlined red and reformulations were written above the inaccuracies by the researcher on the copies of the students’ writing. On the second day both the original scripts and the photocopies were given to the students for them to analyze and identify their grammatical inaccuracies and both the original drafts and the photocopies were collected again. On the third day only their original drafts were given back and students were asked to revise their errors. When the revised drafts and the original drafts were checked with the corrected photocopies, the researcher observed that a large percentage of error categories had been corrected by the students. After one week the same procedure was carried out but the tool used for correction was Indirect Error Correction Feedback. The prompt was 'My experience in the ESL classroom’. The code used for Indirect Error Correction (appendix C) was explained to the students before revision. In indirect error correction, the errors in students’ writing were underlined using the code which was already explained to the students, and the teacher provided information of the type of error above each error. The whole procedure was based on a model found in [Sachs & Polio, in Hyland and Hyland-(2008)]. The survey was done on ‘three day sequences’ of the above two experimental conditions.

It was observed that Indirect Error Correction Feedback made a greater impact than Direct Error Correction Feedback in the correction of specified error categories namely subject verb agreement, word order, and the voice. Thus the appropriateness and reliability of the research tools were established and the hypotheses were formed to conduct the main study.
3.4.2 The main study

The pilot study had demonstrated that feedback techniques seemed to be appropriate and relevant to use as research tools in the research context. Hence a study was established to examine the comparative effectiveness of the uses of two types of feedback. The types of conditions selected for the study were those used in the pilot study namely DEC and IDEC.

The procedure described in the pilot study was followed and when writing the composition, participants were not allowed to consult each other to ensure originality. They were requested to write an essay of 250 words on a prompt given by the teacher. The time given to complete the writing is 45 minutes. The prompts given for the research study are set out in section 3.3.3.2.

These topics were chosen for the reasons that both are related to the field of study of the student sample and both demand the use of past verb forms so that the comparison would be made easy.

On day 1 of each sequence, all the scripts were collected at the end of 45 minutes. The scripts collected from the group were later photocopied and the errors were corrected directly (reformulated) or indirectly using the code, according to the experimental condition. Photocopies of students’ original writings were used for the purpose of both direct correction and indirect correction.

On day 2 of each sequence students analyzed their errors by comparing their original version with that of the photocopies where the teacher’s feedback was provided according to the two experimental conditions. During this session students were not allowed to use their books or pens. An hour was given for comparison. After the comparison all the scripts and photocopies were collected back.

On day 3, students were given their originals and requested to revise all errors. The original version and the revision were matched and analyzed in terms of errors corrected.
As set out in Figure 3.4 the following grammatical errors namely verb form, subject verb agreement and word order were analyzed.

In each category the percentage of error was calculated as the total number of error categories divided by the total number of T-units in students writing multiplied by 100.

\[
\frac{\text{Total No. of error category}}{\text{Total No. of T. units}} \times 100 \%
\]

### 3.5 Data Analysis

The data were quantitatively analyzed employing SPSS version 13 to obtain the results.

#### 3.5.1 Statistical tools

##### 3.5.1.1 T units

The present study uses the T-unit as a language segment in the data analysis to calculate the percentage of error. The T-unit is the minimal unit which was introduced by Hunt (1965) and is defined as the “main clause of a sentence plus all subordinate clauses and non-clausal structures attached to or embedded in it”. Coordinate clauses are treated in the same manner as main clauses. Coordinate clauses were counted as two T-units. Elements were not counted separately.

The T-unit analysis is a useful tool to measure sentence complexity. T-units are used in the analysis of written discourse, for example Rob et al (1986) counted error free T-units for their study on error correction. Sachs and Polio (2007) examined the changes in accuracy per T-unit over drafts of compositions.

This study thus applies this minimal unit to measure the error percentage.
3.5.1.2 t-test and paired t-test

The t-test is the most commonly used statistical method to evaluate the differences in means between two groups. Theoretically, the t-test can be used even if the sample sizes are very small.

Paired t-tests are used to compare means on the same or related subject over time or in differing circumstances. The observed data are usually from the same subject or from matched subjects and are drawn from a population with a normal distribution. The characteristics of paired t-tests are that the samples are often tested in a before – after situation. The paired t-test is actually a test based on the null hypothesis that the differences between the two observations are 0. The test statistic is t with n-1 degrees of freedom. If the p-value associated with t is low (< 0.05), the null hypothesis could be rejected.

3.6 Ethical issues

The participants of this study were informed both verbally and in writing that the data collected would be used only for research purpose. The participants were also assured that the information gathered through in this study would not be revealed for any other purposes without their prior consent.

In order to convey the findings of the research study to the students their scripts were handed back and errors were discussed in the class.

3.7 Limitation

The limitations of this study relate primarily to the data available. As this study was undertaken as a small scale activity, there could be limitations which prevent to reveal the exact performance of the entire student population. Another limitation is that the time frame of this study is short consisting of two ‘three day sequences’. Thus the analysis was made only on one draft and one revision per student. More comprehensive information could have been collected if the process had been used throughout a whole semester. Another
limitation is that only the grammatical accuracy is looked at and not the other aspects of writing such as content, organization and mechanics of writing.

