The Correlation between Error Correction and Grammar Accuracy in Second Language Writing

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Abstract--- Error correction is not considered as a recent arena in language acquisition. However, it has a great effect on the language education process, further error correction has a significant role in the process of learning languages. The aim of the current study is to improve student's accuracy in terms of grammar which is an essential part in writing composition. This study is a quantitative study based on achieved data from pre-test writing composition and post-test writing composition in order to examine the grammar accuracy of students' writing. The participants of the study were 72 EFL students in the Erbil/Iraq who were taking English language courses at Dwarozh institute for teaching and training. The findings illustrate that learners' grammatical errors in the experimental group significantly decreased in the post-test, due to checking the instructors' error correction and rewrite the pre-test composition in the correct format. In contrast, learners' grammatical errors in the control group are not significantly decreased in the post-test while learners only checking the instructors' error correction without rewrite the pre-test composition in the correct format. In conclusion, error correction can be measured as an effective feature in improving students writing skills. The intention of student's feedback in writing composition is to improve learners' writing skills in addition to provide learners with effective writing, minimum error, and maximum clarity.

Keywords--- Error Correction, Grammar Accuracy, Writing Composition, Language Acquisition.

I. INTRODUCTION

Language acquisition and Language learning are an extremely complicated process through which learners experience various challenges and difficulties: one of the crucial areas of these difficulties is learners' linguistic errors. Error correction confuses teachers with respect to how to handle and implement it in classrooms, and how to decide which errors must be corrected (Hong, 2004).

Teaching writing skills and the assessing process of writing in non-native language learning settings are an argumentative matter among language educators and scholars in order to indicate an appropriate method of error correction that benefits learners to improve their writings (Hong, 2004). Numerous studies have been conducted on error correction (Enginarlar, 1993; Khansir, 2014; Ping, 2012; Qun, 2008). However, the necessity of understanding and implementing an appropriate method of error correction in the classroom still exist.

According to the findings of previous studies, English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) teachers face various difficulties when trying to improve students' writing skills. Error correction is one issues teachers face in EFL writing classes. Therefore, Error correction techniques needed to be implemented appropriately (Livingstone, 2011; Truscott, 1996; Semke, 1984).

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On the other hand, Chandler (2003) and Hyland (2003) indicated that appropriate error correction has a positive influence on improving students' writing skills in the target language, and students do not repeat the same error in their writing after receiving corrective feedback from the instructor. Moreover, Hyland (2003) stated that linguistic error correction includes (form and lexis) error correction which can benefit the improvement of students' writing skills in terms of accuracy and fluency.

Furthermore, many studies concentrated on categories of error correction which educators practice in the educational process including word, sentence and expression error correction. In addition, the effect of error correction on the students' writing skills is an essential part of the studies (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener et al, 2005; Chandler, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

According to Kukich (1992), There are five levels of grammatical errors in writing classes including: 1) lexical errors, 2) syntactic errors, 3) semantic errors, 4) discourse structure errors, and 5) pragmatic errors. However, identifying and determining appropriate methods of error correction and avoiding inappropriate techniques are still uncertain.

Students' repetition of the same errors in the writings despite corrective feedback from the teachers is an indication of teachers impotent to practice effective error correction in writing classes; in addition to the teachers' lack of knowledge of implementing appropriate writing error feedback techniques in an appropriate time (Semke, 1984; Truscott, 1996). Furthermore, Ferris (2011) and Leki (1991) stated that students need corrective feedback from the instructors to overcome errors in their writings in order to write more effectively and accurately.

Utilizing error correction is one of key issues in second language writing that teachers and researchers face in the language teaching process. Error correction is a controversial topic whether error correction helps English second language students develop the accuracy of writing and the overall quality of writing skills (Liu, 2008).

This study aims to investigate the effect of error correction with rewriting on grammar accuracy in composition writing. The second objective of the present study is to examine the effect of error correction without rewriting the correct form of writing (only checking the correcting form by students) on grammar accuracy in composition writing.

