DOES THE COUPLING OF ERROR LOG MAINTENANCE WITH INDIVIDUALIZED CONFERENCING IMPROVE THE WRITING OF L2 STUDENTS?

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Lenora Natale Greene

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Lenora Natale Greene

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Signature:

Lenora Natale Greene   _April 15, 2003_

Lenora Natale Greene, Student   **Date**

Approvals:

Steven R. Brown   _April 15, 2003_

Dr. Steven R. Brown, Thesis Advisor   **Date**

Salvatore Attardo   _April 15, 2003_

Dr. Salvatore Attardo, Committee Member   **Date**

Stephanie A. Tingley   _April 15, 2003_

Dr. Stephanie A. Tingley, Committee Member   **Date**

Peter J. Kasvinsky   _April 23, 2003_

Dr. Peter J. Kasvinsky, Dean of Graduate Studies   **Date**

Abstract

Second language learners are frequently frustrated by their seeming inability to produce grammatically, lexically, and syntactically "polished" compositions in English and by their repetition of errors despite correction by instructors. Meanwhile, current studies debate the value of instructor correction of errors in L2 student writing.

The focus of this study was the improvement of L2 written discourse through student maintenance of error logs, combined with conferencing.

Indirect coded feedback was given to four English language learners enrolled in a university intensive English program. The students produced first drafts, second drafts, and final versions of three paragraphs and two essays. After each draft, students maintained error logs and met with their instructor to discuss grammatical errors.

The results indicate that the combination of indirect coded feedback accompanied by error logs and follow-up conferencing did not produce a significant long-term increase in writing proficiency but did demonstrate short-term decreases in error.

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Review of Literature

A question in contemporary ESL research is whether or not L2 student writing is enhanced by grammatical error feedback given by instructors or, as suggested by some, perhaps a waste of both students' and instructors' time. Indeed, many second language writing teachers question whether or not their efforts at directing student attention to sentence level errors in composition is of any benefit or merely a futile exercise in applying the dreaded red pen to their students' discourse shortcomings. As an ESL writing instructor I have often seen the reactions of my students range from frustration to anger to a sense of good humored resignation as they view their returned written work — paragraphs and essays upon which they had diligently labored – carpeted with the corrections and grammar explanations which I had applied in an equally conscientious manner. I currently teach both grammar and reading/writing courses at an Intensive English Program at Youngstown State University and my exasperation, annoyance, and sense of defeat often mirror that of my students, especially when the same students that I instruct in a grammar class frequently seem unable to transfer material studied, practiced, drilled, and tested to their paragraphs and essays.

Thus, this study adopts an action-research, classroom-based approach in which the researcher is also the teacher. A problem in the classroom, error correction, was identified. A solution to that problem, error logs plus conferencing, was tested, as is appropriate in action research, without comparison to a control group, but with comparison to the teacher's previous practice.

Studies on Error Correction and Feedback

If ESL instructors turn to current research for a definitive answer to the question as to whether or not teacher error correction is effective in L2 student writing, they will most probably be met with either tentative or often conflicting findings. Figurative lines in the sand have been drawn with two opposing camps: those who attest to the efficacy of correction in one form or another and those who seek to demonstrate that error correction has little if any effect upon improvement in written discourse.

The role of standard bearer in support of instructor response to student error in L2 writing has been taken up by a former ESL teacher and current researcher, Dana R. Ferris. She has been one of the principal forces in the movement to draw attention to what she perceives as the need for providing non-native students with teacher feedback as these students attempt to contend with the complexities of English as they put pen to paper. In her book, *Treatment of Error in Second Language Student Writing*, Ferris traces the development of error correction in the L2 classroom from its virtually unwavering spotlight on grammar and vocabulary memorization of the pre-70's era to its subsequent swing to the process of writing itself. Ferris characterizes this period during which many composition instructors reveled in "permission" to concentrate their efforts on subject matter rather than the nemesis of grammar correction as one of "benign neglect" (4).

She further reports on the shift in emphasis on content over form with its rationale based on the assumption that improvement in form would occur as an inherent result of student editing of their writing. Thus, "empowering" students, peer feedback, and multiple drafts became composition buzzwords as attention was transferred to the process

of composition writing while error correction by instructors was considered to be of lesser value.

While Ferris and other researchers advocated error correction and feedback as being beneficial to second language writers, a somewhat smaller group of ESL researchers viewed it as has having little value. In fact, some have even proposed that it can have detrimental results. John Truscott is a staunch opponent of grammar correction and his 1996 article, "The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes," spawned a series of responses determined to disprove (or at least challenge) his theories.

Truscott's premise is quite straightforward – grammar correction of L2 writing beyond the beginning stages of formal learning does not help a student to improve his/her writing skills. Thus, he contends, if it has no advantages for increasing L2 writing ability, why do it? To further intensify debate, Truscott posed the following linguistic firecracker: "...feedback on errors was not only unhelpful, but also *harmful* to learners" (331). As an ESL instructor, I was admittedly taken aback by the notion that my dedicated attention to the correction of my students' errors in their writing might actually be impeding their progress toward proficiency. Intrigued by Truscott's hypothesis, I decided that I would first attempt to scrutinize the rationale he employed to arrive at his negative findings and subsequently examine those of his linguistic opponent, Ferris, who adamantly champions the cause for error correction.

Seemingly aware of the academic storm that his seminal article would generate, Truscott offers the following statement early in his article: "First, I do not deny the value of grammatical accuracy; the issue is whether or not grammar correction can contribute to its development" (329). In itself, this is a rather benign statement which serves to

pique the reader's interest and encourages further reading so as to determine what new spin the author gives to studies on second language writing. However, Truscott waves a red flag in the face of ESL instructors with the following declaration: "Grammar correction should be abandoned" (360). Truscott challenges the very traditionally-rooted core of ESL writing instruction which has remained firmly fixed upon a formula basic to most L2 writing classrooms: student grammatical errors + teacher's corrections = student improvement in writing.

In assessing other studies done on grammar correction, Truscott argues that their findings further support his premise that grammar correction is not only a waste of time but detrimental to the student. He observes that:

> The researchers compare the writing of students who have received grammar correction over a period of time with that of students who have not. If correction is important for learning, then the former students should be better writers, on average, than the latter. If the abilities of the two groups do not differ, then correction is not helpful. The third possibility, of course is that the uncorrected students will write better than the corrected ones – in which case, correction is apparently harmful. (329)

Thus, Truscott establishes the rationale behind his hypothesis and further attempts to build a case against the correction of grammar errors.

Truscott presents his case against the focus on grammar in L2 writing and generally claims that the little research that has been conducted on the subject assumes that grammar correction is beneficial, lacks detailed proof of its validity, or disregards

what he believes to be extensive investigations of the futile or negative effects of correction. He writes:

> Grammar correction is too important to be dealt with so casually. We have an obligation to our students and to our profession: to go beyond this uncritical acceptance and to look more seriously at the evidence, at the logic of correction and at the problems it creates. (42)

Truscott not only provokes the reader to continue but also challenges him/her to reassess his/her stand on error correction – even if it is only to ultimately disagree more staunchly with his position.

Truscott's theories parallel those of Stephen Krashen whose book, *Writing: Research, Theory, and Applications* provides defense for the case against error correction in L2 writing. According to Krashen, the most successful way for a second language learner to improve his writing skills is by extensive reading of high-interest material. The writing proficiency then becomes an inherent by-product of the reading process. Both researchers express little confidence in the value of grammar correction. While Krashen strongly advocates reading, Truscott promotes writing as the key to improving grammar skills. When comparing L1 and L2 writers, Krashen emphasizes that "second language writers will, of course, make more errors in grammar and lexical choice than will first language writers. Our temptation, on seeing these errors, is to correct them and to teach the correct form" (42). Correcting student errors in their written work is, therefore, fruitless given that language acquisition, as stated by Krashen, is the result of an innate rather than learned process.

According to Krashen's theory of second language acquisition, we acquire language in only one way – via comprehensible input. Acquisition does not happen by practicing speaking or writing and getting feedback on the correctness of form. It takes place when we understand messages in the second language, when we understand *what* is said or written, rather than how it is expressed, and when we focus on meaning and not form. Here Krashen concurs with Truscott's theory of the pointlessness of error correction. Krashen does not, however, give total support to Truscott's theories, but he gives credence to some forms of explicit grammar correction– as long as they are not overly complex and are sublimated to a focus on meaning. In addition, he proposes that if grammatical rules are to be stressed by instructors, they should be postponed so as not to hinder the composing process itself. As with Truscott, Krashen does not link grammar correction by teachers with increased writing ability for their L2 students. Indeed, for Krashen, extensive pleasurable reading is more directly connected with providing students with the necessary intrinsic linguistic skills to enable them to improve their L2 writing than the correction of grammar errors by their instructors.

Harriet Semke further supports the theory that grammar correction is of little or no value to most L2 students in her article, "The Effects of the Red Pen." In this often quoted article, the author is in agreement with Truscott's stance on the ineffectiveness of error correction and indicates that the correction of grammar errors in L2 writing does not lead to increased language proficiency. Semke conducted a ten-week study of free writing by over 140 university students enrolled in a first-year German class to determine how the following four techniques employed by instructors affected student writing progress: the replacement of direct corrections with instructor comments and questions;

the correction of indicated errors; the addition of encouraging remarks to corrections; or finally, the correction of errors by students after the return of the original with errors pointed out and coded only. Semke not only reveals that students' writing ability was not enhanced by correction; she states that the only students in the study who demonstrated improvement were those who received encouraging comments rather than the mere correction of their work. She also states that there was no significant advancement for those students who were required to self correct their work; moreover, they registered negative feelings as a result of their efforts. Like Truscott, Semke sees detailed attention to error correction by instructors as self defeating. She notes that:

> ...the amount of writing assigned, since correction does not appear to promote competency, can be based on what is best for student learning...Instead of enduring the drudgery of finding and marking errors, the teacher can, with a clear conscience, enjoy becoming better acquainted with the students through mutual sharing of information. The student, instead of being rewarded with the return of an assignment which has been mutilated by the red pen, will receive teacher responses of acceptance, encouragement, and understanding. (202)

Semke thus supports Truscott's premise that there are no salient benefits to correction grammar errors. She advocates a more humanistic approach to students and their writing and further espouses the view that continued writing (accompanied by positive reinforcement) will improve writing.

Truscott further cites the article, "Salience of Feedback on Error and Its Effect on EFL Writing Quality," by Robb, Ross, and Shortreed. These authors, like Semke, evaluate the effects of four different types of error treatment on L2 writing. In this study, 130 Japanese university students were divided into four groups with each group receiving one of four methods of feedback: the correction of all errors by instructors; the underlining and coding of errors by instructors with students self correcting using error charts; the highlighting only of errors without coding by instructors; or merely the indication of the number of errors per line by instructors. The authors report that according to their study, error feedback by instructors resulted in insignificant improvement by students on subsequent drafts of their compositions. They concluded that the focus of instructors' time and efforts invested in the correction of grammatical errors was of little benefit and that any improvement made was due to factors other than error feedback.

In "How Juries Get Hung: Problems With the Evidence for a Focus on Form in Teaching" by Bill Van Patten, the author, like Truscott, notes the dearth of studies concentrating on form rather than content – studies that focus on the merits of error correction for students beyond the beginning stages of language learning. While Van Patten and Truscott both agree that grammar correction for *beginning* L2 writers may be helpful, they are also in agreement that no study exists that shows *clearly* the relationship between error correction and the improvement of writing for students who are beyond the novice stage. Van Patten notes that:

> Much work needs to be done to examine whether or not a focus on form is
> beneficial to intermediate and advanced learners. More specifically, we

> need to investigate just *who* can benefit from instruction in grammar. We
> cannot rely on experiential or dubious research that has been conducted to
> date nor can we go on hunches, intuitions, and traditional notions
> presented as "facts." We need a much more principled approach to
> intermediate and advanced learners, one which includes both theory and
> research. (255)

Here, like Truscott, the author proposes that the studies that do exist concerning error correction in L2 writing often demonstrate wide swings in findings – pros and cons relating to focus on form and, therefore, lack accuracy and reliability.

In her article, "Coaching From the Margins: Issues in Written Response," Ilona Leki joins the camp of those who view instructors' error correction of their L2 students' written work as futile and the results showing its positive benefits as inconclusive. She writes:

> ...for both L1 and L2 students, the most pressing of the issues surrounding
> written responses, overriding and encompassing all others, is whether or
> not written responses to student writing do any good. Is the improvement
> that our comments effect short term or long term? How does written
> commentary affect students' self-confidence and self-esteem? (60)

In addition to doubting the usefulness of error correction, Leki questions that if error correction does result in increased writing proficiency, will improvement continue beyond the next draft of a corrected assignment? She corroborates the findings of other ESL researchers that propose that despite the variations of instructors' response to students' compositions – ranging from minimal feedback to copiously detailed

explanations of error –the responses did little to enhance the quality of form in the compositions. Commenting upon studies conducted to assess the effects of instructors' feedback on grammar errors upon students' writing she states, "In each case, the researchers were forced to the conclusion that none of these different ways of responding [via direct or indirect feedback] to student writing produced significant improvements in students' subsequent writing" (61). Truscott has again found an ally in Leki to champion his arguments that disclaim the validity and effectiveness of error correction in L2 writing.