3.8 Key concepts and variables.

Error  - a form not accepted by the teacher in the given teaching / learning context.

Corrective feedback  - the teacher’s reaction that transforms, disapproves or demands improvement of the students’ performance.

Direct error correction  - errors are underlined and reformulated by the teacher. (explicit correction)

Indirect error correction  - errors are underlined and coded without giving the correct form (implicit correction)

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has three main sections. The first section dealt with the background of the research discussing the demographic and contextual profiles. The second section detailed the main study under the sub headings, , participants, hypotheses, research design, research tools, procedure and data analysis. Finally the third section dealt with the limitations of the study, ethical issues and definition of key variables and concludes with the summary of the chapter.
CHAPTER-4

Analysis and Interpretation of Data

4.0 Introduction

This chapter consists of presentation of collected data in an organized manner and analysis of the data in relation to the hypotheses set out in the previous chapter. The preliminary analysis was first made on collected data and then the data was analyzed to investigate the hypothesis. The results investigate the extent to which the two types of corrective feedback helped learners improve the accuracy of their writing when revising their compositions. Percentage of error in both conditions are compared using ‘t-test’ and ‘paired t test analysis’.

4.1 Correction on students’ writings

The correction on students’ writings in both conditions was done by the researcher. It was checked by another lecturer to confirm reliability. Once it was agreed that there were no changes or strategic differences in the correction made, the scripts were handed over to students for revision. Errors after and before the intervention were calculated as percentage on the total number of T-units in each students’ writings.

4.2 Analysis of data

Having tabulated the error percentage in each category of students writings, descriptive statistics, a few independent sample t-tests and a paired t-test were conducted to test the hypotheses detailed in Chapter 3.

4.3 The impact of direct error correction feedback (DEC) on the students’ performance (Hypothesis 1)

4.3.1. The table 4.1 shows the percentage of the total error categories calculated before and after the intervention of direct error correction feedback. A steady decrease of the percentage of error can be seen.
Table 4.1: Percentage of error categories before and after direct correction. (DEC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Percentage of total error categories identified before the direct correction</th>
<th>Percentage of total error categories identified after the direct correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>18.64</td>
<td>6.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>39.74</td>
<td>11.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>65.51</td>
<td>21.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>71.87</td>
<td>33.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>38.7</td>
<td>13.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>35.08</td>
<td>13.79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>43.66</td>
<td>14.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>59.18</td>
<td>19.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>3.22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>59.25</td>
<td>15.38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>25.71</td>
<td>8.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>4.76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>61.36</td>
<td>18.18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>32.65</td>
<td>10.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>32.65</td>
<td>15.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>59.18</td>
<td>36.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>70.27</td>
<td>36.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>10.25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>17.74</td>
<td>3.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>21.95</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>41.66</td>
<td>27.08</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51.61</td>
<td>23.06</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33.96</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.3.2. Table 4.2 provides the summary of the descriptive statistics for the adjusted average of error percentage committed in Direct error correction feedback (DEC). There is difference between the mean values. The mean value before the intervention is shown as 41.43 and the mean value after the intervention is 15.47.

Table 4.2: Descriptive statistics of Direct Correction (DEC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEC</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std .Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Intervention</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>41.43</td>
<td>16.93</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After intervention</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>15.47</td>
<td>9.83</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.3.3. In order to confirm the difference and to find out whether there is a significant difference in the performance before and after the direct error correction, paired sample t-test is conducted. Table 4.3 summarizes the findings (Original Result findings obtained from SPSS 13 is in Appendix B).

As can be seen in table 4.5 the t- test yields a strong significant value. The value obtained from the paired t-test is .000. It is obviously less than the accepted value 0.05. Therefore the results confirm that the DEC has an impact on the performance of students’ writings. Thus the first null hypothesis that the DEC has no impact on students writing is safely rejected.
Table 4.3: Results of the t-test (DEC) Paired Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Std. error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before DEC</td>
<td>41.43</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.93</td>
<td>3.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After DEC</td>
<td>15.47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.83</td>
<td>2.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: Paired Sample Correlation (DEC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before DEC</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After DEC</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>0.848</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.5: Paired Samples Test (DEC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std Error Mean</th>
<th>95% confidence of the difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before DEC</td>
<td>25.96</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>95% confidence of the difference</td>
<td>12.66</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After DEC</td>
<td>10.05</td>
<td>2.05</td>
<td>21.77</td>
<td>95% confidence of the difference</td>
<td>30.20</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4 The impact of indirect error correction feedback on the students’ performance. (Hypothesis 2)

