EFFECTIVENESS OF FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHING TECHNIQUES: PROVISION OF FEEDBACK AS A WAY TO CORRECT WRITING MISTAKES

EFICÁCIA DAS TÉCNICAS DE ENSINO DE LÍNGUAS ESTRANGEIRAS: FORNECIMENTO DE FEEDBACK COMO FORMA DE CORRIGIR ERROS DE ESCRITA

EFICACIA DE LAS TÉCNICAS DE ENSEÑANZA DE LENGUA EXTRANJERA: PROVISIÓN DE RETROALIMENTACIÓN COMO FORMA DE CORREGIR ERRORES DE ESCRITURA

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ABSTRACT: The study analyzes the problem of providing corrective feedback in studying a foreign language at the university as one of the types of feedback between a teacher and a student. The article regards feedback as a way of correcting students' mistakes in executing control. The paper offers a characteristic of written feedback, identifies its various types and subtypes in terms of their specific characteristics and efficiency of use. Various approaches to the correction of students' mistakes in writing and speech are analyzed. Particular attention is devoted to the conditions of giving effective feedback. The conducted experimental study of the effectiveness of different types of written corrective feedback between a teacher and a student in the process of foreign language learning concludes that indirect written corrective feedback proves more effective since indirect feedback requires greater participation of the students and their active involvement in the learning process.

KEYWORDS: Foreign language. Corrective feedback. Writing. Direct feedback. Indirect feedback.

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RESUMO: *O estudo analisa o problema do feedback corretivo no estudo de uma língua estrangeira na universidade como um dos tipos de feedback entre professor e aluno. O artigo considera o feedback como uma forma de corrigir os erros dos alunos na execução do controle. O artigo oferece uma característica de feedback escrito, identifica seus vários tipos e subtipos em termos de suas características específicas e eficiência de uso. Várias abordagens para a correção de erros de escrita e fala dos alunos são analisadas. É dada especial atenção às condições de dar feedback eficaz. O estudo experimental realizado sobre a eficácia de diferentes tipos de feedback corretivo escrito entre um professor e um aluno no processo de aprendizagem de língua estrangeira conclui que o feedback corretivo indireto escrito se mostra mais eficaz, pois o feedback indireto requer maior participação dos alunos e seu envolvimento ativo na o processo de aprendizagem.*

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: *Língua estrangeira. Feedback corretivo. Escrevendo. Feedback direto. Feedback indireto.*

RESUMEN: *El estudio analiza el problema del feedback correctivo en el estudio de una lengua extranjera en la universidad como uno de los tipos de feedback entre un profesor y un alumno. El artículo considera la retroalimentación como una forma de corregir los errores de los estudiantes en la ejecución del control. El documento ofrece una característica de la retroalimentación escrita, identifica sus diversos tipos y subtipos en términos de sus características específicas y eficiencia de uso. Se analizan varios enfoques para la corrección de los errores de los estudiantes en la escritura y el habla. Se presta especial atención a las condiciones para dar una retroalimentación efectiva. El estudio experimental realizado sobre la eficacia de diferentes tipos de feedback correctivo escrito entre un profesor y un alumno en el proceso de aprendizaje de una lengua extranjera concluye que el feedback correctivo indirecto por escrito resulta más eficaz ya que el feedback indirecto requiere una mayor participación de los alumnos y su implicación activa en la el proceso de aprendizaje.*

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Lengua extranjera. Retroalimentación correctiva. Escribiendo. Retroalimentación directa. Retroalimentación indirecta.*

Introduction

Up-to-date renewal of the content and structure of education calls for a fundamental revision of teacher-students' relationships, particularly for a re-profilization of the teacher from a supervisor of learning activities, who must control the process of knowledge assimilation by students, into an equal participant in this process (BAIDELDINOVA *et al*., 2021; DZYUBA *et al*., 2021). Creating a favorable learning environment is impossible without feedback, which allows the teacher to regularly monitor and adjust the process of knowledge acquisition by students (BESSONOV, 2016).