The study will answer the following question:

Does error correction with rewriting have an effect on grammar accuracy in composition writing?

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Error and Error Correction

In order to clarify and understand the meaning of error correction and its effect on language acquisition, it is essential to give a clear definition of the term "Error" which is considered as nonstandard and abnormal words, expression, sentence, pronunciation, spelling, or meaningless expressions which are not practiced by native speakers. Moreover, errors are incorrect linguistic forms of the written or speaking discourse which is not performed by native speakers (Maicusi, Maicusi, & Lopez, 2000).

Ellis (2008) stated that errors could be identified through comparing students' written or verbal discourses with the standard language of native speakers (correct written or verbal discourses) in the target language. Saville-Troike

(2006) defined errors as a new set of structures performed by learners who are not existed or practiced in the native language.

Teachers and researchers need to be aware of the difference between errors and mistakes which are considered as effective features in order to deal with corrective feedback. Corder (1967) and Saville-Troike (2006) defined the terms "Error" and "Mistake" in order to benefit teachers to differentiate between the terms (error and mistake). Corder (1967) stated that "Errors" happen as a result of students' deficiency of information in the target language or when students are not conscious of errors that they have made. On the other hand, Brown (1987) defined a mistake as a failure to utilize a recognized system correctly which regularly happen through a random guess or a 'slip' not as a result of the deficiency of learners' knowledge. Ellis (2009) stated that mistakes can be corrected by the students themselves.

According to Ferris (2011), direct feedback (explicit correction) happens "when a teacher offers the correct linguistic form for students (morpheme, word, phrase, rewritten sentence, deleted word[s] or morpheme[s]". while, indirect feedback (implicit correction) occurs once the instructor indicates that an error has been made and the instructor leaves the error to the student writer to check the problem and correct the error" (Ferris, 2011).

2.2 Studies on Grammatical Error Correction

Chandler's (2003) conducted a study on the correlation between error correction and writing improvement. the study revealed that teacher's error correction has a positive effect on student's grammatical and lexical errors. In addition, error correction influences student's writing improvement in terms of both accuracy and fluency. Bitchener (2008) stated that error corrective progresses learners' learning skills.

Findings of the studies illustration contradictory effect of error correction, error feedback in some studies has a positive effect while in others are not significant and effective feature for language improvement; Ferris (1999, 2011) and Huntley (1992) have conducted studies on the types of error correction in order to realize which type of error correction has positive impact and is more effective for learners' writing skills. Furthermore, they stated that direct error correction (explicit error correction) has a little positive impact on students' writing skills particularly in terms of grammatical and spelling errors.

According to the Salteh and Sadeghi (2015) study which was conducted on 30 English foreign language teachers and 100 second language bachelor students at Payam Noor University in Iran, the data was sourced from questionnaires and interviews, majority of the teachers and students believed that error correction could be used as an effective element in second language writing, in addition, both teachers and students agreed that error corrective feedback helps students to avoid repeating linguistic errors in their writings.

Phuket and Othman (2015) have conducted a study on forty Thai university students in order to investigate the types of errors in writing skills. The data of the study were students' written narrative essay composition. The findings indicated that most repeated errors in students' writing were word choice, verb tense, preposition, translated words from Thai, and comma. The errors sourced from intralingual and interlingual interference. However, the interference of Interlingual is more frequent in the students' writing. Therefore, Interlingual is determined as the main source of errors in target language writing.

Almuhimedi and Alshumaimeri (2015) have carried out a study on 304 third secondary grade students in Riyadh. The students were asked through a questionnaire whether error correction is an effective element to decrease the frequency of grammatical errors. The findings showed that the overall mean was (3.97) which means the students agreed that linguistic error correction decreases the frequency of errors in the following tests and the students remember the previous errors and do not repeat it again.