4.4.1 Percentage of error categories before and after indirect correction is shown in table 4.6. As can be observed from the table there is decrease in the percentage of error after the intervention
Table 4.6: Percentage of error categories before and after Indirect Error Correction (IDEC)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Students</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Percentage of total error categories specified before the indirect correction</th>
<th>Percentage of total error categories specified after the indirect correction</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>16.12</td>
<td>3.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>20.58</td>
<td>7.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36.04</td>
<td>10.46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>61.22</td>
<td>16.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>61.76</td>
<td>22.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>44.44</td>
<td>5.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>48.38</td>
<td>19.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47.36</td>
<td>18.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>16.66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>15.25</td>
<td>8.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>64.7</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>12.72</td>
<td>1.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>38.25</td>
<td>9.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>41.17</td>
<td>12.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>51.61</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>47.82</td>
<td>19.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>68.29</td>
<td>24.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>36.17</td>
<td>10.41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>31.89</td>
<td>9.54</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>15.38</td>
<td>1.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26.76</td>
<td>5.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>43.13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>48.27</td>
<td>20.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>34.48</td>
<td>10.34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.2. Table 4.7 provides the summary of the descriptive statistics of error percentage before and after the intervention of indirect error correction feedback. The mean value before the intervention is 40.07 and after the intervention it is 13.44.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDEC</th>
<th>Number of students</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before Intervention</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>40.07</td>
<td>16.24</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After intervention</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>13.44</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.4.3. Table 4.8 summarizes the findings of paired t-test conducted to find out whether there is significant difference (Original results obtained from SPSS13 is in Appendix C).

According to table 4.9 the t-value of this test too shows a strong significance. The significant difference obtained in this test is 0.000. It is far below the accepted value 0.05. Therefore the results confirm that the IDEC has an impact on the performance of students’ writings. Thus the second null hypothesis that the IDEC has no impact on students writing is also safely rejected.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Std. error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Before DEC</td>
<td>40.07</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>16.25</td>
<td>3.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>After DEC</td>
<td>13.44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.5. The difference between the impact of DEC and IDEC (Hypothesis 3)

In order to investigate whether there is any difference in the impact of both DEC and IDEC on the students’ writing performance (Hypothesis 3) paired t-test is used. The paired sample correlation is 0.639 and the significant difference is 0.001. (Table 4.12 and table 4.13) This is less than the accepted value and it reveals that the third null hypothesis is accepted. The descriptive statistics is summarized in Table 4.11 (Appendix D).
Table 4.11: Descriptive Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Std. deviation</th>
<th>Std. error Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>DEC-After Intervention</td>
<td>15.47</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>9.84</td>
<td>2.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IDEC- After intervention</td>
<td>13.44</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>7.49</td>
<td>1.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.12: Paired Samples Correlations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pair – 1 DEC</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pair - 2 IDEC</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>.639</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.13: Paired Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pair</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std Error Mean</th>
<th>95%confidence of the difference</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-DEC</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>Lower 1.21</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>.208</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2-IDEC</td>
<td>2.03</td>
<td>7.66</td>
<td>1.56</td>
<td>Upper 5.26</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.6 The difference between the performance of male and female students in the DEC condition

The fourth set of descriptive analysis and independent sample t-test is conducted to check the fourth null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the performance of male and female students when DEC
is given. Table 4.14 reveals that the mean value of female students’ performance is 28.29 and the male students’ value is 28.70.

Table 4.14: Descriptive statistics of (DEC) in relation to sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>28.29</td>
<td>18.88</td>
<td>3.45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28.70</td>
<td>19.64</td>
<td>4.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Though there is no greater difference shown in the mean value, independent sample t-test yields t-values of 0.943 and .944 respectively (Table 4.15). This is greater than the accepted value of 0.05. Therefore the fourth null hypothesis is accepted and Hypothesis 4 is rejected. (Original results obtained from SPSS 13 are in Appendix E). Table 4.15 reveals that there is no significant difference between the performance of female students and the male students when in the DEC condition.

Table 4.15: Results of the t-test (DEC) Independent Samples Test

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DEC</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig (2 tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std .error difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
<td>-.072</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>.943</td>
<td>-.40867</td>
<td>5.71</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-.071</td>
<td>34.80</td>
<td>.944</td>
<td>-.40867</td>
<td>5.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.7. The difference between the performance of male and female students in the IDEC condition

The fifth t-test (independent sample) is conducted to check the fifth null hypothesis that there is no significant relationship between the performance of male and female students when IDEC is given. The mean value of the female group is 25.6467 and the mean value of the male group is 28.6111. Table 4.12 shows this difference.

Table 4.16: Descriptive statistics of (IDEC) in relation to sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Std.Deviation</th>
<th>Std.Error mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>25.64</td>
<td>17.58</td>
<td>3.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>28.61</td>
<td>20.01</td>
<td>4.72</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Hence the t-values observed are 0.594 and .607 respectively. Both values are greater than the accepted value of 0.05.

Therefore the fifth null hypothesis is also accepted and Hypothesis 5 is rejected. The results of independent sample t-test is shown in table 4.17. (Original results obtained from SPSS 13 are in Appendix F).