Support also comes from Ken Sheppard, author of "Two Feedback Types: Do They Make a Difference?" He concurs with those who, like Truscott, affirm that prior studies show little if any significant beneficial consequences of error correction. He states, "...we are led to believe that the various types make little difference; indeed, the use of *any* type at all may not be worth the effort" (104). Here again is another researcher whose findings confirm those of Truscott and others who disclaim the value of error correction in L2 writing. Sheppard conducted a study which concentrated on two groups of ESL college students and their writing. The fifty students studied were divided into two classes and each received a widely divergent type of feedback. Over a ten-week period, instructors marked and coded the papers of one group. Students and instructors discussed grammar errors and then students were asked to make necessary corrections. The other group received more general comments and conferences were then held to discuss only the overall meaning that students intended in their writing; students were then required to revise their work. Sheppard reports that of the two groups, the group that received no error feedback and only general comments and conferencing which stressed

content over form showed advancement of skills. In fact, the students who were asked to focus on detailed error correction produced less complex sentence structure.

Linguistically and pedagogically allied with Truscott, Sheppard notes that his research disclaims that teacher attention to grammar errors produces improvement in writing. He contends that "clearly, these students did not think so, since those who received that treatment did not improve *in grammatical accuracy* as much as those who didn't get corrective feedback; they also regressed in complexity" (108). With this statement, the author adds support to Truscott's premise that not only is attention to grammar correction unwarranted – it is detrimental to student progress.

While there is a group of researchers who propose theories and cite studies that indicate error feedback is not directly related to improvement in L2 writing, there are those who view error feedback as the necessary link to enhanced writing ability. Perhaps the most vocal in opposition to Truscott's theories on this issue is Ferris, who for a time, engaged in a discourse duel with her contemporary. In her article "The Case for Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes: A Response to Truscott (1996)" Ferris reports on a study she conducted to determine whether Truscott's claim that error correction is not just unnecessary but has negative effects upon the L2 writer. Ferris acknowledges that she and Truscott do indeed, concur on certain issues – second language acquisition and the practicalities involved in the correction of grammatical errors.

Truscott recognizes the sequencing order in which most L2 learners acquire a language and judges that if a grammar point is beyond a student's current ability, correction is generally to no avail. This combined with the lack of standard and all

encompassing steps to acquisition hinders instructors' ability to meet the needs of individual students or cultural groups. He states that:

> ...the existence of developmental sequences, and teachers' limited ability to deal with them, is one important factor in the ineffectiveness of grammar correction. Conceivably, the situation will change, with increased understanding of the sequences, but his possibility does not alter the fact that for now no one can give effective feedback on grammar. (*The Case Against* 345)

In agreement with Ferris, Truscott recognizes that the developmental steps necessary for a student to attain a second language supercede a teacher's attempts to correct grammatical errors. Ferris agrees with the basic premise of SLA but also amends it to fit her underlying belief that error correction is valid. She asserts that "L2 student writers need: (a) a focus on different linguistic issues or error patterns than native speakers do; (b) feedback or error correction that is tailored to their linguistic knowledge and experience; and (c) instruction that is sensitive to their unique linguistic deficits and needs for strategy training" (*Treatment* 5). With this, Ferris acknowledges a concord with Truscott; in fact, she notes other areas of agreement such as the need for more detailed long term studies on error correction, inconsistent (and sometimes faulty) teacher feedback, the significant time investment made by instructors in correcting errors and providing feedback, and the lack of student ability or motivation to become involved in the correction process. Nevertheless, much of her effort has been directed towards illustrating how and why Truscott's exhortations to abandon grammar correction are overzealous, unfounded, and in turn "harmful" to students.

Ferrris views Truscott's rationale as faulty – and in her response article, points out what she believes are the weak support areas in Truscott's argument. First, Ferris faults his lack of clear definition of the term "error correction," and claims that neither does he identify any distinctions in the term "grammar correction" and, in fact, dismisses their significance. According to Ferris, it is the precise features of different types of grammar correction that can affect the written discourse of students and bristles at Truscott's statement: "correction comes in many different forms, but for present purposes such distinctions have little significance." ("The Case Against" 329). For Ferris, writing success is most certainly in the details of error correction – details which she claims that Truscott trivializes.

In Truscott's rebuttal piece, "The Case for 'The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes': A Response to Ferris," he dismisses Ferris' claims, stating that neither does he use the term "error correction" nor, as he attested in his first article, does he find it necessary to define "grammar correction" in terms of types because of its irrelevancy to his basic argument that no type of grammar correction is beneficial.

Ferris' second point of contention is that Truscott cites only those pieces of research that substantiate his point of view. She charges him with "tailoring" findings to fit his argument against grammar correction and selecting studies that provide support to his premise, thereby, exaggerating those conclusions that contradict Ferris's theories. Acknowledging the shortage of research studies that support her claims for the benefits of error correction, she in turn questions the reliability of research selected by Truscott to bolster his rationale. She writes "Truscott...overstates research findings that support his thesis and dismisses out of hand the studies which contradict him" (5). Thus, Ferris

charges Truscott with carefully choosing only those researchers whose views support his argument and ignoring those whose analyses disprove his theories.

Truscott's article of rebuttal charges Ferris with a similarly selective and flawed range of research to corroborate her views. Referring to her charge that the studies he used were too widely diverse (focusing on students studying a foreign language or English as a foreign language and too few ESL students) to substantiate his argument, he counters that "any one study is quite limited in its implications. But when a general pattern emerges from a number of different studies (a pattern of failure, in this case), that pattern must be taken seriously" (115). With this, Truscott dismisses one of Ferris's principal objections to his claim that error correction should be abandoned.

Upon what then do Ferris and others base their conviction that correction of grammar errors merits a place in the second language writing classroom? Ferris cites multiple studies (including her own) which she claims substantiate her belief that error correction has not only positive effects on L2 written discourse but is often requested (and even expected) by students. In addition, she refers to studies which demonstrate that errors made by L2 writers are frequently judged to be distracting and stigmatizing by university instructors as well as by those outside of an educational setting.

As the emphasis on the process of how students write became popular in pedagogy in the 70's and shifted into a focus on content in L2 writing in the 80's, debate arose over what instructors should concentrate on. Ann Fathman and Elizabeth Whalley are in agreement with both Truscott and Ferris that there exists insufficient research to determine whether students are best served by concentrating on form or content. However, their views on error correction support those of Ferris. In their article,

"Teacher Response to Student Writing: Focus on Form versus Content," they acknowledge that with the current emphasis on what the student has to say, the grammatical structures they use to express their thoughts have been left to the final draft before being addressed. The authors conducted a study of their own to explore two areas of L2 writing – the value of instructor response to form opposed to content and at what point in the writing process are these comments most effective.

The writing assignments and their drafts of 72 students in six ESL compositions classes in two separate colleges were evaluated to ascertain the differences in their rewrites. The students were divided into four groups based on the following feedback: no instructor responses; grammar responses only; content responses only; and both grammar and content responses. The supposition was that the students receiving no feedback would adapt their revisions as they saw fit while those receiving the other types of comments would concentrate on adapting their work to the feedback provided by the instructor.

They found more progress was made by students in their writing when comments (either form-focused or content-focused or a combination) were provided by instructors. They observe that when grammar errors were indicated by instructors, students' writing accuracy as well as content improved. They report:

> ...when grammar and content feedback are presented at the same time, the content of rewrites improves approximately as much as when content feedback only is given. Focus on grammar does not negatively affect the content of writing. This would suggest that students can improve their

writing in situations where content and form feedback are given

simultaneously. (186)

With their research, Fathman and Whalley contribute to Ferris's hypothesis that error

feedback is, indeed, valuable to students, thereby challenging Truscott's assertion that it

has little merit.

Ferris, also, has researched the relationship between error feedback and progress

in L2 writing. In "The Influence of Teacher Commentary on Student Revision," Ferris

conducted a 15-week study to determine the role of instructor response on the

compositions of 47 L2 students enrolled in an advanced university ESL writing class.

Students were to submit drafts of their work which were then examined and commented

upon by the instructor. Although the students involved in the study were mainly given

feedback on content, some attention was given to prominent grammatical errors in their

writing. Ferris indicated that focusing upon these errors did not distract students from

concentrating on meaning but did, in fact, help to improve the finished work on final

drafts. She alludes to Truscott's contention that focusing on form as well as content can

distract and provide negative consequences on the students' composing process but

asserts that the final discourse result is positive in nature. She notes:

> The simultaneous provision of form- and content-based feedback on
>
> students' essay drafts is a source of some controversy (Truscott, 1996)...
>
> this teacher [involved in Ferris's study] responded primarily to students'
>
> ideas but did provide some indication of the students' major patterns of
>
> error in endnotes, usually accompanied by some in-text underlining of
>
> sample errors. This proved to be one of the most successful types of

commentary, leading to both substantive and effective revisions...Thus, these discourse analytic data appear to support the experimental findings of Fathman and Whalley (1990) and Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986) that simultaneous attention to content and form...does not short circuit students' ability to revise their ideas but may in fact improve their end products, because they receive more accuracy-oriented feedback throughout the writing process. (333)

Ferris here contends that focusing on grammar errors through feedback rather than correction can have a positive effect upon how students revise.

"Can Advanced ESL Students Become Effective Self-Editors?" is another study by Ferris in which she focuses on five essays written by 30 ESL students to determine whether teacher feedback which stressed editing techniques for the correction of grammar errors resulted in improvement of form. Although Ferris acknowledges somewhat inconsistent results, she contends that the majority of the students showed varying degrees of progress illustrated by their decrease in error production.

Do Students Want Feedback?

As was discussed previously in this thesis, there exist multiple studies that debate the validity and necessity of error correction in L2 writing. Aside from the publication of research that has shown that error correction (in varying degrees) has a direct effect upon improvement of written work, studies have also indicated that students as well as instructors view it as necessary for success in the work and academic world.

Truscott doesn't disagree with the research that states that L2 students want and expect error correction; however, he takes a resolute approach to the idea of correction and suggests that because teachers perpetuate the belief that grammar correction is of value, students continue to expect it. Truscott's advice takes on a paternal ring as he insists, "Abundant evidence shows that students believe in correction,...but this does not mean that teachers should give it to them. The obligation teachers have to students is not to use whatever form of instruction the students think is best, but rather to help them learn (The Case Against Grammar Correction 359).

In her response to Truscott, Ferris counters that by not providing students with feedback on grammar errors, teachers run the risk of demoralizing and discouraging students who look to their writing instructors for advice and guidance on how to improve their discourse skills in order to help them to achieve academic and professional success. Ferris cites various studies which support her views that indicate that students want and often expect their grammar errors to be corrected or at least acknowledged by their instructors (The Case for Grammar Correction).

An early article by James Hendrickson, "Error Correction in Foreign Language Teaching: Recent Theory, Research, and Practice" cites (the then contemporary) responses of university students who indicated that grammar correction was important to them. Hendrickson, takes a paternal approach also (albeit more flexible than Truscott) and relates the relationship between student and teacher to that of parent and child. He writes, "All teachers probably provide some means of correcting oral and written errors, just as parents correct their children's' errors in a natural language learning environment" (389). Hendrickson, thus, explains that as a child depends upon a parent for helping to

structure his linguistic output in his environment, so too does the teacher within the classroom.

A less familial assessment can be found in "Some Input on Input: Two Analyses of Student Response to Expert Feedback in L2 Writing" by John Hedgcock and Natalie Lefkowitz. Over 300 FL and ESL university students were asked to respond to a survey that dealt with how they viewed themselves as L2 writers and the role of their instructors as the providers of feedback on their revised work. Oral interviews were also conducted in which the topics of teacher feedback and revision in their L2 writing were discussed. Hedgcock and Lefkowitz note that the majority of the students (both FL and ESL) perceived direct feedback by instructors as being highly desirable. They observe:

> many ...students...expect to make the greatest improvement in writing
> quality and to 'learn the most' when their teachers highlight grammatical
> and mechanical mistakes. Their perceptions of content development,
> organization and the expressive qualities of their written products are
> clearly secondary to their concern for the visible, tangible signs of formal
> correctness (299).

