

**The effect of teacher's error correction strategies on
students' writing, 7th grade, Public School Instituto
Nacional de Camoapa, Boaco.
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II. INTRODUCTION

The main role of English as Second Language (ESL) writing teachers is to help their students improve their writing proficiency in accordance with students needs and objective. How to best achieve is the concern of many ESL writing teachers and researchers (**Polio, 2003**). Providing feedback is viewed- both by teachers and students- as an important part of ESL writing instruction (Enginarla, 1994). One type of feedback that ESL writing teachers provide is error correction. It is perhaps the most widely used method for responding to students writing. For teachers, it represents the largest allocation of time they spend as writing instructors; and for students, error correction may be the most important component that will contribute to their success as writers (**Ferris, 2003**).

Learning a foreign language is a lifelong process and it is often a challenging experience for language learners. Most if not all writing teachers would agree that composition writing is one of the most difficult subjects for foreign language learners. Providing written feedback is indispensable because it plays an important role in guiding, motivating, and encouraging students to improve their accuracy in second language (L2) writing. From this point of view, it is clear that teachers' beliefs, which influence their L2 writing instruction, and students' attitude and preferences regarding error correction, are important (**Journal of Education, 2012**).

There has been some controversy on the usefulness of written corrective feedback in L2 classes (**Ferris, 1999, 2002, 2004; 2007; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2004, 2007**). While it is necessary to investigate the effectiveness of corrective feedback on students' written errors, it is also important to look at teachers' and students' perceptions of corrective feedback. In the case of written corrective feedback, teachers are believed to have the responsibility for selecting the appropriate way of providing such feedback. However, if both teachers and students share common ideas about feedback strategies, corrective feedback will be more productive (**Diab, 2005**).

The present study used qualitative tools in order to investigate the main strategies English teachers implement in writing classes. It pretends to establish the provision of written corrective feedback and its contribution to the improvement of students' written pieces.

III. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Error correction in L2 writing is always a great concern for language teachers. Regularly responding to students' lexical, grammatical and syntactical problems, they remark that error-oriented feedback is one of the most time-consuming and exhausting aspects of their job. They take great pains to mark every single error in students' texts only to find that the same errors reappear the next time. Recurrence of errors is a phenomenon that every writing teacher has to live with.

As a consequence, a debate about error correction has been there for many years, and professionals question their effectiveness. At some point highlighting all errors students make, seems to be unsuccessful in helping to reduce error frequency in subsequent students writing. On the other hand, some teachers have an opposite position where they pay little or no attention to morpho-syntactic or lexical accuracy of students' final written pieces.

In EFL classes writing is important at all levels, but learning a foreign language is a lifelong process and it is often a challenging experience for language learners. Besides, writing has been considered one of the most difficult subjects. Responding to student writing is one of the most controversial topics in second language (L2) instruction and theory. Do students benefit from teachers' corrections and written comments on their writing? If so, are some types of feedback more effective than others? Just as importantly, what are students' preferences for feedback and error correction? Students' beliefs about what constitutes effective feedback on writing and their expectations regarding teacher

paper-marking techniques may influence the effectiveness of such feedback (**Schulz, 1996**); therefore, it is important to investigate L2 students' preferences for teacher feedback on writing in order to ascertain whether these preferences and expectations match those of their teachers. This paper reports on a study investigating EFL university students' preferences for error correction and paper-marking techniques.

At Instituto Nacional de Camoapa, students keep making the same mistakes all over again, even though the teachers correct them appropriately. It is important to know if the types of revision teachers make have a significant effect on the students' writing achievement. Additionally, the strategies implemented by teachers tend to not overcome the problem and encourage students to compose better writings.

It is logical to mention that errors will not disappear simply because they have been pointed out to the student and expectation of perfect written assignments is not realistic. For teachers, it is understandable that errors should be identified and corrected, taking account that this process cannot be held without expert help and therefore need explanation. However, the issue remains in how to correct? When to correct? And what strategies are best at improving the process of writing?