On the contrary, studies on error correction have different results, for instance, Ferris (2004, 2011) and Ferris & Roberts (2001) have researched the effect of error correction on students' writing in the target language. The researchers tested two groups of students in order to examine the effect of linguistic error correction on students' productive skills (writing). The first group (experimental group) received form correction, while the second group (control group) has not received any corrective feedback. The result revealed that students in the experimental group were improved in terms of writing skills depending on form error correction. On the other hand, students' writing in the control group were not improved since they were not received form error corrections.

2.3 Categorizations for error corrections

Tedick (1998) stated that there are six types of error correction reliant on teachers' methods of correction. The types are; first, explicit correction (in this type of error correction teachers directly inform the students about his/her errors then indicate the correct form). The second type is recast (teachers present and suggest the correct form speech or written text without informing the students about the errors directly), the third type is clarification request (in this type teachers draw learners' consideration to the errors through using expression such as: pardon? Excuse me), the fourth sort is metalinguistic clues (teachers ask a question about an information that applies to the error such as: is this possible in Arabic?), the type number five is elicitation (instructors presents the correct structure form to students through familiarizing students with a part of the sentence), the last type is repetition (teachers repeat wrong expressions again and again in order to benefit the learners to recognize errors has been made.

On the other hand, Ferris (2011) categorized error correction into two parts which are direct (explicit) error corrections and indirect (implicit) error corrections. Direct error correction means teachers directly correct any type of students' wrong form, structures, sentences, clauses, expressions, phrases, and words which are not been used by native speakers. In contrast, indirect error correction occurs when teachers assist students to correct their errors by themselves through attracting students' attention to the inaccurate structures.

Moreover, Ferris (2011) subdivided indirect error correction into underlining error correction and coding error correction. Ferris and Roberts (2001) indicated that underlining and coding error correction are beneficial to develop students' writing skills in terms of linguistic and form features. Chandler (2003) and Liu (2008) studied four kinds of error feedback including direct error correction; underlining only; underlining and descriptive; and descriptive only in order to investigate and compare the effect of each type on developing students' writing skills. The findings showed that linguistic direct error correction and underlining errors are the most effective techniques comparing the rest of the techniques.

Ferris and Roberts (2001) have conducted a study in order to examine the effect of treatment (both direct and indirect error correction on the student writing), and zero-treatment (no error correction feedback). The students in the experimental group have received direct and indirect error feedback, while the students in the control group

have not received any feedback from their instructors. The findings indicated that both direct and indirect error correction have a significant effect on the students' writing skills positively. In contrast, there was not any improvement in the students' writing skills in the control group.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a quantitative research design to effectively answer the research question. Quantitative research is illustrating phenomena by gathering numerical data that are analysed using mathematically based methods in specific statistics (Muijs, 2004). The research design of this study is the quantitative research which depended on descriptive statistics of numerical data that is derived from pre-test and post-test. The variables of the study are independent variable error correction and dependent variable which is linguistic accuracy in writing skills.

A total number 72 EFL students in the Kurdistan region/Iraq constituted the participants of this study. The students were taking English language courses at a private Dwarozh institute for teaching and training. The courses were designed to teach all the language skills including (speaking, writing, listening, and reading). The students' ages ranged from 23 to 35 years old.

The students were randomly divided into two groups of thirty-six students in the experimental group as well as the control group. The students of both groups were given a writing test as a pre-test. The students had 90 minutes to complete the writing which was the duration for one lesson. Then the students' writing tests were corrected in terms of grammatical errors and scored. After two days, the writing test papers returned to the students in both the control group and the experimental group. The students in the experimental group were asked to rewrite the correct form of the writing composition which was corrected by the teacher and correct all the errors that the teacher marked and corrected. While the students in the control group were not asked to rewrite the writing composition after correction by the teacher, they only have seen the errors with the correction. After six weeks, the students in both groups were asked to write another composition about any topic that they like to write about. The post text writing composition was for the purpose of comparing pre-test and post-test in terms of grammatical errors. The students were given 90 minutes which was the duration for one lesion, similar to the pre-test writing composition. Finally, the errors of the post-test in both groups were scored based on the grammatical errors.