The authors suggest that for those studying English as a foreign language, their focus on form over content could be attributed to the nature of foreign language and ESL classrooms where attention is often focused on grammar and syntax.

Thomas Gwin poses strong views on student response to error correction in his article "Giving Students the Write Idea: A Way to Provide Feedback on Writing." Gwin, a university writing instructor in Dhahran, states, "our students are painfully aware that their grammatical and mechanical errors are holding them back" (3). Because of this, he

also reports that his students express dissatisfaction if grammar correction and feedback are not provided. As further testimony to the significance that correct grammar holds in many EFL classrooms, he asserts:

> …it is important to clarify the reasons for any departure from the traditional pedagogical methods that they [students] have become accustomed to. Otherwise, they will feel confused and perhaps resentful. No matter how well grounded a method may be in second-language acquisition theory, it cannot be effective if the students do not accept it. Anything that runs contrary to their expectations must be explained to them and receive their support or it will lead to anxiety and raising of the affective filter. (3)

Gwin obviously recognizes the value some non-native writers place on accuracy in writing and how an instructor's deviating from their expectations regarding feedback and error correction would require explanation and justification.

Ilona Leki confirms Gwin's assertion that many L2 students place a very narrow focus upon the perfecting of grammar skills. For some L2 English learners, being an accomplished writer in English represents the ability to produce work with few if any grammatical errors. Her article, "The Preferences of ESL students for Error Correction in College-Level Writing Classes," analyzes survey results of 100 first year university ESL students who were polled on which methods of error correction they preferred. Leki's findings are linked to those of Gwin and Hedgcock and Lefkowitz in that the students surveyed overwhelmingly preferred detailed error correction. Like Gwin, she feels that students should be gently dissuaded from a tunnel vision view of writing that equates

good grammar with effective and successful discourse. She reasons, "Those of us who believe that an excessive focus on error can be debilitating for students and pointlessly time consuming for teachers, must at least consider the need to explain and defend our versions of how to teach language and writing (210). Similar to Hedgcock and Lefkowitz, Leki acknowledges here that ESL students' obsession with grammar is often culturally reflective of the importance that is placed upon correct grammar in EFL classes in their native countries.

Two pieces of research that deal with how students view instructor comments on their written work both support the findings of other studies that indicate that students want and often expect that their instructors will either correct or at least indicate their grammar errors. Patricia Radecki and John Swales report on the feedback given by 59 university ESL students in "ESL Student Reaction To Written Comments on Their Written Work." They report that student questionnaires dealing with instructor response to written work denote that the majority of the responding wanted teachers to attend to their surface level errors. They confirm, "[students] overwhelmingly desired to have all their linguistic errors marked, their response suggesting that error marking was a major responsibility of the teacher" (358). Again, here is another piece of research that illustrates the value that many non-native speakers place on teachers' responses to their grammar errors.

In answer to what they see as teachers emphasizing content over form and disregarding student demands for surface level error correction as a two edged sword, they write:

If they (ESL instructors) do not surface-correct but respond to a writer's meaning, their credibility among their students can be impaired. Clearly, teachers must intervene and change student attitudes; one way for teachers to change their students is by sharing with them the research in writing. Thus they could possibly vindicate their methods and reputation. (364)

Clearly the authors recognize that helping students to see the value in feedback dealing with content may not be an easy task—but one that needs to be addressed.

Yet another study that indicates the value that many non-native speakers may place on specific areas of composition (i.e. grammar as part of their language learning process) is Andrew Cohen and Marilda Cavalcanti's "Feedback on compositions: teacher and student verbal reports." They analyzed the feedback that instructors reported they gave to students along with what the students reported receiving from instructors. They, along with others, suggest to the teacher that perhaps the most effective way to deal with what often appears to be student over-emphasis on form over content or vice versa is, "not to cater to the students' expectations but to shift those expectations according to what contributes most to the development of writing skills" (173). Cohen and Cavalcanti's article adds to the list of several that point to feedback that may not necessarily be what current research deems as most beneficial for L2 writing but what many ESL students feel is most worthwhile.

In a relatively small study conducted at Purdue University, Colleen Brice surveyed the reactions and responses of three freshman enrolled in an ESL writing class to their instructor's feedback on their written work. Her article, "ESL Writers' Reactions

to Teacher Commentary: A Case Study" corroborates much of the research dealing with grammar feedback that indicates L2 writers' preference for error response. Despite their feelings of frustration at the sometimes confusing and complex coding system employed by their instructor, all three of the students assessed wanted explicit feedback and were extremely interested in revising their work according to their teacher's comments.

Faculty Response to Errors

In addition to student preference, the second contention that Ferris uses to substantiate the argument for error correction in the L2 writing classroom is that in an academic environment some non ESL course instructors are less forgiving of grammar, vocabulary, and syntax deficiencies often found in non-native writing. While Truscott (The Case for Grammar) generally dismisses this point made by Ferris as not sufficient justification for the continuance of error correction, Ferris draws on faculty response as one of her key supporting points. Truscott, however, points out that this type of non tolerance demonstrated by some faculty provides no evidence for the value or preservation of error correction. On the other hand, Ferris counters that in order for many L2 students to engage successfully in an English-speaking academic environment, they should demonstrate a fairly complex and scholarly command of the language – in written as well as spoken form.

Among several studies that weaken Truscott's view of Ferris's argument as flawed is "Meanwhile, Back in the Real World...: Accuracy and Fluency in Second Language Teaching" by David Eskey which was written over twenty years ago when the field of ESL instruction was marching firmly away from the prescriptive learning techniques of

the audio lingual method to the then nascent communicative approach. Eskey cautioned allowing the spotlight to swing too sharply from a focus on grammatical competence to communicative competence thus, sacrificing form to content. He notes:

> In principle, this means encouraging students to make the best sense they can of what they hear/read as well as to find a way within the limits of their speaking/writing skills to communicate their ideas and feeling to others...That is, students are, in fact, producing language which communicates well enough but falls considerable short of any reasonable standard of accuracy. (318)

The author acts here as a spokesman for the academic community that often expects more than basic communication skills from its non-native students.

Eskey makes a strong point when he indicates that approaches advocated by Krashen, Truscott and other proponents who view extensive reading and practice in writing as providing ESL students with the tools necessary to write well may, in truth, impede student's success in an academic and post academic environment. He has his own twist on Truscott's attitude of "teacher knows best" and asserts:

> ...we all take a more enlightened view of student error; we don't suppress it as the audiolingual drill sergeants did. But we are still in the business of giving students what they need, which includes the ability to produce correct forms as well as the ability to communicate meaning. Even in this age of facilitating learning, humanistic interacting, and coexisting with error, giving students what they need is still what good teaching is all about. (322)

Eskey, unlike Truscott, sees error correction as two-fold – it supplies students with the necessary support to improve their language skills and also provides them with feedback they themselves want.

To further the case for error correction, Ferris points to studies of university faculty reactions to sentence level errors in L2 written discourse as a basis for her argument for grammar correction (Treatment 2002). One impetus for a study she cites came from a professor who voiced complaints against the poor writing skills of non-native graduate students who demonstrated not only global errors, but local as well, in their written work. "Error gravity: A study of faculty opinion of ESL errors" by Roberta Vann et al. in which faculty members at Iowa State University were asked to rank 12 errors typically made by non-native students. (Interestingly, this study showed that frequently, the age and discipline of the faculty member determined the response – with middle aged faculty and those teaching Physical and Mathematical Sciences and Engineering demonstrating less tolerance for sentence level errors). Whereas the purpose of this study was to help to prioritize grammar instruction and error treatment for ESL instructors, Ferris uses the responses of faculty members as further proof that the errors that L2 students make in their written work may impact how they are viewed (and evaluated) by non ESL faculty.

Yet another piece of research drawn on by Ferris to support her views is "Professors' Reactions to the Academic Writing of Nonnative-Speaking Students" by Terry Santos. 178 professors at UCLA were asked to rank a composition written by two ESL students in terms of content and language. Similar to Vann et al.'s results, faculty

members experiencing most "irritation" at sentence level errors were not the most senior in terms of age nor were they native speakers. (76) Nevertheless, Santos writes:

> The findings for several of the research questions seem to lead to the conclusion that professors are willing to look beyond the deficiencies of language to the content in the writing of these NNS students... Professors are realists and have come to accept, if not appreciate, the fact that the writing of NNS students – and, all too often, NS students – will contain numerous errors of language and that it would only be punitive, and probably futile, to downgrade heavily for them.
>
> (84)

Santos offers a sweeping opinion here of a generous faculty attitude of evaluation toward sentence level errors commonly made by non-native speakers. While one would like to think that this would be the case for culturally and academically enlightened members of the academy, I would venture that there are (hopefully) only a small number of faculty who expects non-native speaking students to be held to the same standards of writing as native speakers.

In addition, Santos reveals that those who judged mistakes in grammar, mechanics, and vocabulary most harshly were non-native speakers themselves. Not only do studies such as this indicate to ESL instructors which errors and their grammar study equivalents need to be focused on in the classroom, but they demonstrate to Truscott and other proponents of the "don't sweat the grammar" school of ESL instruction that some faculty may indeed consider the ability to write compositions in academically appropriate language as an important skill for L2 writers.

Michael Janopoulos also surveyed faculty members on their responses to error in the writing of native and non-native speakers. "University Faculty Tolerance of NS and NNS Writing Errors: A Comparison" studied the responses of 85 faculty members to sentence level writing errors made by L1 and L2 writers to judge whether or not faculty were more "forgiving" of errors made by non-natives. As with the aforementioned studies on faculty response, this research indicates that the faculty polled was generally more tolerant of sentence level errors made by L2 writers than L1.

Janopoulos responds to Santos's disclosure that the faculty he surveyed indicated that they would be willing to overlook grammar, mechanical, and lexical shortcomings in the compositions of their nonnative-speaking students. He poses the question as to whether or not this tolerance of errors in writing by some faculty members is not, in fact, doing a disservice to L2 students. If these students are not judged by the same standards as native speaking-students, how can they compete in courses where they are expected to show the same writing skills as native speaking-students? He writes:

> ...the argument that it is unreasonable to expect NNS students to be the equal of the NS peers in written fluency is a compelling one, especially if their academic performance in all other respects is exemplary. Nevertheless, if it can be demonstrated that such an attitude exists and is pervasive enough to place NNS students at a disadvantage when taking WPEs [written proficiency exams] that are normed to NS standards, institutions must rethink their positions on a wide range of issue pertaining to how they admit, instruct, evaluate, and relate to NNS university students. (118)

While the results of Santos' study indicate a more benevolent faculty attitude towards L2 writing errors, Janopoulos suggests that by holding non-native speaking students to the same standards as their native counterparts may be actually impeding their progress by giving them unrealistic views of their English proficiency so that when they are faced with more stringent evaluative benchmarks they may find themselves at a great disadvantage.

Janopoulos further poses that some faculty may find it difficult to discern the intelligence and talents of some ESL students due to stigmatizing errors they make in their verbal or written communication. If someone does not consciously offer correction for these errors which do not impede understanding but cause a speaker to appear uneducated or ignorant, how does a non-native speaker know that this type of grammar deficiency may cause him/her to lack "credibility" and appear less knowledgeable than he/she actually is? Once more we have another rationale for Ferris's stance on the validity and necessity of error correction in the written work of ESL students.

Examining the research that debates the validity of error correction clearly indicates that Truscott's view that grammar correction is of little value and, in turn, harmful to students is not widely held. Those who endorse error feedback in a myriad of ways often present a strong argument for keeping it as an integral part of the English as a second language classroom. While many of Truscott's points regarding the futility of error correction in L2 writing are worth considering and merit further research, I believe that the case *for* feedback is more compelling – especially in light of students' linguistic needs and their (as well as that of their instructors across the curriculum) expectations in a university setting. Having aligned myself with the theories of researchers such as Ferris

and others who see error correction as a tool to assist rather than hamper L2 writers, I decided to explore the types of feedback which I concluded would best offer my IEP students opportunities to improve their skills in writing.

To support the belief that error treatment can indeed influence non-native student written discourse in a positive manner, Leki (Coaching 1990) recognizes contemporary discourse theory that often centers on the significance of teacher response to student writing and the impact it may have on students' attitudes toward writing itself. However, she notes that because of the inherent differences in the composing skills of native and non-native writers, instructors should approach responding to the written discourse of second language learners in a different manner. She observes, "An element of prescription appears necessary in responses to L2 student papers because L2 students have a smaller backlog of experience with English grammatical or rhetorical structure to fall back on... (59). Here Leki infers that native speakers have already amassed sufficient linguistic and cultural input to enable them to concentrate more easily on the areas of voice and meaning in their writing. L2 Students, however, usually have not had the extensive contact with English grammar, syntax and vocabulary as native-speakers. Thus, the feelings of many composition instructors that *what* the student has to say by the time they reach the university is of more significance than the grammar errors they make may have validity for the L1 writer. However, as Leki observes, the typical ESL student who usually has less extensive experience with writing in English may require more extensive feedback. She acknowledges the importance of teacher feedback to the ESL student and also urges L2 writing instructors to consider the special linguistic backgrounds of their students as they respond to their students' written work.