IV. RATIONALE

Error correction is necessary and making errors is an important and useful part in language learning because it allows learners to experiment with language and measure their success. In the writing of a second or foreign language learner, both errors and mistakes are expected to appear. Besides, students' desires for error feedback could not so easily be dismissed or ignored. Successful second language learning lies in the *feedback* that a learner receives from others.

At the end of this research, the results will benefit English teachers and 7th grade students at Instituto Nacional de Camoapa. On the other hand, it will propose some strategies that help the teaching- learning process of writing classes, and therefore improve students written pieces in future tasks.

To teachers: they will be aware of the current methods they are implementing and how this is helping students to improve error correction. Additionally, the study will show what strategies are best for their students. This research can be considered as a positive feedback for teachers who have the desire to become better English learners as well as the expert help regarding error correction.

To students: the results will help students to be aware of the lexical and grammatical inaccuracies they make and how they can improve them. Besides, they will find out the importance of peer assessment and collaboration where they understand that the teacher is not the only one who can teach, correct and improve the written assignments class. With this research, students can figure out that they have the potential of improving their written errors.

V. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

General Objective:

1. To analyze the effect of writing error correction strategies used by English teachers.

Specific Objectives

1. To determine the main strategies currently used by English teachers to correct writing errors.
2. To find out the most common grammatical errors made by students as shown in their writing pieces.
3. To propose strategies to improve the learning-teaching methodology of writing.

VI. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

What are the main strategies implemented by teachers for error correction in writing classes?

What type of error correction method is used when it comes to feedback?

Which are the most common grammatical errors made by students?

What strategies would be useful to improve the learning-teaching methodology, and therefore, the writing assignments?

VII. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

7.1. Definitions

7.1.1. Definition of Error & Error Correction

Errors are mistakes which students cannot correct without help – and which, therefore, need explanation. Errors occur when learners try to say something that is beyond their current level of knowledge or language processing. Because they are still processing and/or don't know this part of language, learners cannot correct errors themselves because they do not understand what is wrong (**Chkotua, 2012**)

Error correction focuses on whether teachers should correct errors in student writing and what techniques they should use in correcting errors. Error correction has been proposed as a process that supports successful collaboration (**Shaw, 1932; Sniezek & Henry, 1989**).

7.1.2. Definition of Mistake

It is when the student says something which is grammatically correct, but is not what they meant (**ENGLISH TEACHING *professional*, 2012**)

7.2. Importance of written error correction

Providing feedback on student's writing is perhaps, the most effective widely used method for responding to student writing (**Ferris, 2003**). Despite the ongoing debate on the effectiveness of written error correction, teachers still felt that providing corrective

feedback is important in helping their student improve their writing (**Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Brown, 2007**). Teachers believe that providing written error correction to their students' writing is important in helping them improving their writing accuracy. In addition, they believe that providing written error correction also encourages students to read more in order to help them become better writers (**Corpuz, 2011**)

According to **Long (1991)** error correction is provided to focus students' attention on grammatically accurate forms within the context of performing a communicative task. Hence, it can be argued that one of the roles of error correction in L2 instruction is to promote student's production of L2 structures that are grammatically accurate and are still applicable for communicative purposes.

Ortega (2009) argues there are several implications regarding error correction instruction in L2 classes. Firstly, by providing error correction, students are able to pay attention to the existence of new features of the L2. In addition, students become aware and are able to identify the gaps between their L2 usage and that of L1 speaker's. Secondly, error correction may help students to discover the limitations of their L2 communication abilities with their given L2 resources. Therefore, it can be argued that error correction could function as a "noticing facilitator" that directs the attention of L2 students not only towards error, but also to new features of the target language.

7.3. Practice of written error correction

For teachers, written error correction plays an integral role in improving L2 writing accuracy of their students (**Ferris & Robert, 2001; Lee, 2004; Brown, 2007**). Teachers prefer to provide written error correction because it allows for an individualized teacher-to-student communication that is rarely possible on day to day operations on a L2 writing class.