At the present stage, there is increased attention to the development of such a strategy of the teacher regarding the errors of writing in the study of a foreign language that would

meet the linguistic needs of the student (BREDIKHINA, 2018). Having the purpose to develop students' ability to freely express their thoughts in writing, to achieve a certain skill in constructing their own written text, the teacher, certainly, cannot ignore grammatical and vocabulary aspects of student writing, not to contribute to the development of ерушк editing skills (MALEKI; ESLAMI, 2013).

For this reason, today, the issues of providing corrective feedback in the process of learning a foreign language in institutions of higher education, as well as of the effective ways of its provision and the proper correction of students' mistakes in writing remain topical (USMANOVA; KHOKHLOVA; FEDOSEEV, 2021).

Literature review

Considering pedagogical research on the provision of feedback, it should be noted that the issue of feedback has for a long time been regarded predominantly in terms of classifying the types of feedback. Specifically, researchers propose various typologies of feedback and examine it in different contexts: in teacher-student communication (SHUTE, 2008), in oral or written speech (FARJADNASAB; KHODASHENAS, 2017). Special attention is paid by scholars to the study of students' awareness of the types of effective feedback (GAMLEM; SMITH, 2013), their recognition of the importance of using it (GAMLEM; MUNTHE, 2014), as well as the provision of feedback among students to one another (LIU; CARLESS, 2006).

Feedback acts in two directions: the teacher's and the student's. The feedback acting in the direction of the teacher provides them with information about the level of students' performance. The teacher analyzes the information about the presence of some deficiencies, monitors deviations in the speech activity of students, reveals the degree of compliance of the chosen learning strategy and tactics with the real needs. This makes it possible to timely assess the methodological situation and make the necessary corrections in the selection of techniques, ways, and methods of teaching, the selection of exercises, determining the mode and duration of their performance, and the sequence of the organization of all educational work with students (SKOVHOLT, 2018).

Ensuring the effectiveness of feedback, according to researchers (PARR; HAWE, 2017), requires following a specific sequence of steps in giving it: at the first stage, the performance and degree of mastery of the material by the student is assessed and goals are set; at the second stage, assessment, self-assessment, and evaluation of work in pairs are conducted; at the third stage, the students monitor their achievements and reflect on them.

Researchers (BROWN; HARRIS; HARNETT, 2012) point out three aspects of effective feedback: its structure (goals, location of provision, timing, the student's proficiency in the material), content (constructive, differentiated), and format (oral, written, graphic, video) (GOLUBEVA *et al*., 2021).

Since corrective feedback, known as the correction of mistakes or grammar, is the teacher's primary tool in working on students' mistakes (HUBACKOVA, 2016), research distinguishes between oral and written corrective feedback between the teacher and the student in the process of studying a foreign language (MACKEY, 2006).

Written corrective feedback is linked to the approach to the correction of students' mistakes that needs to be well-balanced and selective to various types of mistakes. Researchers in this area explore the issues concerning the types of mistakes that require analysis (BITCHENER; YOUNG; CAMERON, 2005) and when and how the teacher is advised to respond to students' mistakes (ELLIS, 2008).

There are several approaches to the types of this kind of feedback. In writing, some researchers (ÖLMEZER-ÖZTÜRK, 2019) distinguish between direct feedback, in which the teacher corrects the error and writes out the correct writing, and indirect feedback, which involves coding the mistakes (spelling [SP], grammar [GR], etc.) and underlining them so that the student corrects it themselves.

Other researchers (RUDZEWITZ *et al*., 2018) tend to differentiate between two types of direct corrective feedback: the correction of mistakes by the teacher personally or by means of meta-linguistic information, and indirect corrective feedback, which refers to only students' own corrections that make them think for themselves.