Error Correction Codes

To further substantiate the validity of teacher response, one can turn to the work of several researchers such as Lalande who have found various combinations of error feedback to have positive results on the writing of L2 students. According to his 1982 article, "Reducing Composition Errors: an Experiment," Lalande examined the writing of university students studying German as a foreign language; however, he suggests that the findings can be applied to other languages. He states:

> Fortunately or unfortunately, the problem of recurring errors is not
>
> peculiar to the teaching of German. The questions remains, therefore,
>
> what measures teacher and students can take to ameliorate the situation?
>
> How can students be brought to show an appreciable decline in errors
>
> from one essay to the next, or at least from course beginning to course
>
> end? (140)

Although this study was based on compositions written in German by non-native German speakers, Lalande suggests that the findings related to error correction can be applied to those studying English as a second language.

His study involved four classes comprised of sixty students which were divided into two experimental groups and two control groups. While the control group was returned their written work with all errors corrected, the experimental group had their essays returned with errors marked with error correction codes. The experimental group was then asked to correct their errors and re-write the essay. In addition, they were also asked to chart their errors according to an "Error Awareness Sheet" on which they were

instructed to indicate the number and rate of occurrence of errors. This 1982 study employed a relatively complicated and ponderous system of error coding and error documentation but seems to provide a prototype for more contemporarily "user friendly" versions. Nevertheless, Lalande's study illustrates that having L2 students "own" their [student] errors by supplying corrections rather than the instructor and then charting the occurrences and frequency of certain errors does impact future writing.

Results revealed that the majority of those in the experimental group outshone those in the control group in terms of "...compositions of superior grammatical and orthographic quality" (146). Furthermore, a post-study survey of students indicated that the experimental group felt that their having to correct and rewrite their work significantly contributed to improving their writing abilities. In fact, Laland points out that the results of the questionnaire indicate that *all* students felt that their writing had improved as a result of their participation even though data analysis indicated that only the experimental groups were positively impacted by direct feedback.

Since the students whose writing received direct feedback with errors corrected for them demonstrated no negative feeling, he infers, "teachers should consider seriously the adoption of a policy of total correction of written errors" which directly contradicts Truscott who views the effect of error correction upon students in an opposing light (147). (Interestingly, despite inconsistent or erroneous instructor feedback, students were even able to successfully correct indicated errors which were mistakenly or contradictorily labeled.) This study conducted over twenty years ago was a springboard for future research and techniques in error correction in the ESL writing classroom.

Lalande's work is one of the earlier pieces of research used by Ferris to further reinforce her stand on error correction. Both researchers indicate (through studies conducted two decades apart) that calling student attention to coded responses to grammar errors has a positive influence on the quality of form in their writing.

Ferris, however, offers a more contemporary approach to responding to student writing in a draft for future publication, "Does Error Feedback Help Student Writers? New evidence on the short-and long-term effects of written error correction." In this research, Ferris again continues to explore the question of the validity of error feedback and the topic of how students make use of teacher response. Unlike many former studies which were limited in size and scope, this study by Ferris was comparatively sizeable involving over 90 college level ESL students during an academic semester. The three teachers involved were instructed to provide content feedback on the first drafts of two writing assignments and, by means of a 15 item error coding system, provide specific feedback on grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics after the initial re-write. Finally, based on teacher feedback, students were to write a final draft.

Analysis of the results showed that the majority of the students (about 80%) made significant progress in self-correction of errors in response to feedback provided by instructors. In an effort to disprove Truscott's argument that this type of response-to-teacher correction is only short-term and does not become ingrained in the learner's language acquisition, Ferris provides a detailed examination of errors in the writings analyzed and concludes that those ESL learners demonstrated considerable improvement in grammar skills over the fifteen week study.

Ferris's approach is similar to the earlier study conducted by Lalande in which he suggests, "the combination of error awareness and problem-solving techniques" to assist students in developing their writing skills. ("Reducing Composition" 145). Both researchers indicate (through studies conducted two decades apart) that calling student attention to coded responses to grammar errors does have a positive influence on the quality of form of their writing

"Error Feedback in L2 Writing Classes: How Explicit Does it Need to Be?" published in 2001 and written by Ferris and Roberts discusses the efficacy of feedback vs. no feedback in helping students to edit their work. In addition, the authors designed their study to examine whether or not the effort involved in error coding by instructors is worthwhile. Besides considering the time investment involved in the labeling of errors, the researchers also pondered the validity of error correction in terms of human mistakes in mislabeling.

In this study, 72 university ESL students were divided into three groups and asked to write a diagnostic essay. One group received their papers back with errors underlined but not coded, another group received papers with errors underlined and coded with symbols relating to five categories encompassing errors involving verbs, noun endings, articles, word choice, and syntax, and the last group received no feedback at all.

The results showed that the students who received no feedback were significantly less able to edit their papers successfully than the groups that received feedback. In fact, indirect feedback via locating errors only vs. locating and labeling errors with coded responses made little difference in student editing performance. In a response to some

critics of error correction who view it as flawed due to human error and overwhelmingly

burdensome to instructors the authors note:

> Thus, if teachers' primary goal in giving error feedback is to give students
>
> cues so that they can self-edit their papers most successfully, it may be
>
> adequate at least with some student populations to locate errors without
>
> labeling them by error type. This is good news in that marking errors in
>
> this way may be faster and easier for teachers, and more importantly, it
>
> reduces the possibility that instructors themselves will make errors while
>
> correcting. (177)

Here one can see that Ferris and Roberts temper their observation that the more time

consuming error feedback coding system garners similar results to the more succinct

method of merely underlining errors. Their article thus suggests that instructors should

tailor their feedback techniques to their students' needs and abilities with students as the

determining factor as to how an instructor sets the classroom environment and evaluation

tools rather than the objective findings of researchers.

Ferris continues to explore pedagogical methods of error feedback in a currently

on-going study, "Does Error Feedback Help Student Writers. New evidence on the short-

and long-term effects of written error correction." In recognition of the lack of extensive

and extended research on the topic, Ferris analyzes the L2 writing of over 90 ESL

students at a U.S. university during an academic semester. Throughout the term, students

wrote multiple drafts of writing assignments and received content feedback on first drafts

and systematic error correction on second drafts. A fifteen-item error chart with

corresponding codes was used to mark errors by instructors, and a grade was then assigned after students corrected and handed in a final draft.

The results of Ferris's late 90's study indicate that the students who participated successfully utilize instructors' indirect feedback via error charts and correct their errors through the fifteen weeks of the semester. She contests Truscott's argument in his controversial article, "The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes," that teacher feedback may not be clear and while a student may be able to correct errors from the first to second draft, the student may continue to repeat the error in future writings.   Ferris reports that the judgment of Truscott and others who contend that teacher feedback is often flawed and confusing does not hold in this study. She indicates that:

> ...students made statistically significant progress in reducing their overall number of errors...between the first and last essay assignments of the semester...Findings, thus contrast with the claims of previous researchers that teachers give incomplete and inaccurate error feedback and that students ignore teacher feedback or cannot it {sic} utilize effectively in revision. (24)

As is indicated in this ongoing study, Ferris continues to explore the issue of error correction in L2 writing and accordingly adds to data that support my thesis that when non-native speaking students actively participate in correction in response to error feedback, their writing can improve.

Error Logs

Another study on error feedback was conducted at the University of Minnesota by Susan Bosher who concentrated on indirect feedback via error correction codes and error analysis charts. Her subsequent article, "The Role of Error Correction in the Process-Oriented ESL Composition Classroom" reports on pedagogical techniques used with Southeast Asian ESL students. By engaging her students in the correction of their own work, she suggests that this "problem-solving" approach enables students to help themselves using the guidance and feedback provided by writing instructors. Her article offers procedures for providing coded feedback as well as practical advice on how to implement an analysis chart for students. She suggests that a feedback system such as this, "... [provides] students with practice at gaining conscious control over the language, but without forgetting the complexity of the language and the need for taking risks to develop syntactically" (90). While this article does not present an analysis of data collected as the result of a precise study to determine the value of the instructive methods employed with her students, it does offer ESL instructors information on how to implement a program of error charts and student logs and provides them with suggestions to carry out in their classrooms.

While some researchers like Ferris offer studies supported with data and others like Bosher present guidelines for the implementation of programs which focus on indirect feedback via coding and error analysis techniques, some infer that such programs may not be the panacea for self-correction that they claim. Brice's previously mentioned limited study of students' reactions to instructors' responses to their L2 writing indicate that the participants expressed dissatisfaction with the system of symbols for grammar

correction maintaining that they were unable at times to recall the significance of some of the error symbols. Brice reports that the written work two of the three students showed improvement after having their initial drafts indirectly marked by means of error symbols; however she indicates that: "although they were able, to varying degrees, to make use of these markings to revise, they exhibited quite a bit of frustration with the system," ("ESL Writers' Reactions"). Brice's analysis indicates the duality of this type of indirect feedback. She points out that when instructors' employ this type of feedback to encourage ESL students toward discourse independence, care must be taken to present the students with the necessary tools to do so. The fallibility of the instructor as an omnipotent corrector must be taken into account and more research devoted to how to enable them to best aid their students to become successful self-editors.

One of the focuses of a study conducted at a university in Hong Kong by Icy Lee dealt with students' ability to metalinguistically manage teacher response through error codes. One of the findings indicated that on a task designed to measure the students' ability to correct errors in a 300-word article, students were given responses based on three conditions: errors were underlined directly; only lines containing errors were checked and students were to then find and correct mistakes; or no feedback was given at all. The most positive results were found when students were given direct indications of error location. However, when the students were provided with an error code (indicated by Lee as a popular pedagogical tool in Hong Kong for promoting self- correction by students), they demonstrated little aptitude for making appropriate corrections based on instructors' metalanguage. The author calls attention to the fact that what teachers assume their students know in terms of grammar terminology may not be realistic. She

recommends that instructors consider the fact that some students may not have a firm grasp of the grammatical concepts indicated by coding symbols. In her analysis of the low scores achieved in their ability to link specific categories of errors to corresponding grammatical symbols, she suggests that indirect feedback by means of an error coding system is inherently valid but advises that: "...teachers need to re-consider the use of grammatical terminology in error feedback, and devise ways to bridge the gap between teachers' and students' understanding of the grammatical concepts involved" (473). Accordingly, Lee suggests that what students know and what their instructors *think* they know about grammatical categories may differ greatly.

A significant sideline to research directly related to dealing with error correction in the L2 classroom is an article that focuses on a university writing center that provides assistance to a large number of ESL students experiencing problems with their L2 writing. Jane Cogie, Kim Strain and Sharon Lorinskas have collaborated in their article, "Avoiding the Proofreading Trap: The Value of the Error Correction Process," to present several methods of enabling ESL students to become independent in error correction.

Cogie et al. discusses the frustration felt by the writing center staff who found ESL student writers becoming less and less active in the process of "owning" their own errors. The authors observe:

> ...many of us on the staff, including graduate assistants in both English
> and Linguistics, as well as practicum students, began to feel that too
> often..., at least when sentence level-errors were concerned, tended to
> translate into the tutor editing and the student observing...Thus the issue
> for us was not how to transcend the temptation to focus on sentence-level

errors but rather how to move the sentence-level tutoring process beyond

the tutor-as-editor dynamic to a dynamic that at once guides and involves

the student in learning to self-edit. (7-8)

The authors recognize the necessity for writing center personnel to avoid becoming

"quick-fix" aides to second language writers who seek assistance with their written work

and facilitate students in developing the metacognitive skills necessary to become

independent editors of their own work.

Besides advocating the use of ESL dictionaries, the authors promote the use of

error logs "personalized dictionaries of the student's most frequent or serious errors

created and maintained by the student..." (18). They acknowledge the time commitment

error logs entail but cite success with students:

> ...an ESL student from Korea...understood English rhetorical style and
>
> grammar rules, but nevertheless made numerous grammatical errors in her
>
> writing, especially on in-class essays. She began using an error log
>
> organized by error types and was soon able to see the pattern of her most
>
> significant problems. Although her writing did not become error-free, the
>
> number of errors was reduced significantly, by an estimated 35%. (20)

This excerpt demonstrates how one student was able to influence the quality of

form in her written work by the charting of personal grammatical weaknesses. Though

this research does not directly concern itself with the ESL writing classroom, the authors

present another perspective on the use of errors logs as tools to enable L2 writers to

assume a more active and able role of self-editors of their work.