The students in the experimental groups were requested to rewrite the writing composition in the correct form after receiving corrective feedback from their teacher. On the other hand, students' writings in the control group were only corrected, but the students were not requested to rewrite the composition in the correct form after receiving feedback. After one month, the students were given a post-test which was writing composition in order to be compared with a pre-test.

Data were collected from a pre-test writing composition and a post-test writing composition. The students were asked to write a composition about any topic they were interested in (free writing) in order that they can write about any topic they have good knowledge about it. In addition, the students were given some common and popular topics in order to help the students to find topics easily such as (A friend in need is a friend indeed, the effects of social media on education, and technology and facilities at your school) if the students could not find a topic of writing easily.

The process of data analysis was divided into two parts based on the research questions which are: Does error correction with rewriting have an effect on grammar accuracy in composition writing? Microsoft Excel (version 2016) has been used for analyzing the data of both pre-writing test composition and post-test writing composition.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents descriptive statistics of the number of errors in the pre-writing composition test and the post-writing composition test. The students of both groups (experimental and control) had pre-writing test. Errors in the pre-writing test were corrected by their teacher and counted. The students in the experimental group were asked to write the correct form of writing on another paper to know their errors and correct the errors with their hands. While, the students in the control group only see the error feedback (correct form of errors) without writing the correcting form on another paper. After one month, the students had the post-writing test in order to investigate whether the students repeat the previous errors that the teacher corrected them in the pre-writing test. The difference between the number of errors in the pre-test scoring and the errors in the post-test scoring presented in the following tables in order to identify whether error correction with rewriting is a significant element in the error correction process.

Table 1: The Number of the Errors in the Pre-Writing Test and Post-Writing test of the Experimental Group

STUDENT	Errors in Pre-test (experimental group)	Errors in post-test (experimental group)	Difference between Linguistic Errors in Pre-test and Post test
1	15	9	6
2	13	8	5
3	8	5	3
4	4	2	2
5	13	7	6
6	9	7	2
7	10	3	7
8	10	8	2
9	12	7	5
10	9	8	1
11	5	1	4
12	10	2	8
13	10	5	5
14	19	14	5
15	14	7	7
16	10	7	3
17	12	9	3
18	11	9	2
19	8	9	-1
20	19	13	6
21	13	9	4
22	10	3	7
23	14	10	4
24	13	10	3
25	15	13	2
26	11	10	1
27	13	14	-1
28	8	6	2
29	11	8	3
30	16	11	5
31	12	10	2
32	8	6	2
33	10	11	-1
34	10	5	5
35	14	10	4
36	10	7	3

Table 1 presents the number of errors committed in the pre- and post- test writings of 36 of the participants in the experimental group. In addition, the table (1) reveals the differences between the number of errors in the pre-writing test and the post-writing test.

Table 2: Statistical analysis of the pre-writing test and post-writing test comparison of the experimental group
Paired Sample T-test between Pre and Post for Experimental

		M	SD	C	P-Value
Experimental	pre	11.36	3.24	0.75	9.18
	post	7.8611	3.27896	(0.001)**	(0.001)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
Key: M: Mean Score   SD: Standard Deviation   C: Correlation

Table 2 reveals the significant difference between students' errors in the pre-test writing and post-test writing based on the P-value which is (P= 0.000 < 0.05). The result indicates that there is a significant difference between participants' errors in the pre and post-writing test. In other words, the number of the students' errors in the post writing test decreased compared to the number of errors in the pre-writing test. This result indicates that error correction with rewriting is a significant and effective element to improve students' grammar accuracy when writing compositions. On the other hand, the mean score of students' errors in the pre-test of writing a composition is 11.36 which is significantly higher than the mean score of the students' error committed in the post-test of writing a composition. The finding shows that error correction with rewriting has a significant and positive effect on grammar accuracy in writing composition.