Table 4.17: Results of the t-test (IDEC) Independent Samples Test in relation to sex

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>IDEC</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Sig(2 tailed)</th>
<th>Mean Difference</th>
<th>Std.error difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Equal variances assumed</td>
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<td>.594</td>
<td>-2.96</td>
<td>5.52</td>
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<tr>
<td>Equal variances not assumed</td>
<td>-.520</td>
<td>32.33</td>
<td>.607</td>
<td>-2.96</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The analyses of the above results reveal in general that students corrected their grammatical errors as a result of teacher’s feedback. In the next section these results will be discussed in greater detail.

4.8 Findings of the post study interview

In the informal post study interview with the students (Appendix G) after both interventions following information were gathered.

All the students responded positively to receive feedback from the teacher and they felt that they were able to identify their errors after receiving both feedback types. However 20 out of these 24 students preferred receiving indirect error correction in contrast to direct error correction due to the reason that they were able to think and find out the correct form and thus they will not easily forget the correct grammatical forms.

In the informal discussion, (Appendix H) teachers who teach ESL to the third year Arts students stated that they are unable to provide different types of written error corrective feedback due to the limited time available to handle writing lessons. They could only underline the errors in red and write overall comments in one or two sentences or phrases. However all of them agreed that their students like to receive error correction feedback from them. They said that they too believe that their students would improve their writing if proper error correction feedback is given.

4.9 Conclusion

The analyses of the above results reveal in general that students corrected their grammatical errors as a result of teachers’ feedback. In the next section these results will be discussed in greater detail.
CHAPTER 5

Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

In 1992 Raimes stated that teachers of ESL writing have become aware of the significance of providing students error corrective feedback, helping them self-edit their written texts and remove the grammatical inaccuracies before the final draft. The present study is based on a similar assumption and was carried out, basically to find out whether teacher error corrective feedback had any impact on student writing and also to find out if there was any significant difference between the draft version and the revised version when two types of feedback namely Direct Error Correction and Indirect Error Correction were provided to students. As detailed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation, specific research questions were established to find out whether there is improvement in students’ performance when the above treatments are given and which treatment makes a greater impact on the performance of the students. Other research questions were posed to investigate whether there is a significant difference between the performance of male students as contrasted with female students when direct and indirect error correction feedback were provided. This chapter discusses the results indicated in Chapter 4 in relation to the hypotheses set out in Chapter 3. The chapter concludes with implications of the findings of the study and sets out suggestions for ELT practitioners with regard to the use of feedback to enhance the skill of writing.

5.1 Summary of findings

The results of this study (Chapter 4) suggest that written error corrective teacher feedback has a positive impact on students’ grammatical revisions. All twenty four students made a significantly fewer number of grammatical errors in their final drafts under both conditions. Thus it reveals that both direct and indirect error correction feedback have a positive impact on students’ revisions and both female students and male students were able to make significant
changes without discrimination to a great extent in their revisions. The study was conducted to investigate the impact of the above two feedback strategies on one hand and to find out the most effective one among the two, on the other. According to the results, mean value of 25.96 of 41.4279 errors were corrected under DEC condition and 26.63 of 40.0746 errors were corrected under IDEC condition. Though there is a small difference in the percentage of both conditions, the t-test conducted revealed that this difference is not significant. When we consider the committed errors before the intervention with regard to both conditions, though not significant, students committed fewer errors in the second condition. This seems to indicate that students gradually correct their errors when they repeatedly undergo error correction treatment.

Thus it can be contended that the findings of this study in general support previous research conclusions [Ferris (1997), Ashwell (2000) and Chandler (2003)] that error correction helps students improve their accuracy in writing regardless of the type of correction.

The ten months study of Bitchner and Ute (2008) too support the present study as they conclude that written error correction feedback improve the article usage of their samples.

The investigation of Noroozizadch (2009) reveals that though the two types of feedback (Direct and Indirect error correction) had positive impact on students’ writings indirect error correction feedback displayed a significant difference. This is in contrast with the findings of the present study where no significant difference was found between the two feedback types. However unlike the present study the samples in Noroozizadch’s study are post graduate students.

Though the comparison of two feedback types did not yield any statistically significant difference, in an informal interview (Appendix G) conducted after both interventions, students expressed the view that they prefer IDEC (Indirect Error Correction) as it paves the way for them to re-think and correct their errors. An informal discussion carried out with teachers who handled writing
lessons in the research context revealed the fact that they were unable to spend time on providing feedback to each and every student as the time allocated for ESL teaching was limited. However they too were of the opinion that students in general rely mostly on teachers feedback not only with regard to writing but with regard to improvement in other ESL skills too.

5.2 Theoretical bases and the research findings

These findings seem to support the different theoretical bases (discussed in chapter 2) that underpin this study. As discussed previously in chapter 2, ‘Input Hypothesis’ asserts that people can acquire a language only when they receive oral or written message in the form of comprehensible input.

In the present study, teacher error correction feedback both direct and indirect is seen as a form of written messages providing a source of comprehensible input to the learner. Thus it can be considered as a base which helps them to acquire more competence and improve their writing.