Conferencing

A limited number of studies exist that establish that indirect feedback via error coding by instructors and the subsequent correction of errors and maintenance of error logs by students can lead to the improvement in form in L2 written discourse. The question arises as to whether or not these pedagogical techniques can in turn be enhanced by reinforcing them with conferences between the student and instructor.

In the article, "Responding to Student Writing," Vivian Zamel promotes teacher-student conferences to help to counteract student confusion and misinterpretation of teacher responses on their compositions. Zamel sees conferencing as an opportunity for the instructor and non-native speaker to better grasp the meaning behind instructor comments and subsequently successfully revise their work. Zamel advocates:

> Instead of limiting our responses to written comments and reactions...that
>
> proceed in only one direction, we should set up collaborative sessions and
>
> conferences during which important discoveries can be made by both
>
> reader and writer. The reader can discover the underlying meaning and
>
> logic of what may appear to be an incoherent text and instruct the writer
>
> how to reshape, modify, and transform the text; the writer can
>
> simultaneously discover what lies behind and motivates the complex
>
> reactions of the reader and help the reader understand a text that up to this
>
> point may have been ambiguous, elusive, or unintelligible. (97)

The author here offers the instructor a method by which some of the resulting confusion and misinterpretation of coding found discussed by Lee and other researchers such as Truscott and Ferris can be alleviated through one-to-one interaction with a student.

Similarly, G.G. Patthey-Chavez and Dana Ferris discuss the beneficial effects of conferencing on the writing of L2 students in their article, "Writing Conferences and the Weaving of Multi-Voiced Texts in College Composition." They re-confirm research that has shown that while ESL students view teacher response to their grammar errors as highly desirable, they often express frustration at how the feedback is provided. The author's present data that illustrate how conferences can be beneficial to students when they are frustrated or confused by teacher. They note:

> Although there were quantitative and qualitative differences in the conferences of stronger and weaker students, all 8 students did indeed revise their papers in ways that a) made them more acceptable academic discourse and b) reflected, to varying degrees and with differing levels of sophistication, the suggestions and directives of their teachers during the conferences (83)

This excerpt further reinforces the view that individualized interaction between student and teacher can supplement the instructional techniques of feedback through error coding.

A 1990 study, "Student Input and Negotiation of Meaning in ESL Writing Conferences," by Lynn Goldstein and Susan Conrad recognizes how conferencing between students and instructors can positively influence student writing – especially for native-speakers. However, their findings suggest that conferencing between ESL students and instructors are by its very nature often influenced by the culture of the L2 writer and that the act of conferencing itself does not necessarily guarantee successful negotiation of meaning between student and instructor and vice versa. They note,

"...regardless of why variation across students existed, the results show that conferences do not necessarily do what the literature claims they do – they do not necessarily result in input" (456). Thus, while Goldstein and Conrad acknowledge the efficacy of conferences for L1 writers, they also pose that this may not also apply to those who are L2 writers.

The manner in which American students negotiate meaning in writing conferences with instructors is culturally bound and often is diametrically opposed to how some eastern cultures negotiate meaning in a classroom setting. The authors recognize this and present classroom implications for the ESL instructor who may have students whose educational experience reflects values distinct from that of the American classroom. They observe:

> ...as members of diverse cultures, ESL students come with rules of speaking that may conflict with those of U.S. classrooms and with those teachers might like to see operate in conferences. These rules of speaking may also play a role in the students' perceptions of their and their teachers' roles in a conference.

This extract emphasizes the need for the ESL instructor to adapt his/her negotiation-of-meaning skills to the cultural perspectives of her students.

Teacher/student discussion is also addressed in the previously mentioned study "Two Feedback Types: Do they make a Difference?" Sheppard suggests that conferencing with students is valuable no matter what type of feedback technique is employed. He recommends conferences with individual students in which instructors are able to discuss with them ways in which to refine their work. He states, "Perhaps, in the end, the critical issue is still the question of how to structure a post-composition

conference so that the student can really understand how to strengthen what she has already written" (109). Here Sheppard has urged ESL research to address studies on one-to-one communicative situations in which students and teachers can most effectively interact so as to strengthen ESL student writing.

Fiona Hyland also supports conferencing between L2 students and their writing instructors in her work, "The Impact of Teacher Written Feedback on Individual Writers." While Hyland confirms the views of other researchers who see a need for teachers to respond in a less global fashion to their students' writing and to individualize instructor feedback to fit the needs and expectations of each student, she sees conferencing as a means by which potential "miscommunication and misunderstanding" resulting from teacher response to the writing of ESL students, can be prevented (255).

Her study focused on students enrolled in an intensive English program preparing for either undergraduate or graduate work in a New Zealand university. How the six students revised their work after their instructors' feedback was the basis for the study. An examination of the data collected revealed that students revised their work according to the suggestions offered by their teachers; however, the degree to which students revised varied according to the individual. Likewise, the teachers adapted their feedback to individual students according to their expressed preferences. While all students involved conveyed the desire for feedback, some preferred that the instructors focus on content and other students requested attention to grammar. Hyland explains, "...teachers gave feedback to individual students, not texts, and brought with them an awareness of the students' likely reactions to the feedback" (271).

Hyland stresses the importance and need for teacher awareness of the distinct

feedback desires of their students while recognizing that students may not always have

the same views as instructors as which type of feedback is most needed to improve their

writing skills. She also indicates that what students request as feedback and how they

view teacher responses may be culturally determined. She notes:

> To help prevent miscommunication, teachers and students should talk
>
> together in detail about their aims and expectations with regard to
>
> feedback. Teachers need to allocate some time for face-to-face discussion
>
> with the individual student on feedback issues, to gain an awareness of the
>
> student's perspective and an understanding of what each individual student
>
> brings with them to the course in terms of past experiences and
>
> expectations. (280)

Here Hyland joins with other researchers who support the use of conferencing with

students based on the type of feedback they prefer and areas in which their instructor sees

them as most needing teacher guidance. Thus, Hyland urges that conferencing be

individualized to encompass the needs and writing background of the L2 student.

Hyland again repeats the view of other researchers that there exists a real need for

in-depth studies relating to feedback in L2 writing. Her findings serve to illustrate once

more that there is, in deed, much disagreement on which types of responses would serve

to generate the most improvement in the written work of ESL students.

Form vs. content continues to be a major area of debate with much discussion

revolving around which types of form feedback are most effective. This has given rise to

a myriad of questions: If an instructor chooses to respond to grammar errors, which form

of feedback is most beneficial, direct or indirect? Should *all* errors be corrected or merely pointed out? Is there a hierarchy of errors, and if so, should attention be placed on only global errors which impede comprehension or local errors which do not? Should students "own" their errors by actively participating in the process of correction by being held responsible for correcting and charting their errors? Is an individualized post-draft conference in which student and teacher discuss the writer's feedback expectations as well as his/her particular grammar trouble spots effective?

Obviously, the least demanding time and effort investment by the instructor would result from the Truscott et al. approach to error correction: "Don't do it." It is understandable after reading the studies devoted to responding to grammar errors via codes, logs, and conferencing that putting these pedagogical methods into action in an ESL writing classroom would entail a significant amount of preparation and implementation on the part of the instructor. If a writing teacher in a college or university has a large number of classes or ESL students, the desirability of putting such an individualized methodology into practice would neither be attractive nor, in some instances, even feasible. However, an intensive language program, like those present on many college and university campuses, can often provide an academic atmosphere and small class enrollment in which instructors have an environment conducive to providing detailed responses to their students' written work, thus enabling students to actively participate in feedback on their errors and to engage in one-to-one follow-up interaction.

The inherent nature of many Intensive English Programs is to offer courses to assist students in making the transition to an American college or university. The pedagogical focus is often primarily concentrated on providing students with the

language skills necessary to achieve English proficiency requirements for admission and/or strengthening their oral, aural, reading, and writing abilities in order to help them achieve academic success in an American college or university setting. It is in this type of setting where the emphasis for students of intermediate and above levels is on the refining of English skills. In this kind of IEP setting (frequently with low student-to teacher-ratios), ESL instructors are often able to provide additional opportunities to individualize feedback for their students.

In a university setting with a large international student population, the ESL writing classes are more numerous and have a greater number of students per class. With the resulting larger student paper load, many ESL instructors frequently do not have the time and energy necessary to provide consistently detailed error feedback and one-on-one conferencing. However, the low student-to-teacher ratios characteristic of programs similar to the English Language Institute at Youngstown State University provide an environment where a great deal of individual attention can be given to students and their writing.

The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the treatment of errors through coded responses by an instructor and the subsequent logging and prioritizing of errors by students discussed in individual conferences would produce improvement in student writing

Academic Environment

The students were enrolled in the English Language Institute (ELI) at a mid-sized urban university in Northeast Ohio. The ELI is a non-credit intensive English program affiliated with Youngstown State University and is primarily comprised of international students who have not yet reached the English proficiency level necessary for admission to YSU (ITP TOEFL [Institutional Testing Program for the Test of English as a Foreign Language] 500) or another university, but who wish to pursue either a graduate or undergraduate degree. Occasionally students enroll in order to improve their language skills for reasons other than admission to a U.S. college or university.

The curriculum is comprised of courses in English grammar, reading/writing, listening/speaking, and TOEFL preparation on a four day basis per week. Five levels ranging from introductory to advanced are also offered. The student enrollment is small enough to provide a low student-teacher ratio of less than 10:1.

Participants

This study focused on four students enrolled in a high-intermediate Reading/Writing Class that met for one hour and forty minutes each class day for a fifteen-week semester. These same students were enrolled in a high-intermediate grammar class which met for one hour prior to the reading/writing class throughout the week.

Three women and one man took part in the study. All were in their early to mid-twenties, had been in the U.S. less than one year and were planning to enroll at Youngstown State University upon successful attainment of the required English proficiency score. The linguistic backgrounds of the four subjects were as follows: Greek, Korean, Turkish, and Vietnamese. Except for one student who had only been enrolled in the ELI for one semester, the other three had taken classes for two semesters. Their highest ITP TOEFL scores ranged from 400-475. (The ITP TOEFL is an English proficiency test commonly used by US universities for graduate and undergraduate international admissions. A score of 500 is a common requirement for undergraduate admissions). Their instructor, who is also the researcher, had experience teaching ESL grammar and pronunciation classes for fourteen years and composition classes for five years.

Pseudonyms were used for participants, and signed consent forms were obtained. A consent form sample is included in the appendix.

Pedagogical Content

The first writing assignment used in this study was based on a supplementary reading and discussion of Kafka's "The Metamorphosis." Students were asked to write a folktale from their culture in narrative form. However, the following four assignments in the study were designed to correspond with units in the integrated skills textbook which focused on reading and writing. Each unit of the text was comprised of a principal reading dealing with a specific topic and reinforced by a shorter second reading on related subject matter. Students were assigned various writing topics for each unit and began the semester writing paragraphs and progressed to essay-length assignments. Content for the writing assignments was based on unit readings and subsequent class discussions as well as personal narratives which related to text material. This study focuses on five writing assignments (three paragraphs and two essays) consisting of two drafts and one final copy each. The paragraphs were between 75 to 100 words and the essays ranged from two to three pages typed pages.

Two drafts and a final revision for these five assignments were used in this study.

- **Assignment #1**: Narrative essay (approximately 200-250 words)
  Prompt: *Write a folktale from your native country*
  Objective: To enable students to respond in writing using the standard format for a five (or more) paragraph narrative essay.
- **Assignment # 2**: Paragraph (approximately 75-100 words)
  Prompt: *Do you think that home schooling is a good idea?*
  Objective: To encourage students to think critically after reading and discussing text materials related to home schooling and to respond in writing using the standard format for paragraph formation.
- **Assignment #3**: Comparison/Comparison Essay (approximately 250-350 words)
  Prompt: *Compare or contrast one phase of education in your country with a phase of education in the USA (elementary, secondary, post-secondary etc.).*

Objective: To encourage students to think critically after reading and
discussing text materials related to education and to respond in writing
using the standard format for a five (or more) paragraph essay.

- **Assignment #4**: Paragraph (approximately 100 words)
  Prompt: *Discuss the following: "Living in another language means
  growing another self, and it takes time for that other self to become
  familiar." (Allistair Reed)*
  Objective: To encourage students to think critically after reading and
  discussing text materials relating to immigration and to respond in writing
  using the standard format for paragraph formation.
- **Assignment #5**: Paragraph (approximately 100-125 words)
  Prompt: *In your opinion, what has been the most significant technological
  advancement in your lifetime?*
  Objective: To encourage students to think critically after reading and
  discussing text materials relating to technology and to respond in writing
  using the standard format for paragraph formation.