Table 3 and table 4 present descriptive statistics of the number of errors committed in the pre-writing composition test and the post-writing composition test of the control group. Each student in the control group only saw the corrective feedback from their teacher. The students were not asked to rewrite the corrected form of their errors on another paper. the difference between the numbers of the errors in pre- and post-writing tests presents the effect of corrective feedback on students' grammar accuracy in second language writing.

Table 3: The number of errors in the pre-test and post writing of the control group

Student	Errors in pre-test of control group	Errors in post-test of control group	Difference between errors in pre-test and post test
1	12	9	3
2	8	8	0
3	9	5	4
4	6	3	3
5	13	8	5
6	8	7	1
7	14	14	0
8	14	10	4
9	9	8	1
10	10	13	-3
11	12	8	4
12	9	11	-2
13	22	16	6
14	14	13	1
15	4	1	3
16	15	13	2
17	18	15	3
18	11	14	-3
19	11	9	2
20	11	8	3
21	11	9	2
22	6	3	3
23	14	12	2
24	8	6	2
25	10	9	1
26	5	2	3
27	12	12	0
28	9	7	2
29	14	12	2
30	7	4	3
31	12	9	3
32	15	13	2
33	9	11	-2
34	19	15	4
35	12	11	1
36	10	7	3

Table 3 presents the number of errors committed in the pre- and post- test writings of 36 of the participants in the control group. In addition, the table (3) reveals the differences between the number of errors in the pre-writing test and the post-writing test.

Table 4: Statistical analysis of the pre-test and post-test comparison of the control group
Paired Sample T-test between Pre and Post for Control Group

		M	SD	C	P-Value
Experimental	pre	11.19	3.85	0.857	5.483
	post	9.31	3.87	(0.001)**	(0.001)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Key: M: Mean Score   SD: Standard Deviation   C: Correlation

Table 4 reveals the significant difference between students' errors in the pre-test writing and post-test writing based on the P-value which is (P= 0.001 < 0.05). The result indicates that there is a significant difference between participants' errors in the pre and post-writing test of the control group. In other words, the number of the students' errors in the post writing test reduced compared to the number of errors in the pre-writing test. This result reveals that error correction with without rewriting is significant to improve students' grammar accuracy when writing compositions. Moreover, the mean score of students' errors in the pre-test of writing a composition is 11.19 which is higher than the mean score of the students' error committed in the post-test of writing a composition which is 9.31. The finding presents that error correction without rewriting has a positive effect on grammar accuracy in writing composition.

The findings of the tables (1, 2, 3, 4) confirmed that the effects of error correction on students' grammar accuracy in writing was positive which is coincide with the study of (Almuhimedi and Alshumaimeri, 2015) which stated that error correction has a positive impact on students' high performance in grammar accuracy and decreasing the frequency of errors.

The following tables (5 and 6) presents the comparison between the differences of errors committed in pre- and post-writing tests of both experimental and control groups. The comparison reveals the effect of error correction with rewriting and without rewriting on students' grammar accuracy in writing composition.

Table 5: The number of the errors in difference between the pre-test and post writing of both groups

Student in both groups	difference between errors in pre-test and post-test of experimental group	difference between errors in pre-test and post-test of control group	difference between improvement in grammar accuracy of students in experimental group and control group
1	6	3	3
2	5	0	5
3	3	4	-1
4	2	3	-1
5	6	5	1
6	2	1	1
7	7	0	7
8	2	4	-2
9	5	1	4
10	1	-3	4
11	4	4	0
12	8	-2	10
13	5	6	-1
14	5	1	4
15	7	3	4
16	3	2	1
17	3	3	0

18	2	-3	5
19	-1	2	-3
20	6	3	3
21	4	2	2
22	7	3	4
23	4	2	2
24	3	2	1
25	2	1	1
26	1	3	-2
27	-1	0	-1
28	2	2	0
29	3	2	1
30	5	3	2
31	2	3	-1
32	2	2	0
33	-1	-2	1
34	5	4	1
35	4	1	3
36	3	3	0

Table 5 presents the comparison between the difference of the number of errors committed in the pre- and post-test writings of 36 of the participants in the experimental group and the difference of the number of errors committed in the pre- and post- test writings of 36 of the participants in the control group.