Linked to Krashen’s hypothesis is Schmidt’s (1995) assertion in his ‘noticing’ that the input learners notice becomes the intake for learning. According to Schmidt if consciousness is indeed equivalent to the short term store, this amounts to a claim that where there is storage without commission, awareness is impossible. Thus during the comparison stage of this study (discussed in Chapter 3) students may have become conscious of their error commitment while comparing their original draft with the corrected version. Thus ‘noticing’ of errors under both conditions may have led to awareness and as a result to intake.

In addition, Holec (1980) states that the ability of students to self educate allows the learner to become more responsible for the learning processes. As discussed in Chapter 2, learner autonomy becomes extremely important in applied areas of education due to the reason that the focus of curriculum design itself has been
turned towards more learner centeredness and autonomous learners are expected to assume greater responsibility for and take charge of, their own learning. Autonomous learners take an active role in the learning process, generating ideas and availing themselves of opportunities rather than simply reacting to various stimuli provided by the teacher. The present research study seem to confirm the belief that indirect error correction has a positive impact on students’ L2 composition writing. Indirect error correction by which learners discover the more appropriate forms with the help of the error code provided by the teacher thus can be viewed as a base which helps learners to take charge of their own learning.

Bandura (1997) on the other hand looks at learning not from an individual point of view but as a social act. As discussed in Chapter 2, Bandura states, ‘learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, human behaviour seems to be learnt observationally through modeling; from observing others, one forms an idea of how behaviours are formed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action’. The present study could be considered a social act as both teacher and students formed a social group and teacher feedback may have served as coded information to induce learning.

5.3 Implications and suggestions

As pointed out in the literature review of this study error correction and how it should be done have been debated by the researchers since these two concepts are related to the theory and practice of writing. Researchers like Kepner (1991) and Trustcott (1996) claim that error correction does not help students improve their writing and may even be potentially harmful while researchers like Ashwell (2000) and Chandler (2003) suggest that error correction helps language learning. In the present research context ELT teachers seem to believe that if a teacher pinpoints grammatical inaccuracies in students’ writing, students would identify their errors and not repeat them in their future
writings. Thus this study originally emanated from an intention to investigate and find out context specific (related to University of Jaffna) information regarding error correction and also to find out the most suitable strategy for enhancing students’ writing skills. As a result of the study a number of pedagogical implications could be proposed.

Taking into consideration the fact that students writing improved between drafts, it would be appropriate to propose error correction regardless of types as a desired feedback mechanism, to be used to respond to students’ writings. Another important implication is that the study supports the process approach (cf. chapter 1) to teaching writing. The study utilized process techniques such as drafting, revising and rewriting and together with the use of feedback, these techniques seem to have promoted more competent writing. However, the process writing techniques such as drafting, revising and rewriting are not used a great deal in writing classes at the University of Jaffna. Teachers may need to be trained in the process techniques and also the different types of feedback techniques in order to attain successful implication.

Moreover, it has been suggested by Ellis (1994) that grammar instruction focused on problematic writing errors should accompany writing feedback so that learners can accelerate their development. Hyland (2003) on the other hand emphasizes that for form-based feedback, error codes are effective in stimulating student response and in self-editing strategies. These statements and the findings of this study seem to imply that the teacher could select a feedback type which is suitable to handle the type of errors students commit.

Ferris and Hedgcock (1998) states that the stages that a writer goes through in process writing (starting with pre-writing, going through revision and ending with the final draft) are recursive and overlapping and that this process should be used broadly to outline the sequence of any classroom activity. Thus it could be suggested that syllabus designers particularly in the research context should take this into consideration and allocate time for writing tasks accordingly so
that teachers could facilitate process oriented writing using feedback techniques.

As can be seen in the findings and from students’ responses in interviews regarding feedback, students seem to have been stimulated by providing feedback. This may be further accelerated if teachers negotiate with the students regarding the type of feedback to be provided, its features and how often it will be provided.

It seems to have been improved that with two ‘three day sequences’ a fair percent of grammatical accuracy was developed. Thus if appropriate feedback is given on more occasions it may be possible to gradually increase the accuracy rate.

5.4 Limitations

Even though the study revealed important findings, generalization should be made with caution because of a number of reasons.

Firstly, the study was conducted in an area where Tamil is both the L1 (first language) and the medium of instruction of the participants. In the Faculty of Arts of the University of Jaffna students are less exposed to English when compared to the students from other Faculties like Science, Medicine, Agriculture and Commerce and Management. Tamil is the medium of study in all the departments in the Faculty of Arts except the Department of Law. Thus the result of a similar research study in the Department of Law or in other faculties may be different as more proficient students may prefer other mechanism.

Secondly, it was carried out only with the students in the Social Science stream. The study should therefore be extended to the students who specialised in Humanities too.
Thirdly the L1 of all the student samples of the present study is Tamil. Investigations should be carried out at other Universities with students of different L1.

Fourthly, only the grammatical accuracy was looked at for investigation and other aspects of writing such as content, organization and mechanical errors were not taken for analysis.