The instructor underlined and coded each error with symbols which were based

on the "ESL Grading Symbols" sheet and "Error Awareness Sheet" included in the text,

Writing Clearly: An Editing Guide by Janet Lane and Ellen Lange (xviii-xix). In an

effort to avoid "overloading" students with coded categories, Lane and Lange's list of

grammar errors and codes was shortened. "Vt" (verb tense) and "vf" (verb form) were

omitted from the "ESL Grading Symbols" and were replaced with the single symbol "v"

(verb). In addition, "mw" (missing word) was added under the section "Local Errors."

Under the heading "Other Errors," "coh" (cohesion), "cs" (comma splice), "dm" (dangling

modifier), and "lc" (lower case) were also eliminated. The key to codes used in the study

is as follows:

art (article)	cap (capitalization)	cl (dependent clause	cond (conditional)	conn (connecting word)	wc (word choice)
frag (fragment)	mw (missing word)	nonidiom (nonidiomatic)	p (punctuation)	pass (passive)	wf (word form)
prep (Preposition)	Pro ref/agree (pronoun reference/agreement)	ss (sentence structure)	s/pl (singular/plural	v (verb tense/formation)	wo (word order)

Methods

During the second week of the fall 2002 semester, sample error charts and error log sheets were distributed to students. Using the first draft of a previous piece of student writing, the instructor explained the rationale for the error charts and log sheets and demonstrated how the students were to complete error logs by placing a check next to each type of error they had made on an assignment. The distinctions between *Global* (errors which are considered more "serious" since they may often effect comprehension), *Local* (errors which are less "serious" and usually do not detract from meaning), and *Other Errors* (ones frequently made by native speakers) were also discussed. On a separate section of the error log, students were asked to place a check next to the three or four areas of grammar or mechanics in which they had made the most errors. The rationale was that by highlighting the most recurrent errors, students would focus on not repeating those errors in future work. Handouts with sample sentences with errors underlined and coded were discussed with students. Based on these examples, students then practiced completing an error log and prioritizing the most numerous errors.

The students' first drafts of subsequent writing assignments were collected and general comments on content were made in the margins of text to which they corresponded. The instructor underlined grammar errors and coding symbols were written above each error. Individualized conferences were held after instructor responses had been made on the first draft. Since the class size was small, the instructor was able to meet with each student individually during the one hour and forty minute class session while other students were working on various writing assignments. Content areas were addressed first with subsequent discussion of grammar and mechanical errors.

Students were then instructed to revise per content discussion, chart their errors, make note of "top-priority" errors and finally to correct errors. After the first revision, the second and third drafts were corrected with primary attention given to grammatical and mechanical errors. Drafts were returned and individual students and instructor met to discuss the form of the written work. When students indicated that they did not know or were not sure of how to correct an error, the instructor provided specific explanations and examples of the grammar point in question. During each post-first draft conference, the instructor discussed all errors made but placed special emphasis on the student's most frequently made errors. While simply drawing the students' attention to a particular error frequently resulted in their being able to correct it, at times, the instructor would give a brief grammar explanation with examples to assist in the comprehension of a particularly troublesome or pattern error. Students were again asked to chart and prioritize errors before submitting the final copy of their work. After the final revision had been coded and returned to students, they were asked once more to log and prioritize their errors. Copies of the coded drafts and final copies along with accompanying error log sheets completed by students were then photocopied for data analysis. Finally, the instructor and each student met once more to discuss the completed assignment.

Results

Results of the study are reported as raw figures and percentages in tables accompanying the text. Because the number of errors in each cell of the tables was relatively small, no attempt has been made to use inferential statistics.

Tuan (Vietnam)

In the first draft of the first assignment, a narrative essay, Tuan made a total of 18 errors as follows: one verb, two word order, four articles, four prepositions, one punctuation, two pronoun reference/agreement, two spelling, and two sentences or parts of sentences unclear in meaning. Thus, the fewest number of errors made were global with the most made in the category of local errors. In his second draft, he eliminated the word order errors but picked up an additional verb error. The second draft saw the reduction of all but two errors involving prepositions. All errors in the category labeled "other" were eliminated with the exception of one pronoun reference/agreement. No errors involving grammar or mechanics were found in the final draft. I would attribute the evident decrease in errors from Tuan's first to second drafts and zero errors in the final revision partially to the fact that he seemed especially to enjoy this assignment. Since it dealt with relating a story that he was familiar with from childhood and required relatively simple vocabulary, grammar and syntax, Tuan enthusiastically set to relating a Vietnamese folktale.

Tuan's second assignment showed a general decrease in total errors across the two drafts and final copy, from a total of twelve to five to three. He successfully eliminated two global errors involving verbs after the first revision but picked up an error involving

connectors in the final draft. Local errors involving word choice in draft one were eliminated in drafts two and three, and two word choice errors were not replicated. In addition, two singular/plural errors decreased to one in draft number two. No article errors were present in the second draft but reoccurred in the last. Three first draft pronoun reference/agreement errors were reduced to one in the second draft and eliminated in the final copy. However, spelling errors stayed at one in drafts number one and two as did errors involving unclear meaning.

Tuan's third assignment showed a dramatic increase in total number of errors from the second assignment (18 to 62). While there was a significantly smaller number of errors in the final revision, there was no steady decrease from the first to the last draft. Of the five assignments, this demonstrated the least progress. The first draft contained eighteen errors – the majority of which pertained to verbs, word choice, and prepositions. In the second draft verb errors jumped from three to fourteen, word choice errors from four to nine and prepositions from three to six. Other increases occurred from the first to second draft with single errors involving articles, singular/plural, non-idiomatic usage, and spelling rising to five or more. The final draft saw an increase from one to two errors in the use of the passive and the presence of one connector error. Article and preposition errors decreased to two while errors involving singular/plural, punctuation, and pronoun reference agreement remained at one. However, there was a decrease in errors involving articles, word choice, prepositions, spelling, and sentences with unclear segments. This was perhaps the most frustrating of the all the assignments for Tuan. His first draft lacked development; thus, by increasing the content, he also increased the number of errors on the subsequent revision.

As in the previous assignment, Tuan's first draft of the fourth assignment lacked adequate development of ideas. Therefore, this relatively shorter paragraph (assignment number 4) again showed an increase in errors from draft one to draft two, but unlike the previous assignment, the final revision showed a decrease in errors. No global errors were present in draft one; nevertheless, there were three local errors involving articles and two involving word choice. In this first draft, two errors each were made involving pronoun reference agreement, run on sentences, and unclear meaning, with one error each in punctuation and spelling. Two verb and three connector errors appeared in the second draft, but article errors were reduced to two and word choice errors were eliminated. The most significant increase occurred in the second draft which saw one error each in capitalization, pronoun reference/agreement, and spelling. Punctuation errors increased from one to three and three errors related to non-idiomatic usage appeared. Unlike assignment number three, there was a slight decrease in errors from drafts one to two. All errors were corrected except for one involving word choice and two related to punctuation. As Tuan labored to develop his ideas more thoroughly and in a more complex manner his errors increased; however, because he was especially shocked (and embarrassed) at the number of errors (56) in the second draft of his third assignment, he made an effort to write and edit more carefully thereafter.

Tuan's final assignment showed much improvement from the previous. The first draft of his paragraph showed eleven errors. There were five errors involving verbs which decreased to two in the next draft and finally to zero in the last. One connector error in draft one did not reappear in subsequent revisions. The three article errors, one preposition error, and one pronoun/reference error were not repeated either. The final

revision saw the emergence of one error involving spelling and an area that was unclear in meaning. As in his first writing assignment, Tuan was able to successfully produce an error-free final copy.

This student's total number of grammar errors decreased across the three drafts of each writing assignment which shows that short term improvement was present in all but the third assignment. However, from assignment one to assignment five, the total number of errors per assignment did not steadily decrease. In fact, from assignment number one to number five, there was a noticeable increase. Tuan's pattern errors involving articles, prepositions, pronoun /reference agreement, and spelling continued to persist throughout the study.

Tuan had studied English for less than one year in his country and had two years of post- secondary school education there. This was his second semester of study at the ELI and he had previously been enrolled for one term in an intensive English program in another state. His highest TOEFL score at the beginning of the semester was 447. Of the four students, he was the only one who worked every day after attending classes and the weekends as well. In class, he often made an effort to express complex thoughts and ideas in response to writing assignments, but his demanding work schedule left him little time to focus on his other ELI classes in addition to his writing assignments. It was frequently obvious that his revisions on writing assignments were completed hastily and haphazardly. (He could regularly be seen hurriedly trying to complete homework before classes and during breaks). It was not unusual for him to turn in an assignment late or incomplete. In addition, at the beginning of the semester, he often expressed frustration at having to maintain the error logs as well as correct the errors coded in his assignment

and viewed them as yet another burden to add to his homework load. I feel that his dissatisfaction was due primarily to his having to juggle school and work rather than a lack of motivation to improve his writing skills. It was obvious that when students were given time in class to work on writing assignments, he made a sincere effort to do so. Nevertheless, often when he would return to class the next day, the assignment he had been working on in class the previous day had not been further developed. During conferences Tuan would frequently say that he had been unable to complete an assignment because he had to work immediately after his ELI classes until 10:00 p.m. Despite his demanding work/school schedule, Tuan was able to meet the university's English proficiency requirement (TOEFL 500) by the end of the semester and was admitted to undergraduate studies.

Cigdem (Turkey):

On the first draft of writing assignment number one, an essay, Cigdems's fewest number of errors was found in the section involving global errors. Two verb errors in draft one continued into draft two and increased to three in the final draft. The majority of the 42 errors in the first draft were local with the most frequent errors involving five missing words, four prepositions and spelling errors, and eight errors involving both articles and word choice. A total of ten spelling errors were found.

The number of errors rose significantly to 54 in the second draft. There was an increase in punctuation errors (13), missing words (12), and articles (11). Word choice (4), spelling (3), and prepositions (2) demonstrated a decrease. The modest reduction in preposition errors from four to two in the second draft was canceled by the addition of

another error in the last draft. Punctuation errors decreased to three in the final revision while three run-on related problems, which appeared in draft number two, decreased to two. Significant decreases in article and word choice errors were evident in the second and final revisions where the number decreased to one each. A modest decrease in preposition errors from four to two in the second draft was canceled by the addition of another error in the last draft. The high number of punctuation errors decreased to three in the second and final revisions while two run-on related problems appeared in draft number two and continued into the last re-write. Reassessing the error logs for drafts number two and three showed an almost identical number of errors in each category; however, a review of the revisions themselves show that some of the errors Cigdem made from draft one to two were often not identical but similar in nature. That is, correcting a punctuation or run-on error in sentences in draft one would emerge in similar sentences elsewhere in the revision. Some of the errors were simply repeated rather than corrected. Although improvement in this assignment was dramatic from draft one (43) to draft two (15), it was not consistent.

Like the other students, Cigdem enjoyed working on a folktale from Turkey, but unlike the others who related their narratives in a relatively simplistic manner, she seemed to become over-involved in small details in content, especially in the first draft. As a result, her sentences often became unwieldy, overly complex, with multiple errors across the three drafts (111).

Cigdem's editing in the second shorter assignment improved considerably. Nine errors in the first draft were reduced to five in the second and finally to zero in the final copy. Verb errors in draft one decreased from two to one while three errors involving

articles were eliminated in subsequent revisions. No new global errors were introduced in the second draft; however, one error each related to singular/plural and word choice did occur as well as two non-idiomatic expression errors.

Cigdem's improvement continued in assignment number three which showed a decrease in errors across the three drafts from a total of 31 to 20 to 13. From the first to the second draft, there was a quick drop-off in missing word errors (from five to zero), in prepositions (from four to one), and in spelling errors (from nine to four). From draft one to draft two there were very slight increases in the categories of verbs (2 to 4), punctuation (3 to 5), and word choice (3 to 4). Five missing word errors in draft one were eliminated; in addition, one non-idiomatic usage error did not reoccur. In the third draft the verb and punctuation errors were eliminated and only one word choice error remained. In fact, these were the most remarkable changes from the second draft to the third. The total number of local errors remained virtually constant from the second draft to the third, with some redistribution of errors within categories. In the third draft, the types of errors were evenly distributed across four of the six categories of local errors. "Other" errors clustered around spelling (three), run-on (two), and pronoun reference/agreement (one).

As in her other three assignments, Cigdem's errors occurred in the "local" and "other" categories rather than in "global." The first draft of the paragraph had a large number of errors (eight) related to articles which were reduced to one in draft number two. From draft one to draft two, four word choice errors continued. In the category of "other" errors, the small number of capitalization and non-idiomatic usage errors did not reoccur; however, punctuation errors in the first draft spiked from 3 to five to seven in the

later revisions. Spelling errors also rose quickly from one to four but decreased to one in the last copy. Overall, the improvement was modest but was evident all the same.