Table 6: Statistical analysis of the pre-test and post-test comparison of both the experimental group and the control group

Paired Sample T-test between Control and Experiment Group

		M	SD	C	P-Value
Control		1.9	2.06	0.24	-3.14
Experimental		3.5	2.29	(0.65)	(0.003)

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Key: M: Mean Score   SD: Standard Deviation   C: Correlation

Table 6 reveals the significant difference of the comparison between the difference of the number of errors committed in the pre- and post- test writings of the experimental group and the difference of the number of errors committed in the pre- and post- test writings of the control group based on the P-value which is (P= 0.003 < 0.05). The result indicates that there is a significant difference between the participants' improvement of grammar accuracy in writing composition of the experimental group compared to the participants' improvement of grammar accuracy in writing composition of the control group. Furthermore, the difference in number of the students' errors between the pre- and post- writing tests of the experimental group is lower compared to the difference in number of the student's errors between the pre-and post-writing tests of the control group. The result reveals that error correction with rewriting is more effective compared to error correction without rewriting to improve students' grammar accuracy when writing compositions. Moreover, the mean score of students' improvement of grammar accuracy in writing composition of the experimental group is 3.5 which is higher the mean score of students' improvement of grammar accuracy in writing composition of the control group which is 1.9. The finding presents that error correction with rewriting the correct form of errors is more effective compared to error correction without rewriting the correct form of errors on grammar accuracy in writing composition.

According to the findings, which is presented in the table (2,4,6) error correction with rewriting and error correction without rewriting the corrected form are effective elements to avoid repeating the same grammar error structures in further writings. This result is in accordance with the findings of the studies of (Ferris 2004; Ferris, 2011; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Salteh and Sadeghi, 2015) which stated that error correction is an effective element in decreasing the frequency of grammar errors in writing.

The findings and results of the study provide the answer to the research questions which were related to the error correction with rewriting and error correction without rewriting the correct form of errors after receiving the corrective feedback from their teacher. The result revealed error correction has a positive effect on students' improvement of grammar accuracy in writing composition. In addition, this study is concerning the effect of error correction with rewriting on students' linguistic accuracy, diverse to the other abovementioned studies which concentrated only on the error correction without asking students to rewrite the correct form of their errors after receiving corrective feedback. According to the findings, error correction with rewriting is more effective compared with error correction without rewriting. Therefore, error correction with rewriting needs to be more implemented not as a substitute for the error correction without rewriting the correct form of the errors after receiving feedback while as an addition technique.

V. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The fundamental task of a EFL/ESL teachers is to improve the students' language proficiency in order to make minimum errors and be aware of the errors that they make. Teachers have an essential role to identify students' errors which the students do not have knowledge about the correct form of the errors they committed. Teachers can help students how to overcome grammatical error in order to improve students' grammar accuracy in their writing composition.

In terms of pedagogical implication, not all the teachers use error correction in their classes. Moreover, writing papers mostly marked without mentioning students' errors. Therefore, the students will be able not to identify what are their errors. Hence, teachers are required to pay more attention to error correction and techniques of error correction in their teaching plan.

This study focused on the effect of error correction on students' improvement of grammar accuracy in writing composition. The findings of the study stated that error correction is an influence feature in grammar accuracy. Moreover, error correction with rewriting is another positive point and technique in error correction which may not all the teachers have concerned about.

According to the findings and the review of some previous studies (Chandler, 2003; Hyland, 2003; Ferris 2004; Ferris, 2011; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Salteh and Sadeghi, 2015), it is recommended that teachers should implement error correction (without rewriting or with rewriting) in their language classes, especially in writing classes in order to improve students' grammar accuracy in a writing composition.

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