An effective influence on the formation and improvement of skills and abilities of written speech is produced by the identification and correction of mistakes in cooperation with the student, combined with such types of work as discussing mistakes in a group of students and individually (BLACK; NANNI, 2016), checking and re-writing the written work after receiving comments from the teacher (ELLIS *et al*., 2008), keeping records of mistakes in order to develop appropriate skills and abilities of the student (ARIDAH; ATMOWARDOYO; SALIJA, 2017).

However, despite the substantial body of research on the problem under consideration, particular attention needs to be paid to the study of the effectiveness of different mechanisms of providing written corrective feedback.

The aim of this article is to investigate the effectiveness of different types of written corrective feedback between the teacher and the student in the process of learning a foreign language in a university.

The study objectives:

1. To design and conduct an experimental study on the use of different types of written corrective feedback between the teacher and the student in the process of learning a foreign language in a university.

2. To conclude on the degree of effectiveness of using different types of written corrective feedback based on the conducted experimental study.

Research hypothesis: the use of indirect written corrective feedback is more effective because the indirect feedback pathway requires more student participation, their active involvement in the process.

Methods

The experimental study of the effectiveness of the provision of written corrective feedback between the teacher and the student in the process of learning a foreign language in the university was carried out at the Moscow State University of Technology and Management in 2021.

The experimental study is conducted on 192 students in the 2nd and 3rd years of study. Of these, 98 people are included in the experimental group and 94 – in the control group.

The control of students' foreign language writing at the formative and control stages of the experiment involves the performance of written control tests.

At the formative stage of the experiment, in the CG, the direct feedback method is employed when checking the students' written control tests: the teacher corrects the mistakes and writes down the correct answer. In the EG, the method used when checking students' written tests at the formative stage of the experiment is indirect feedback: the teacher only points out the mistake to the student by coding it according to the established scheme of mistake titles and suggests that the student correct it themselves.

The written control tests completed by the students at the control stage of the experiment are checked according to the following assessment scheme:

Table 1 – Results of the written control tests

Type of mistake	Points removed
Morphological	1
Syntactic	2
Lexical	2
Stylistic	2
Spelling	2
Punctuation	1

Source: Elaborated by the authors

The results of the assessment of students' control tests at the control stage of the experiment allow concluding on the degree of effectiveness of the two types of written corrective feedback between the teacher and the student in learning a foreign language at a university.

The reliability of differences between the results of the two student groups before and after the experiment is tested via Student's t-test for related and independent samples.

Results

The results of the study of the use of different types of written corrective feedback in the control and experimental groups are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Results of the study of the use of different types of written corrective feedback

	EG		CG		t_{Emp} for independent samples
	Average number of removed points	t_{Emp} for related samples	Average number of removed points	t_{Emp} for related samples	
Before the experiment	26.4	4.23	25.8	0.87	0.76
After the experiment	15.6		22.7		4.51

Source: Elaborated by the authors

As evident from Table 2, the average number of removed points in the EG prior to the formative stage of the experiment is 26.4 and, in the CG, – 25.8. The results of statistical analysis of the reliability of differences by Student's t-test for independent samples (for CG and EG) shows no significant differences between the groups ($t_{Emp} = 0.76$).

After the completion of the formative stage of the experiment, the results in the EG are much better (the average number of points removed equals 15.6). The results of statistical

analysis of the reliability of differences by Student's t-test for related samples (for EG) also confirms the higher results in the EG after the formative experiment (t_{Emp} = 4.23; p≤0.01)

Meanwhile, the results in the CG show no considerable change (the average number of points removed – 22.7) and the results of statistical analysis by Student's t-test for related samples (for CG) reveal no significant differences in the results of CG after the formative stage (t_{Emp} = 0.87).

At the same time, the results of statistical analysis of the reliability of differences by Student's t-test for unrelated samples (for CG and EG) confirms the higher results in the EG in comparison with the CG in the number of mistakes after the formative stage of the experiment (t_{Emp} = 4.51; p≤0.01).