Cigdem's final assignment also showed general improvement in error occurrence. As with the second assignment (also a paragraph) the total number of errors was relatively few and were eliminated in the final revision. The greatest concentration of errors in the first draft was in the category of "local" errors, specifically articles (seven) and word choice (five). While the article errors decreased to three and word choice errors to zero, it was apparent that, for this student, articles and word choice continued to present a challenge.

In general, error occurrence in Cigdem's work was mercurial. The large number of errors found in assignment one plummeted in assignment two only to escalate steeply in the third and fourth. By the fifth assignment the total had again fallen. While short-term error improvement was evident in every draft for each of the writing assignments, she had still made a relatively large number of errors on three of the five assignments. Nevertheless, she had shown some improvement from the beginning of the study to its conclusion. Errors related to verbs, articles, punctuation, and word choice continued throughout the study without noticeable change.

Cigdem entered the ELI having completed two years of university training and less than one year of English study in her native country. Although she was the weakest in terms of English language background, she was the most motivated to do well in her ELI studies. She confided in her instructor that she was under pressure from her family to do well in her coursework at the ELI and fulfill the English proficiency requirement to be admitted to YSU. Having begun the semester with a 380 TOEFL score, she was

originally placed in an intermediate level reading/writing class, however, she petitioned the instructors to allow her to enter the high intermediate class. Because she had made steady progress and had shown great drive to improve her English skills during the first semester, she was permitted to enter the more advanced class. During both terms at the ELI, Cigdem regularly studied beyond class work and went from a fairly simplistic style of writing at the beginning of her second semester to being able to express herself in a relatively sophisticated manner by the end of the term. She devoted great time and energy to her class work and often told the instructor that she would spend several hours every evening working on writing assignments. She regularly met with a tutor twice a week during the term, and her motivation and hard work were rewarded. In one semester Cigdem's TOEFL score rose impressively from 380 to 500 and, she too was admitted to undergraduate studies at YSU.

Mia (Korea):

This student's first assignment contained a total of 16 errors on the first and second drafts only. The one word order and four verb errors that occurred in the first draft were eliminated in subsequent revisions. The majority of errors were found in the "local" category in both the first and second drafts. Two article errors in draft one were reduced to one in draft two while the two word choice errors in the first draft increased to four in the second.

Mia made only two errors on her second assignment – the fewest number of total errors made by any of the students on any of the assignments. The solitary connector and singular/plural errors were corrected by the second draft.

While assignment number three contained a total of 42 errors on drafts one and two, all errors were corrected by the final copy. Only one global error related to connectors appeared in draft two, while the majority of errors were found in the "local" and "other errors" category. Articles (nine), singular/plural (seven), non-idiomatic expressions, and word choice (five) appeared to be the most problematic areas. All first draft errors in draft one were either eliminated or reduced to one in the following revision. The exception was a pronoun/reference agreement error which increased to two in the second draft.

Mia's fourth assignment again was characterized by a minimal number of errors (eight total.) The six first draft errors were distributed among "global," "local," and "other." The two verb errors in draft one were not eliminated in the following revision while the one word choice error, two non-idiomatic errors, and one punctuation error were. The last copy was error free.

As in three other writing assignments, Mia's errors on her fifth and final assignment were clustered in the "local" category. The seven article errors dropped to three in draft two whereas the singular/plural errors (five) and preposition errors (two) were eliminated in draft three. Two non-idiomatic usage errors and one error related to unclear meaning also disappeared by draft two. Again, this student submitted a final copy which had zero errors.

Mia's pattern errors (articles and word choice) generally showed improvement from draft to draft but, like the other students' written work, not from assignment to assignment.

Mia had the most educational experience with more than eight years of English study and a university degree from her home country. While visiting family locally, she was attending the ELI in order to practice and improve her English skills and did not plan to pursue a further degree at YSU. She was the only student who had not had one previous semester at the ELI. While she began the term with a relatively high ITP TOEFL score (490), her writing was noted for lack of details and fairly simplistic sentence structure. She was the least "adventurous" in terms of writing yet had the strongest language background of the class. Despite my exhortations to expand upon her ideas, her writing was minimalistic by nature. Although she never stated it as her intention, I believe that she would often focus on editing her assignments for perfect grammar rather than improved content. As a result, each of her final revisions was errorless but lacking in idea development. While she made the most progress statistically in terms of error reduction on individual assignments, she made the least progress in terms of accuracy from the first to the last assignment as well as content improvement. Her exit TOEFL score was 530, and she chose to enroll for one semester in undergraduate classes at YSU as an "enrichment experience" before returning to her home country.

Melina (Greece):

The errors in all five of Melina's assignments had a tendency to cluster in the categories of "local" and "other." On all but one of the assignments, verb and word order errors were most prevalent. In the first draft of the first assignment there were five errors related to verbs, four to singular/plural, three each to word choice and word order. The

six remaining were divided among articles, punctuation and spelling. In the second draft, Melina eliminated all the errors of draft one but introduced new errors in the categories of passive (two), word choice (two), and non-idiomatic usage. The twenty one errors in draft one dropped to six in draft two and remained at six in the final copy. However, only one error related to word choice continued from the second draft; the remaining five errors were mirrored categories from the initial draft.

From the first to the second assignment, the number of errors in Melina's writing increased from 33 to 39. Verb errors were still evident in draft one (three) but decreased from two to one in the following two drafts. As in the previous assignment, her errors were grouped in the categories of "local" and "other" errors. Errors in draft one related to articles (seven), preposition errors (four), and word choice errors (three) were eliminated or reduced to one each in the final draft. Two errors each involved pronoun/reference agreement and spelling in the first draft. These were eliminated in the following revisions; however, single errors related to punctuation and non-idiomatic usage increased in the second draft to two. Only one non-idiomatic usage item occurred in the final copy.

The longer third assignment saw a sudden rise in error occurrence with the total number spiking to 80. However, the three drafts had a rapid drop-off in errors from fifty-one to eleven with a slight rise to eighteen in the final copy. The types of errors in Melina's first draft very nearly paralleled those of her first two assignments with the addition of two new categories of errors (connector, missing word.) The four verb errors from the first draft dropped to three and then one in the remaining revisions. The same occurred with the five instances of preposition errors in draft one decreasing to two and

finally to one. Additionally, word choice errors (nine) dropped off to one in draft two but rose to three in the final revision. Four error types occurred in draft one: (connector/one), (missing word/three), (non-idiom/six), (spelling/two). None of them were repeated in draft two, but all reoccurred either once or twice in the last revision. Although there were seven more errors in draft three than in draft two, the improvement from the first draft was significant.

With the fourth assignment, Melina's total error count and error categories remained similar to those of the first two writing assignments. In the first draft she made a total of twenty six errors. Five of the errors involved verbs, four involved missing words and articles, three were related to non-idiomatic usage, and two each related to word choice, punctuation, pronoun reference/agreement, and unclear meaning. With the exception of punctuation errors, which rose by one in draft two, all errors were reduced to one or eliminated by draft two. The three errors which persisted in the final copy were associated with punctuation (two) and pronoun reference/agreement (one).

Melina made the fewest number of total errors in her final assignment. The categories echoed those of previous assignments and exemplified the pattern errors which characterized her writing – those related to verbs, articles, non-idiomatic usage, word choice, punctuation, and pronoun/reference agreement. The greatest number of errors (five) involved verbs. These decreased to one in the second draft. Two errors each occurred with missing words, articles, and pronoun/reference agreement. All errors, with the exception of one article and one verb, were eliminated by draft two. In draft one, single errors were made related to word order, non-idiomatic usage, punctuation, and spelling and did not reoccur. No errors remained by the final revision.

As with her classmates, Melina's pattern errors (verbs, missing words, articles) continued throughout the semester's writing assignments but improved from draft to draft for each of the assignments. With the exception of the third assignment in which her (and the other students') total number of errors rose significantly, there was short-term improvement in each of Melina's drafts for specific assignments, In addition, like Cigdem, she too showed a modest decrease in error by the final assignment.

Melina had seven years of English language classes prior to arriving in the United States. She had recently completed her secondary education in Greece and had been enrolled for two semesters at the ELI. She began the semester at YSU with a 427 entry TOEFL score and was the only student of the four who did not achieve the necessary TOEFL score to enter YSU as an undergraduate student the following semester. In my opinion, this was not due to a lack of ability but rather a lack of motivation which was reflected in all of her classes. While she did not have to deal with working while going to school, she often did not submit assignments on time or they were incomplete. In addition, she was frequently late or absent from class. Melina often demonstrated strong analytical skills in verbal discussions and attempted to express them in her written work; however, she was the least focused of the four students involved in this study. While discussing her written work in conferences, she once admitted that her previous grades in secondary school in Greece were not very good nor did she enjoy school very much. At the conclusion of the semester, Melina chose to return to her country rather than continue her studies at the ELI.

secondary school in Greece were not very good nor did she enjoy school very much. At

the conclusion of the semester, Melina chose to return to her country rather than continue

her studies at the ELI.

DISCUSSION

The results of this study indicate that the grammatical accuracy of two of the four students involved showed modest improvement over time as a result of the maintenance of error logs related to coded feedback and post-writing conferences. One student showed a moderate increase in errors from the first to the last week of the study. Finally, one student showed a steady increase in overall errors with each writing assignment. However, a decrease in error, in general, was evident in the revisions of the drafts of all students for each assignment.

On a long-term basis, the results of this study do not show that indirect feedback, the maintenance of error logs, and subsequent discussion between instructor and students helped to avoid the reoccurrence of grammatical errors, especially those that were persistent. Nevertheless, there was evidence that short-term benefits were present.

The most significant increase in error occurrence was found in the third writing assignment in which the presence of errors rose dramatically leading one to question whether or not the study was actually responsible for students multiplying errors. The nature of this assignment, which was a comparison/contrast essay, and therefore longer, supports the idea that the more a student writes the more there exists a propensity for error. In conferences with all students concerning their first two assignments, underdeveloped content was a recurrent theme. Encouragement to expand upon their ideas and include more supporting details and examples combined with the more demanding character of this writing assignment may have been a factor in the striking swell of grammatical errors.

Although the results demonstrate that the writing skills of only half of the students improved over the ten-week study, all of the students *believed* that that their writing skills had improved. They felt that maintaining error logs for each draft and the following discussion of their errors with the instructor would help to make them better writers. In a post-study survey, responses to the prioritizing of errors and maintenance of error logs were overwhelmingly positive. Each student indicated that the logging and prioritizing of errors required them to think more carefully as they made composed. In response to a question on the survey regarding the usefulness of the error logs, one student wrote, "They helped me by looking my mistakes that I made the most, to stop doing them again." Another student commented, "At first I thought it was not going to help me but now I can see my improvement."

CONCLUSION

This was not an experimental study and did not set out to be one. The study lacked a control group, the researcher was also the teacher, and the number of students was small. This study instead reported a piece of action research in which a classroom teacher tried out for herself a potential answer to a classroom problem, and from this what can we conclude?

Were Truscott and the others right? Is grammar correction for all except for beginning L2 learners futile or even harmful? Or, are the theories of Ferris and other researchers who contend that grammar correction of written discourse for those learning English as a second or other language is beneficial accurate? Based on the outcome of this study, the long-term results were mixed but lend some credence to those who judge that grammar correction is of little value. However, in deference to those researchers who consider grammar correction a positive feedback tool, the results indicate that on a short-term basis there were advantages in increased accuracy. On a subjective basis, the students involved in this study were unanimous in their support of indirect feedback and the maintenance of error logs. Despite the less than momentous results, the students perceived that the feedback and error logs were instrumental in helping them to *focus* on their writing and *think* and *edit* more carefully as they composed – and ultimately helped them to improve their English writing skills.