Finally, it was conducted with a limited number of students and a short duration of time. Thus generalization could only be made if longitudinal studies of this type had been carried out in other faculties of the University of Jaffna, other Universities and also with students of different L1 in the Sri Lankan context.

5.5 Future Research

This study was a relatively small - scale study which looked at the effect of feedback on student writing. The findings of the study which seem to validate the hypotheses set out (in Chapter 3) suggest that the study would be of benefit to ELT (English Language Teaching) at the University of Jaffna and in Sri Lanka to carry out future studies in the same area. The study itself was a short term one. Future research could include studies conducted over a longer period of time. e.g. for at least one semester using the same research design to observe developments in writing. In this study grammatical inaccuracy was taken as the main feature for analysis. Future research could include the effect of feedback on other important elements of writing such as content and organization and other areas of language such as vocabulary.

The research questions of this study can also be investigated in relation to students at other levels of proficiency so that the results could be generalized. Further, it can be extended to other departments and other faculties of the University of Jaffna in order to observe and compare the developments in writing. In order to confirm the results of this study, it can also be investigated
at other Universities where there are students of different L1 and with varying proficiency levels. In addition the senior secondary level students (e.g. G.C.E.(A/L)) and the students of different extension courses can also be included in the survey.

5.6 Conclusion

To conclude, this study is just one experiment related to the long standing controversy regarding error correction as a teacher feedback on the improvement of L2 writing. The strength of this study is that it reports the findings from a context where no studies of this type have ever been done. The findings seem to indicate some important insights – It is therefore offered as a contribution to the growing data base of research on English Language Teaching in Sri Lanka particularly teaching at the tertiary level.
Bibliography


Furnborough, C. & Truman, M. (2009). Adult beginner distance language learner perceptions and use of assignment feedback, Distance Education, 30, 399-418


Appendix A

QUESTIONNAIRE

The purpose of this questionnaire is to find information about the impact of direct and indirect error correction feedback on the performance of students’ L2 writing. The data will be treated confidentially and used purely for research purposes.

Mrs.K.Sivaji.
Lecturer /E.L.T.C.
University of Jaffna.

PERSONAL DATA.

Underline the correct answer.

I. Gender: male female
II. Age group 19-21 22-24 25-27
III. Place of birth Jaffna Kilinochi Mannar Mullaitivu Vavuniya other
IV. Results obtained for English in G.C.E(O/L). A B C S F D C S F
V. Results obtained for English in G.C.E (A/L). A B C S F
VI. Results obtained for ESL in the last semester A B C D E F

PART II

Rate the following statements by underlining the correct number.

4- always
3- frequently
2- sometimes
1. On very few occasions
0- Never.
1. I like to write essays in English.
2. I write essays in English in the ESL class.

3. My essays are corrected by my ESL teacher.

4. I receive feedback from my teacher.

5. My teacher uses different types of feedback.

6. I like to receive feedback from my teacher.

7. I think I can write better if I receive feedback from my teacher.
Appendix B  
(Original Results - SPSS 13 Statistical Analysis – DEC - Paired Samples Test)

Paired Samples Statistics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>N</th>
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</tr>
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<td>ADC</td>
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<td>9.83067</td>
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Paired Samples Correlations

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<th>Sig.</th>
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Paired Samples Test

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<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
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<td>23</td>
<td>.000</td>
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</table>
Appendix C
(Original Results - SPSS 13 Statistical Analysis – IDEC - Paired Samples Test)

Paired Samples Statistics

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<tr>
<td>1 IDECA</td>
<td>13.4421</td>
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<td>7.48762</td>
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Paired Samples Correlations

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<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>.000</td>
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Paired Samples Test

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<th>95% Confidence Interval of the Difference</th>
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<th>df</th>
<th>Sig. (2-tailed)</th>
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</table>
Appendix D
(Original Results - SPSS 13 Statistical Analysis – Comparison of DEC and IDEC - Paired Samples Test)

Paired Samples Statistics

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<th>T_1_2</th>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Std. Deviation</th>
<th>Std. Error Mean</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
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Paired Samples Correlations

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<th>Pair 1</th>
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<th>N</th>
<th>Correlation</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
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<tr>
<td>24</td>
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Paired Samples Test

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<th>df</th>
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<td>.1296</td>
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### Appendix E

(Original Results - SPSS 13 Statistical Analysis – Male & Female
DEC - Independent Samples Test)

#### Group Statistics

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<td>4.63054</td>
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#### Independent Samples Test

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## Appendix F
(Original Results - SPSS 13 Statistical Analysis – Male & Female IDEC – Independent Samples Test)

### Group Statistics

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### Independent Samples Test

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Equal variances assumed

Equal variances not assumed

Levene's Test for Equality of Variances

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Appendix G

Informal Post Study Interview with students

An informal post study interview was conducted on 2.6.2010 after both intervention (DEC and IDEC) were carried out. The interview was conducted in both Tamil and English. The following questions were used to elicit information from the students.

