The Role of the Error Correction Journal on the Written Performance of Foreign Language Students

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THE ROLE OF THE ERROR CORRECTION JOURNAL ON THE WRITTEN PERFORMANCE OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE STUDENTS

Budimka Uskokovic, WVU
March 27th, 2013
SLA Development

### Behaviorism
- active and repeated responses to the stimuli (Skinner, 1957)
- reinforcement and punishment

### UG (Chomsky, 1959)
- internalizing language rules
- “a necessary stage of the development process, similar to what children go through as they acquire a first language” (Corder, 1967; Krashen, 1982)

### Monitor Model
- Zone of Proximal Development (Vygotsky, 1978) – independent problem solving as a goal
- Error correction may have little or no effect since the language acquisition occurs naturally (Krashen, 1982)
SLA DEVELOPMENT (CONT.)

Interlanguage Theory
- Selinker, 1972
- Systematic, discrete, transferable, preamble
- Simplification, overgeneralization, restructuring, fossilization

Processing Theory
- Pienemann, 1984
- Error correction may not be affected by feedback of any type
- Practice; ready to learn

Input Enhancement
- Smith, 1991
- Corrective feedback as one specific form of consciousness raising
TYPES OF FEEDBACK

- Feedback on Content (Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982)
  Morgantown is an hour from Pittsburgh.

- Feedback on Form (Fathman & Whalley, 1990)
  Morganotown is an hour from Pittsburgh.
TYPES OF FEEDBACK

- Explicit (direct)
  - Meine Lieblingsstadt in den USA is Pittsburgh.

- Implicit (indirect)
  - use the third person singular
  - Meine Lieblingsstadt in den USA is Pittsburgh.
ERROR CORRECTION CODES

- Type of implicit feedback that reduces negative and disheartening effects of indicating writing errors without reducing the effects of error correction (Hyland, 1990)
- To indicate teaching points that L2 learners are supposed to know

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AE</th>
<th>Adjektiv-Endung</th>
<th>Incorrect adjective ending</th>
<th>ein guter Buch: ein gutes Buch</th>
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<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Genus</td>
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<td>Konj</td>
<td>Konjunktion</td>
<td>Wrong conjunction</td>
<td>Wenn ich ein Kind war Als ich ein Kind war</td>
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POSSIBLE TREATMENTS

- Feedback given between drafts (Ashwell, 2000)
- Error rates compared between first and last papers in 10-week-term (Chandler, 2003)
- Written corrective feedback on first drafts followed by in-class editing on same paper (Ferris & Roberts, 2001)
RESULTS OF PREVIOUS RESEARCH

- Improvements made on the revised writing cannot be a good predictor of long-term learning (Truscott & Hsu, 2008).
- Students must be aware of their mistakes in order to have more success in long-term learning (Falhasiri et al., 2001).
- “If students did not revise their writing based on feedback about errors, having teachers mark errors was equivalent to giving no error feedback.” (Chandler, 2003)
- Lalande (1982) found out that 23% of the control group made fewer mistakes, while 63% of the experimental group had decreased their error frequencies.
- Guénette (2007) – further research should include different types of research design to address different issues and control as many variables as possible
Advantages of Error Correction

- **Focus-on-form Instrument** (Ellis, 2005)
  - new features in L2
- **Noticing Facilitator**
  - communicative demand
  - gap between L1 and L2 (limitations)
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1) Can an Error Correction Journal improve the ability of students to avoid common errors in written communication?

2) Do students perceive an improvement when they use an Error Correction Journal as a learning tool?

3) Do students perceive improved motivation toward writing?
PARTICIPANTS

- 36 (11 females) undergraduate students at WVU (19-24); different majors (2 in German); German 203; 17 weeks in the Spring 2013; L1=English; sufficient previous knowledge

- Participants were randomly divided in two control groups. Students in the experimental group voluntarily decided to participate.
Control Group I
• direct feedback

Control Group II
• coded feedback

Experimental Group
• coded feedback plus Journal
PROCEDURE

Control Group I (10)
Initial essay
(Draft 1 + Draft 2) x 3
Final essay

Control Group II (11)
Initial essay
(Draft 1 + Draft 2) x 3
Final essay

Experimental Group (11)
Survey, Initial essay
[(Draft 1 + ECJ) + (Draft 2 + ECJ)] x 3
Final essay, Survey
SURVEY

- 18 questions; at the beginning and at the end of the study
- Likert scale about the frequency of verb, noun and article, pronoun, adjective, preposition, negation, word order and conjunction errors
- How often do you make errors in German compositions?
- How often do you get a feedback?
- How often are you satisfied with that feedback?
- Yes/No questions
- Do you think an instructor can help students identify the errors they make in written communication?
- Do you think that an Error Correction Journal can improve the ability of students to recognize and avoid common errors in written communication?
ESSAYS

- Initial essay – My favorite city (no specific requirements; about 80 words)
- First essay – My favorite city in the U.S. (size, history, sightseeing, sport, museums, activities, shopping, restaurants; about 80 words)
- Second essay – My fairy tale (characters, what happened and when; use the past simple; about 100 words)
- Third essay - My future job (use the future tense, about 80 words)
- Final essay - Summer vacation (plans, presents for friends, a foreign country family; use the future tense; about 80 words)