Appendix A. Data

Student's Name: Tuan
Term   Fall 2002
Assignment #1   Essay

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	1	2		-100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo	2			100.00%		100.00%
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	4			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
s/pl						
wc						
wf						
prep	4	2		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
coh						
frag						
nonidiom						
p	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
pro ref/agree	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
ro						
sp	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
unclear	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
TOTAL	18	5	0			100.00%

Student's Name: Tuan
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #2 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn			1	0.00%	(-1)	(-1)
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	1		1	100.00%	(-1)	0.00%
s/pl	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
wc	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
wf						
prep		1	1	(-1)	0.00%	(-1)
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom						
p						
pro ref/agree	3	1		66.67%	100.00%	100.00%
ro						
sp	1	1		0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
unclear	1	1		0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
TOTAL	**12**	**5**	**3**			**75.00%**

Student's Name: Tuan
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #3 Essay

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft #1	Draft #2	Final	Draft #2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	3	14		-366.67%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass	1		2	100.00%	(-1)	-100.00%
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn			1		(-1)	(-1)
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw		1		(-1)	100.00%	
art	1	5	2	-400.00%	60.00%	-100.00%
prep	3	6	2			
s/pl	1	5	5	-400.00%	0.00%	-400.00%
wc	4	9	3	-125.00%	66.67%	25.00%
wf						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap		1		(-1)	100.00%	
cs						
frag			1		(-1)	(-1)
nonidiom	1	6		-500.00%	100.00%	100.00%
p		1	1	(-1)	0.00%	(-1)
pro ref/agree		1	1	(-1)	0.00%	(-1)
ro	1	2		-100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
sp	1	5	1	-400.00%	80.00%	0.00%
unclear	2	6	1	-200.00%	83.33%	50.00%
TOTAL	**18**	**62**	**20**			**-11.11%**

Student's Name: Tuan
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #4 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v		2		(-2)	100.00%	0.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn		3		(-3)	100.00%	0.00%
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	3	2		33.33%	100.00%	100.00%
s/pl						
wc	2		1	100.00%	(-1)	50.00%
wf						
prep						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
frag						
nonidiom		3		(-3)	100.00%	0.00%
p	1	3	2	-200.00%	33.33%	-100.00%
pro ref/agree	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
ro	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
sp	1	1		0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
unclear	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
TOTAL	**13**	**16**	**3**			**76.92%**

Student's Name: Tuan
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #5 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	5	2		60.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn	1			100.00%	(-1)	100.00%
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	3			100.00%	(-3)	100.00%
s/pl						
wc						
wf						
prep	1			100.00%	(-1)	100.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
cs						
nonidiom						
p						
pro ref/agree	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
ro						
sp		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
unclear		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
TOTAL	11	4	0			100.00%

Student's Name: Mia
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #1 Essay

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	4			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
s/pl		2		(-2)	100.00%	0.00%
wc	2	4		-100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
wf						
prep						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom						
p						
pro ref/agree						
ro						
sp						
unclear						
TOTAL	**9**	**7**	**0**			**100.00%**

Student's Name: Mia
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #2 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v						
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art						
s/pl	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
wc						
wf						
prep						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
fragment						
nonidiom						
p						
pro ref/agree						
ro						
sp						
unclear						
TOTAL	**2**	**0**	**0**			**100.00%**

Student's Name: Mia
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #3 Essay

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v						
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn		1		(-1)	100.00%	
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
art	9	1		88.89%	100.00%	100.00%
s/pl	7	1		85.71%	100.00%	100.00%
wc	5	1		80.00%	100.00%	100.00%
wf						
prep	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
coh						
frag						
nonidiom	7			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
p						
pro ref/agree	1	3		-200.00%	100.00%	100.00%
sp	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
unclear	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
TOTAL	**35**	**7**	**0**			**100.00%**

Student's Name: Mia
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #4 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	2	2		0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art						
s/pl						
wc	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
wf						
prep						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
p	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
pro ref/agree						
ro						
sp						
unclear						
TOTAL	**6**	**2**	**0**			**100.00%**

Student's Name: Mia
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #5 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
art	7	3		57.14%	100.00%	100.00%
s/pl	5			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
wc						
wf						
prep	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
p						
pro ref/agree		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
ro						
sp						
unclear	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
TOTAL	21	5	0			100.00%

Student's Name: Melina
Term: Fall 2002
Assignment #1: Essay

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	5		2	100.00%	(-2)	60.00%
cond						
pass		2		(-2)	100.00%	0.00%
cl						
ss						
wo	3			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	2		1	100.00%	(-1)	50.00%
s/pl	4			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
wc	3	2	1	33.33%	50.00%	66.67%
wf						
prep						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
p	1		2	100.00%	(-2)	-100.00%
pro ref/agree	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
ro						
sp	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
unclear						
TOTAL	**21**	**6**	**6**			**71.43%**

Student's Name: Melina
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #2 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	3	2	1	33.33%	50.00%	66.67%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo	1			100.00%	(-1)	100.00%
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	7	2	1	71.43%	50.00%	85.71%
s/pl	1		1	100.00%	(-1)	0.00%
wc	3			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
wf						
prep	4		1	100.00%	(-1)	75.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom	1	2	1	-100.00%	50.00%	0.00%
p		2				
pro ref/agree	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
ro						
sp	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
unclear	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
TOTAL	**25**	**8**	**5**			**80.00%**

Student's Name: Melina
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #3 Essay

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	4	3		25.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass				#DIV/0!	0.00%	
cl						
ss						
wo			1			
conn	1		2	0.00%	(-1)	(-1)
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw	3		1	100.00%	0.00%	66.67%
art	4	1		75.00%	100.00%	100.00%
s/pl	4		1	100.00%		75.00%
wc	9	1	3	88.89%	-200.00%	66.67%
wf						
prep	5	2	1	60.00%	50.00%	80.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap	2	1				
frag						
nonidiom	6		2	(-1)		(-1)
p	9	3	4	66.67%	-33.33%	55.56%
pro ref/agree	2		2	100.00%		0.00%
ro				(-1)		0.00%
sp	2		1	100.00%		50.00%
unclear				(-2)		(-2)
TOTAL	**51**	**11**	**18**			**64.71%**

Student's Name: Melina
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #4 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	5	1		80.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw	4			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
art	4			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
s/pl						
wc	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
wf						
prep	1	1		0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom	3			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
p	2	3	2	-50.00%	33.33%	0.00%
pro ref/agree	2	1	1	50.00%	0.00%	50.00%
ro						
sp	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
unclear	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
TOTAL	**26**	**9**	**3**			**88.46%**

Student's Name: Melina
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #5 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	5	1		80.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
art	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
s/pl						
wc						
wf						
prep						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
p	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
pro ref/agree	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
ro						
sp	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
unclear						
TOTAL	**15**	**2**	**0**			**100.00%**

Student's Name : Cigdem
TERM : Fall 2002
Assignment #1 Essay

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	2	2	3	0.00%	-50.00%	-50.00%
cond						
pass			1	0.00%	(-1)	(-1)
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw	5	12		-140.00%	100.00%	100.00%
art	8	11	1	-37.50%	90.91%	87.50%
s/pl						
wc	8	4	1	50.00%	75.00%	87.50%
wf						
prep	4	2	3	50.00%	-50.00%	25.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap		2		(-2)	100.00%	(-2)
frag						
nonidiom	1	2		-100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
p	10	13	3	-30.00%	76.92%	70.00%
pro ref/agree						
ro		3	2	(-3)	33.33%	(-2)
sp	4	3		25.00%	100.00%	100.00%
unclear			1	0.00%	(-1)	(-1)
TOTAL	**42**	**54**	**15**			**64.29%**

Student's Name: Cigdem
Term   Fall 2002
Assignment #2   Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft #1	Draft #2	Final	Draft #2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	3			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
s/pl		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
wc		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
wf						
prep						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom		2		(-2)	100.00%	0.00%
p	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
pro ref/agree						
ro						
sp						
unclear	3			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
TOTAL	**9**	**5**	**0**			**100.00%**

Student's Name: Cigdem
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #3 Essay

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	2	4		-100.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw	5			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
art	2	1	2	50.00%	-100.00%	0.00%
s/pl	1		2	100.00%	(-1)	-100.00%
wc	3	4	1	-33.33%	75.00%	66.67%
wf						
prep	4	1	2	75.00%	-100.00%	50.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
p	3	5		-66.67%	100.00%	100.00%
pro ref/agree			1			
ro	1		2	100.00%	(-1)	-100.00%
sp	9	4	3	55.56%	25.00%	66.67%
unclear		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
TOTAL	**31**	**20**	**13**			**58.06%**

Student's Name: Cigdem
Term Fall 2002
Assignment #4 Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v		4	2	(-4)	50.00%	(-2)
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo	1			100.00%		100.00%
conn			1	0.00%	(-1)	(-1)
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	8	1	3	87.50%	-200.00%	62.50%
s/pl						
wc	4	4	1	0.00%	75.00%	75.00%
wf						
prep	1	1		0.00%	100.00%	100.00%
OTHER ERRORS						
cap	2			100.00%		100.00%
frag						
nonidiom	1			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
p	3	5	7	-66.67%	-40.00%	-133.33%
pro ref/agree	1		3	100.00%	(-3)	-200.00%
ro						
sp	1	4	1	-300.00%	75.00%	0.00%
unclear		1		(-1)	100.00%	0.00%
TOTAL	**22**	**20**	**18**			**18.18%**

Student's Name: Cigdem
Term   Fall 2002
Assignment #5   Paragraph

TYPE OF ERROR	TOTAL NUMBER OF ERRORS			IMPROVEMENT (%)		
	Draft # 1	Draft # 2	Final	Draft # 2	Final	TOTAL
GLOBAL ERRORS						
v	2	1		50.00%	100.00%	100.00%
cond						
pass						
cl						
ss						
wo						
conn						
LOCAL ERRORS						
mw						
art	7	3		57.14%	100.00%	100.00%
s/pl						
wc	5			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
wf						
prep						
OTHER ERRORS						
cap						
frag						
nonidiom						
p	2			100.00%	0.00%	100.00%
pro ref/agree						
ro						
sp						
unclear						
TOTAL	**16**	**4**	**0**			**100.00%**

Appendix B. Grading Symbols

GLOBAL ERRORS

SYMBOL	EXPLANATION
v	incorrect verb tense
cond	incorrect use or formation of conditional sentence
pass	incorrect use or formation of passive voice
cl	incorrect use or formation of a dependent clause
ss	incorrect sentence structure
wo	incorrect or awkward word order
conn	incorrect or missing connecting word(s)

LOCAL ERRORS

SYMBOL	EXPLANATION
mw	missing word
art	incorrect or missing article
s/pl	problem with the singular or plural of a noun
wc	incorrect word choice
wf	incorrect word form
prep	incorrect use of a preposition

OTHER ERRORS

SYMBOL	EXPLANATION
cap	capitalization—capital letter needed
frag	fragment—incomplete sentence
nonidiom	nonidiomatic—not expressed this way in English
p	punctuation—punctuation incorrect or missing
pro ref/ pro agree	pronoun reference/agreement—pronoun reference unclear or agreement incorrect
ro	run-on—two independent clauses joined with no punctuation
sp	spelling error—word incorrectly spelled
unclear	unclear—message not clear

Appendix C. Error Log

Global Errors

SYMBOL	
v	
cond	
pass	
cl	
ss	
wo	
conn	

Local Errors

SYMBOL	
mw	
art	
s/pl	
wc	
wf	
prep	

Other Errors

SYMBOL	
cap	
frag	
nonidiom	
p	
pro ref/pro agree	
ro	
sp	
unclear	

Appendix D. Student Survey

I am very interested in your responses to the ESL writing study in which you participated during the Fall Semester of 2002 at the English Language Institute at Youngstown State University. I would appreciate your taking a few moments to respond to the following items:

1. Do you feel that the instructor's coding of errors by means of corresponding symbols helped you to correct your grammar on written assignments in this course?
   Yes___
   No___
   Not sure___
   Comments on or criticisms of the system of coding errors by your instructor (explain):

2. Do you feel that your recording your errors on the error log sheets helped you to improve your grammar on written work?
   Yes___
   No___
   Not sure___
   Comments on or criticisms of the recording of your errors on error log sheets (explain):

3. Do you feel that prioritizing errors on the error log sheet helped you to improve your grammar on written work?
   Yes___
   No___
   Not sure___
   Comments on or criticisms of prioritizing of errors on the error log sheets (explain):

4. Do you feel that the conferences in which your errors were discussed with the instructor
   helped you to improve your grammar on written work?
   Yes___
   No___
   Not sure___
   Comments on or criticisms of conferences (explain):

5. In general, do you feel that this method of coded error correction of grammar mistakes in your writing *and* the maintenance of error logs followed by conferencing with your instructor have helped you to improve your English writing skills?
   Yes___
   No___
   Not sure___
   Comments or criticisms (explain):

Appendix E. Informed Consent Form

Dear ELI Student,

       I am conducting a study to determine the effects of error correction on second language writing. In this study you will be asked to correct your errors in written assignments according to symbols on an error chart, to record your errors on an error log, and discuss your errors with your instructor. You will participate in this study during the Fall Semester of 2002.

       There are no risks to you. Hopefully, you will find that your writing skills in English will improve as a result of your participation in this study.

       All information will be handled in a strictly confidential manner, so that no one will be able to identity you when the results are recorded/reported.

       Your participation in this study is totally voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without negative consequences. If you wish to withdraw at any time during the study, simply notify me.

       Please feel free to contact me at the ELI (Phone: 330-941-4711)

                                      Lynn Greene

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       I understand the study described above and have been given a copy of the description as outlined above. I am 18 years of age or older and I agree to participate.

_____
Signature   Date

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