1. Did you like receiving feedback in the way it was done? As Direct correction? As Indirect correction?

2. Which feedback type did you prefer?

3. Why did you prefer this feedback type in contrast to the other type?

4. Do you think you improved your writing ability because of the feedback given?

5. Were you able to identify the grammatical errors that you had committed?
Appendix H

An informal Discussion with the teachers who handle writing lessons in the third year Arts stream.

An informal discussion was held on 2.6.2010 with the teachers who teach ESL to the Arts faculty in order to gather the information regarding writing lessons and feedback.

1. Do you provide feedback in the writing classes?
2. Do you correct students’ grammatical inaccuracies?
3. Do you provide different types of feedback?
4. Do your students like to receive feedback from you?
5. Do your students feel that providing feedback would improve their writings?
6. Do you find enough time to correct your students’ writings?
Appendix I
Students’ scripts, correction & Revision
Global warming affected the world during the last decade. Global warming affected many ways, animals, people, air, water, forest, and land. All natural pollutants by Global warming. Air is important for humans, life mostly important is air. Air was polluted, toxic gases mixed with the pure air. So, we breathed this air, we affected people included many illnesses and people drank dirty water. So, people affected many diseases. Sea level increased environment warm increased so, by this there will be no rain. Due to environmental pollution by Global warming, that time very dry prevail.

There are many plants died or dried. Children died that time, many people affected for global warming. Green house affected, many diseases spreaded the environment. The natural forests destroyed by the Global warming. Land break it is one of the most important dangers in our lives. Many animals died here and there, many birds ate this bodies. But to environment mostly polluted, land polluted. Some animals took death body and put the water falls due to water falls, pounds, and drain were pollute. The reason for this human activities are important. First, human have to take action properly, protected the environment. We must have clear the all nature. First we go good ways, after all are prevailing good ways.
environment clear not that action
human have our hands,
we must protect our environment,
every human duty for the clean our surrounding
we must clean. Our future heirs will
following this activities and will protect our
environment.
we can have clean our surrounding and
environment. Due to we must live happy in the
world. Every moment we will enjoy
How Global warming affected the world caused problems to
animals, people, air, water, forest and land.

All natural elements get polluted by Global warming. All natural are important for the human life. Mostly important is air. Air was polluted, CO2 gases were mixed with the pure air. So we breathed this air, we affected people included many illness and people drink dirty water.

So, people affected many diseases. Sea level increased and environment was increased. So by this, there will be no rain due to environmental polluted by Global warming, that time very dry prevailed.

There were many plants died or dried. Children died that time. Many people affected for the Global warming. Green house affected, many diseases spreaded the environment. The natural forests destroyed by the Global warming.

Earthquake was also due to Global warming. It is one of the most important dangers in our life.

Many animals died here and there. Many birds ate this bodies. Due to this environment mostly polluted, land polluted. Some animals took death body and put the water falls due to water falls, ponds and drain were pollute.

The reason for this human activities are important. First, human have to take action properly, protected their environment. We must have clear the all nature. First we go good ways, after all are prevailing good ways.
People have to take action properly to protect the environment. We must protect our environment, not that action human have our hands.

It is the duty of every human being for the clean our surrounding. We must clean our future heirs will following this activities and will protect our environment.

We can have clean our surroundings and environment, due to we must live happily in the world and every moment we will enjoy every moment of our life.
Global warming affected the world in the last decade. Global warming caused many problems to animals, people, air, water, forests, and land, all the natural elements got polluted by global warming. All natural elements are important for human life, most important is air. Air was polluted, toxic gases were mixed with pure air. When we breathe this air, we were affected. People suffered from many illnesses, and people drank dirty water so, people affected by many diseases. The sea level increased and the temperature environment also increased so, by this there will be no rain. Due to environment pollution caused by global warming, very dry atmosphere prevailed.

There were many plants dried, dried and children died all that time. Many people were affected by the Global warming. Green house affect caused many diseases which spread in the environment.

The natural forests were destroyed by the Global warming. Earthquake is one of the dangers in our life. Many animals died here and there. Many birds ate their bodies due to that environment mostly polluted.
Land was polluted. Some animals took dead bodies and put them in the waterfalls. Due to this waterfalls, ponds, and drain were polluted. The because of all these human activities.

First human have to take action properly to protect the environment. We must clean the nature first take up good measure. After that all good condition will prevail.

To make the environment pure or not that action depend on human hands. So, my view is we must protect our environment. It is every human's duty for the clean our surrounding.

I am determined we must clean our future. Heirs will following these activities and protect our environment.

We can have clean our surrounding and environment. Due to we must live happy in the world. Every moment we will enjoy.