- 2 drafts of each of the three essays; one week between the first corrected draft and the second written draft
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QUESTIONS (1)

- Eight questions after the first corrected draft

1. What do you think about your errors?
2. Why do you think you made them?
3. Is the way your errors have been corrected appropriate for you?
4. Do you understand now why your constructions have those errors?
5. Do you think that you can benefit if you write the second draft?
6. Do you think that the chart can help you?
7. Do you think you will be able to avoid those mistakes in the future?
8. Can this type of correction feedback motivate you in your future writing?
Five questions after the second corrected draft

1. Do you think you have improved from the second draft?
2. Do you think that you can avoid those mistakes in the future?
3. How much did the chart help you notice your mistakes?
4. Do you think you will be able to recognize your errors next time you encounter them?
5. Can you tell me something about your motivation for your future writing?
RESULTS

- Results from the first Survey have shown that participants make errors sometimes (45.45%), and often (45.45%), but that they get feedback very often (63.6%), and that they are often satisfied with the feedback (54.5%).

- The greatest grammar area they make the most mistakes are articles (54.5%), prepositions (27.3%), and both together (9.1%). However, they make pronoun errors, negation errors and conjunction errors occasionally (54.5%); verb errors and adjective errors equally often (45.4%).

- They prefer direct feedback (72.7%). Moreover, they think that an instructor can help students identify the errors they make in written communication, and that an Error Correction Journal can improve the ability of students to recognize and avoid common errors (100%).
The comments about the first draft of the first essay have shown that students think that their essays were corrected appropriately (100%), and that they can benefit from the second draft (100%) because repetition is very crucial for practice and improvement, which the comments about the second draft have approved.

They got a slightly better grade (even 10 points more). They were able to correct most of their mistakes; they were able to better understand why they made the mistakes.
They also think that they will be able to recognize and avoid their mistakes in the future since the more they practice those certain areas, the more they can improve (90.9%). According to comments about the second draft, they still believe they will be able to avoid their mistakes although it is hard to say if they will be better prepared for future assignments (90.9%), but 9.1% think it is very hard to avoid them when taking a test.

This type of correction feedback truly helps them feel confident in their writing abilities and in turn makes them more motivated to try writing in German again and again (100%).
RESULTS (CONT.)

- Their motivation for future writing ranges from better use of word order, sentence structure, endings, and better vocabulary to good grades and avoiding mistakes totally.
ADVANTAGES OF THE CHART

- The chart can show where students need improvement, and it shows what areas they are weakest and they need to focus on. It helps keep track of the mistakes they have made and with what category they struggle with the most, identify areas of multiple errors, and centralize them (81.8%).

- The chart could be a very valuable learning tool. It has the potential to show students their strong and weak points in writing. It allows them to study harder in the areas they made mistakes. I didn’t benefit from it, but I also only really made one mistake on my first draft.
However, they think that the chart can help them somewhat since it is hard to fill it out when they don’t know what each error falls under and counting mistakes does not help fix them (18.2%).
**Figure 1. Histogram of Error Frequency on the First Draft of the First Essay.**
Figure 2. Histogram of Error Frequency on the Second Draft of the First Essay
RESULTS FROM THE CHART

- On the first draft, students made most mistakes in word choice (35), minimum errors made in pronouns and negative forms (2); (M=9.3; SD=8.1; r=0.8)
- Very likely to correct errors in: verb tense (100%), pronouns (100%), gender (80%), number (75%), case (66%), prepositions (65%), adjective endings (55%), word choice (50%), negative forms (50%).
- However, they cannot correct errors in word order (only 45.5%), sentence structure (40%), verb form (only 20%), conjunctions (0%) and subject-verb agreement (-30%).
PRELIMINARY ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Results have also shown that they were able to reduce the number of their mistakes from the first to the second draft noticing their mistakes and using the Error Correction Journal.

2. Error Correction Journal can help students improve their writing since they can identify what mistakes they have made and what categories they should focus on. It has the potential to show students their strong and weak points in writing although some students do not have to benefit from it since they do not make very many mistakes.

3. They are motivated to practice more, to improve their mistakes, to write fluently, to stretch their vocabulary, and to get a better grade. However, they also think that they will be able to recognize and avoid their mistakes in the future writing with more practice.
**The next steps**

- Student should write the third and the final essay.
- Students should bring Error Correction Journal for the third essay, and fill out the Survey at the end of the semester.
- Results should be compared with the second, third and the final essay.
- Results should be compared among control groups with the results from the experimental group.
- Results should be compared individually.
LIMITATIONS

- Should the survey be given to the control groups?
- Do all errors have the equal weight for students’ future writing?
- How much have the instructions helped so far?
- Are the essays representative enough for students’ everyday needs?
IMPLICATIONS

- Students are more aware of the language learning process and can better recognize and avoid errors.
- Students are aware of the type of errors they usually make, and they are ready to correct themselves with some practice.
- The opportunity to keep a journal is empowering and motivating. It is possible to use it in other subject areas.
- New curriculum design
DISCUSSION

- How do you correct your students’ essays?
- Are your students satisfied with the feedback you provide for them?
- Have you ever conducted a research in this field?
- Would you use this type of a journal for your students? Why?
- For my own improvement and better style of my thesis, I would like you to fill out the Research Presentation Feedback Form.
THANK YOU FOR YOUR ATTENTION !!!