Discussion

The conducted study confirms that the use of indirect feedback is more effective since the pathway of indirect feedback requires greater participation and their active involvement in the process, which clearly guarantees greater efficiency of such cooperation. However, there is no consensus on how exactly the indirect feedback should be provided – by coding the mistake according to the established scheme of mistake naming (as in our study) or through the so-called "hidden" identification of the mistake by underlining it in the text so that the student diagnoses and corrects it on their own. Researchers suggest (BITCHENER; YOUNG; CAMERON, 2005) that such indirect detection of a mistake forces the student to analyze it, to study a certain grammatical phenomenon more deeply, and in the process of such work, to practice their text editing skills, which leads to better, long-term success in learning to write.

In our view, direct and indirect feedback can be efficiently combined if the teacher aims to work out a particular category of mistakes and codes all errors in this category while fluently correcting various other mistakes. It is assumed that the way in which this "hidden" correction provided is pre-agreed upon with the student: be it by simply underlining the mistakes, coding them, using editorial symbols, verbal corrections, or comments. Mistake coding is usually less time-consuming and appears to be the best way to correct, provided that the student understands the coding marks. Researchers (BLACK; NANNI, 2016) alert against excessive direct intervention in student writing and teachers' assumption of text authorship.

Scientific pedagogical literature offers many practical tips for providing feedback in the correction of writing mistakes. Understanding the importance of feedback as a component of the overall methodological strategy of the learning process, researchers suggest the need

for teachers to develop a plan for such work. In particular, R. Ellis *et al.* (2008) present a multi-step planning methodology that involves diagnostic analysis of individual student needs, determining the most common category of mistakes, using mini-lessons to work on them, intensifying partner work, and introducing self-correction of mistakes. This plan, of course, assumes the presence of the teacher's feedback, their comments on both the primary and final versions of the written work, which assess the student's progress. The principles on which such work should be based are timeliness and relevance to students' language needs (DMITRICHENKOVA *et al.*, 2021).

Contrary to the fears of some researchers (MACKEY, 2006) about whether all students pay due attention to the teacher's corrections, the results of a study (RUDZEWITZ *et al.*, 2018) in this area show that about 80% of all mistakes that students are asked to correct are successfully corrected. At the same time, students are found to greatly appreciate and count on such cooperation with the teacher. There is also compelling evidence (ARIDAH; ATMOWARDOYO; SALIJA, 2017) of a steady increase in the language competence of students (POPOVA; BOBROVA; MALTZAGOV, 2021) whose instructors respond to writing mistakes in a timely manner and work on students' skills in recognizing and correcting writing mistakes, as skills in identifying and acknowledging editing errors allow them to avoid them in the future.

Studying the issue of different categories of mistakes, researchers (ELLIS, 2008) distinguish: (a) – mistakes that interfere with the understanding of the text and belong to the "global" ones, and (b) – mistakes that are not critical for the correct perception of the text. The criterion of "globality" of this or that mistake varies majorly depending on the context. Mistakes are also sometimes divided into those that are easy to explain and correct relying on grammatical and lexical norms and rules, and idiosyncratic ones, the detection of which requires a high level of language proficiency. Examples of errors of the first group are those in verb tenses, the agreement between the subject and the predicate, noun forms, punctuation, etc.

The student is given a certain amount of time to study the teacher's comments, discuss the mistakes, work on them with practice exercises, and prepare a corrected version of the text. The more complex mistakes include those which the student is unable to correct based only on normative textbooks: word choice, sentence structure, the use of idiomatic expressions, and the like.

Due to the lack of clear rules, such mistakes require not just coding, but direct correction by the teacher. Explanation of such mistakes is accompanied by preliminary development of training exercises in order to identify the sources of mistakes and ways to avoid them (e.g., exercises on finding an adequate word or expression). It is recommended to work on the mistakes based on texts of appropriate complexity, which may already be familiar to the student while paying attention to the recognition of the problematic structures and grammatical phenomena (ARIDAH; ATMOWARDOYO; SALIJA, 2017).