We can control nature, by our good activities. If we clean our environment, we can live without diseases.
When Tsunami waves hit the Srilankan coast in 2004 on December 26 that day is very sadness day. That day unfortunately Tsunami affected our country, not only Srilanka. Many countries affected, early morning Tsunami came our coast regions, areas many places destroyed. Many house, Temples, Churches, schools and buildings broke by Tsunami. On the 26th December 2004 I was attended the class at 9:00 am. Tsunami did not see high cost people and lower cost people. It was affected all people at the time some people were ran for the mountain areas, some people climb on the trees or higher buildings. Many people died at the spot. Many children died that place. Children cried "help to me", "help to me". That voice is very sadness. Mother lost out children, husband lost his wife. Children lost out parents. Our searched is very sadness. They lost our relations, properties and friends, until today. They did not see our relations and children.

Many people affected by Tsunami due to many people included insane. Many children became an orphan. Children admitted to the orphan home. That time many people helped for the affected people. Some one admitted for the hospital. Someone died on the way. Affected the Tsunam. Places were very horrible.

The land and sea were polluted very mostly. The rich man become the poor stage. The poor man become the rich man stage by Tsunami.
Tsunami did not see religion, race, colour, education, people or not. All are equal before Tsunami.

Many NGOs helped for the affected people. Such as it gave many clothes, food, milk and medicine.

After the Police, army and GS helped for the people many ways. They protected us first, and they prepared the food and gave it. That is an unforgettable incident.

I cannot forget that incident. This incident saved in my mind. This is my first experience some youth girls ran no cloth on body. This action is very disturb our minds. Immediately some people helped the youth.

Like as this circumstance did not again in our life and we can't see sadness. Many people lost our own houses and they coming here and there after lack of food babies affected mostly. They cried every moment.

I don't forget this incident in my life.
When Tsunami waves hit the Srilankan coast in 2004

Locally on December 26, that day is very sadness Day. That day unfortunately Tsunami affected our country, not only Srilanka. Many countries affected. Early morning Tsunami come on Coast Regions areas, many places destroyed. Many houses, Temples, Churches, Schools and buildings broke by Tsunami. On the 26th December 2004 I was attended the class at 9:00 am. Tsunami did affect high cost people and lower cost people. It was affected all people at the time some people were ran for the mountain areas, some people climb on the trees or higher buildings. Many people died at the spot. Many children died that place. Children cried, 'Help me', 'help me'. That voice is very sadness. Mother lost her children, husband lost his wife. Children lost our parents. Our searched is very sadness. They lost our relatives, properties and friends, until today. They did not see our relations and children.

Many people affected by Tsunami due to many people included insane. Many children became orphans. Children admitted to the orphan home; that time many people helped for the affected people. Some one admitted for the hospitals. Someone died on the way. Affected the Tsunami places were very horrible.

The land and sea were polluted very mostly. The rich man became the poor stage. The poor man became the rich man stage by Tsunami.
Tsunami did not see Religion, Race, Colour education people or not. All are equal before Tsunami.

Many who's helped for the affected people. Such as all gave many clothes, foods, milk, and medicines. [After the incomplete]

Police, army, and BS helped for the people many ways. Protected us first and then prepared the food and gave. That is an unforgettable incident.

I can't never forget that incident. This incident saved in my mind. This is my first experience. Some youth girls ran the cloth on body. This action is very disturbing minds. Immediately some people helped the youth.

Like as this circumstance did not again in our life, and we can't see sadness. Many people lost our own houses, and they remained here and there, after lecture, children affected mostly. They cried every moment. I don't forget this incident in my life.
When the tsunami waves hit the Sri Lankan Coast in 2004.

2004 December 26 was a very sad day. That day unfortunately, tsunami affected our country. Not only Sri Lanka many countries were affected such as Indonesia, Sumoththara, Java, Maldives and many coast areas. Many places were destroyed. Many houses, Temples, Churches, Schools and banks were destroyed. On the 26th of December 2004 I attended the class at 9 am.

Tsunami didn’t discriminate high cost people and lower cost people. It was affected all people at that time. Some people ran away from the mountain area, some people climbed on the trees and higher buildings. Many people died at the spot. Children cried “help me, help me” that voice was very sad.

Mother lost their children, husband lost his wife, wife lost her husband, children lost their parents, their search itself very sad. They lost their relations, properties, friends and kids. Untill today they didn’t see their relations and children.

Many people were affected by tsunami. Many children became orphan. Children and people were admitted at the hospital. At that time many people helped the affected people. Many places were destroyed due to that places were very horrible.

The land, Sea, Well, Ponds and river were polluted very much. The rich man became the poor. The poor man became the rich. Tsunami didn’t discriminate Religion, Race, Colour, Rich or poor and educated people or not. It affected all.

Many NGO’s helped to the affected people such as clothes, foods, medicine, milk powder, soap and basic things also.
Some youth without dress in their body ran away road. In some lactation babies cried on the way. This action was very disturbing our minds.

I can't forget that incident. That incident saved everybody's mind. That is my and our first of all incident before that we did not face such incident, this is very havoc.

This circumstance will not come again in our life. And we can't see again.

Before the tsunami everybody enjoyed Christmas; after a few minutes they were sad. Their enjoyment not valid after the tsunami.

So we can't forget this incident every year that date. We will pray to the death persons that day should remember for the tsunami incident. So, we should pray for the every death beings.