It is worth outlining the range of the grammatical phenomena that typically trigger discussion in the analysis of mistakes made by students studying a foreign language. These include: verb tenses, verb condition, auxiliary verbs, articles, noun definition, subject-participant agreement, parts of speech, word order in a sentence, word choice, sentence structure. The approach to correcting such mistakes, in our opinion, should be well-balanced; it is necessary to avoid both underestimating the seriousness of the mistake and overestimating it without taking into account other features of the text.

Researchers (BLACK; NANNI, 2016) recommend teachers to take a selective approach to different categories of mistakes, which presupposes that the main work is done on correcting the typical, global mistakes, while less critical mistakes (e.g., style inaccuracies) are paid attention to only in the works of very successful, strong students. A certain time saving is ensured by a wide introduction of work in pairs, partner and self-editing, mini-discussions, consideration of the specific linguistic needs of the group, and quite a realistic nature of the tasks.

Identifying and correcting mistakes in collaboration with the student is not the only way to effectively promote the improvement of writing skills. We argue that engaging students in peer-editing is a good motivating factor for developing their editing skills because mistakes in other people's work are sometimes easier to detect than in one's own. A study by Liu and Carless (2006) describes a clearly structured, supervised, three-stage process in which students first examine mistakes in ready-made texts, then edit each other's work, and only after that focus on editing their own work.

Studies were conducted (BLACK; NANNI, 2016; ELLIS *et al*., 2008) on students' feedback about which strategy is the most preferable for them. The results reveal that all students hope for the teacher's comments on their mistakes. Building and implementing a strategy to develop students' writing skills is known to require a lot of teacher's time and patience, as well as high professional skills, but the lack of such feedback causes certain

anxiety in students, undermines their confidence in both their abilities and their teacher. Choosing among such assessment categories as content, text organization, grammar, and vocabulary, students especially insist on the explanation of grammatical errors. Certain difficulties are caused by too "hidden" comments of the teacher (underlining, circling, arrows, etc.) At times, editing mistakes may seem uninteresting, unimportant to students, depending to a large extent on the teacher's comments. Lack of confidence in their ability to correct a mistake also leads students to be reluctant to develop their text-editing skills. At the same time, students clearly show a desire for cooperation in the work on mistake correction, for self-diagnosis and self-correction of the mistakes made, instead of simple copying of the correct version. A certain number of students always prefer partial correction, that is, correction of the most significant mistakes. The main point agreed upon by all students is that the teacher's strategy with regard to mistakes needs to be consistent, timely, and integral and that the teacher cooperates with students.

It needs to be borne in mind that the effectiveness of this work is also conditioned by other factors: the student's level of knowledge, their motivation (ARTEMOVA *et al.*, 2021), peculiarities of their individual learning style and personality, etc. (PANIKAROVA *et al.*, 2021). Specifically, analyzing the level of students' knowledge as one of the most important criteria in the development of a strategy on mistake correction, the researchers (BITCHENER; YOUNG; CAMERON, 2005) distinguish between two levels: the one at which the student is not able to diagnose their mistakes themselves, and the one at which the student is able to self-correct the mistakes pointed out by the teacher. Depending on the level of students' knowledge, the teacher chooses different methods and techniques of working with the group.

Conclusion

To draw a summary, the effectiveness of written corrective feedback is affected by the following conditions: the teacher's awareness of the types and methods of its provision; regularity of use; understandability for the student; focusing first on learning objectives and then on assessment; positive influence on the student; giving details and having an individualized approach.

The results of the study support the hypothesis that the use of indirect written corrective feedback is more effective because it requires greater student participation, their active involvement in the learning process.

Prospective further research should be aimed at scientifically grounded analysis and selection of effective techniques, methods, and means of providing written corrective feedback on students' writing mistakes as a component of the overall methodological strategy of the foreign language learning process.

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