On the other hand, teachers have their own way of providing error correction based on the following aspects: use of error correction codes, providing detailed comments, explicit error correction, underlining and encircling errors. They have their own manner of practicing error correction as well as on how to provide it. Some teachers believe in an explicit manner of providing feedback but others believe in an implicit manner, though the use of error correction codes, in providing feedback. The different patterns of their beliefs and preferences could be interpreted as a reflection of the differences in their previous experiences regarding providing written error correction (**Corpuz, 2011**).

7.4. Approaches and Methods of written error correction

Although providing correct forms of grammatical error is one of the most popular techniques among language teachers, the use of various types of corrective feedback has been recommended as it is considered to be more effective and successful than simply relying on a single technique.

7.4.1. General approaches: Comprehensive vs Selective

According to recent literature (**Ellis, 2009; Van Beuningen, 2010**), there are two general approaches in providing written error correction. These two contrasting approaches refer to the comprehensiveness of written error correction provided by teachers on their students written texts. The comprehensive (or unfocused) approach involves the teachers correcting correcting all errors in a student's text, irrespective of their error category. On the other hand, the selective (or unfocused) approach targets specific linguistic features only, leaving all other errors outside of the current focus domain uncorrected.

7.4.2. Methods of written error correction

Error feedback

“Error feedback” refers to the feedback teachers give on students' errors, which could be either direct or indirect. These can also be referred as explicit and implicit.

While it is necessary to investigate the effectiveness of corrective feedback on students' written errors, it is also important to look at teachers' and students' perceptions of corrective feedback. In the case of written corrective feedback, teachers are believed to have the responsibility for selecting the appropriate way of providing such feedback. However, if both teachers and students share common ideas about feedback strategies, corrective feedback will be more productive (**Diab, 2006**).

Explicit error correction

It refers to direct feedback which is concerned to overt correction of student errors, that is, teachers locating and correcting errors for students. It is usually applied when the teacher intervenes by pointing out where and how learners are wrong. It can also entail asking the student to repeat the corrected version of an utterance. A compelling reason and justification for sometimes giving explicit correction is simply that many learners expect or want their errors to be corrected in this way. Maybe this is because it reflects the traditional view of what a teacher does. These days, students often complain about not being corrected enough – rarely about being corrected too much! (**Payne, 2012**)

Implicit error correction

Implicit error correction or Indirect feedback refers to teachers indicating errors without correcting them for students. Some teachers, when giving indirect feedback, locate

errors directly by underlining or circling the errors, while others may locate errors indirectly, for instance, by putting a mark in the margin to indicate an error on a certain line.

Whether teachers locate errors directly or indirectly, they can further decide if they want to identify the error types — by using symbols, codes, or verbal comments. For direct location of errors, teachers normally put the symbols, codes or comments right above or next to the errors underlined or circled. For indirect location of errors, teachers may put a code or symbol in the margin to identify the error type on a certain line (Educational Journal, 2003).

Ferris (2002) explains that treating errors is not so simple, advocating explicit grammar instruction. She explains that most second language writers make a multitude of errors in their writing, from incorrect verb tense to article misuse to improper word choice. The instructor must first decide which errors in a student's paper most adversely affect meaning, the global errors as opposed to the local errors. Then, the instructor must identify which of those occur most frequently. These are called patterns of error. The instructor may decide to address two or three of these at a time.

Ferris goes on to explain that if they correct grammar, many composition instructors have a system for correcting student papers. They may or may not be conscious of this system. They might use coded feedback, in which abbreviations stand for parts of speech, such as *vt* for *verb tense*. Or, they might use uncoded feedback, writing out a description of the specific error. Research indicates that second language writers are often frustrated by coded feedback, which they must then decipher.

7.5. Types of errors in writing

In order to become a more proficient writer, you need to be able to think of your writing in "global" and "local" ways. According to the *Allyn & Bacon Guide to Writing Concise Edition*, "You revise *locally* whenever you make changes to a text that affect only the one or two sentences that you are currently working on. In contrast, you revise *globally* when a change in one part of your draft drives changes in other parts of the draft"

7.5.1. Global & Local issues in writing

Global Issues:

A "global" error is a high-frequency error within piece of writing or an error that seriously impairs intelligibility of sentences and paragraphs within a piece of writing. Global errors affect syntax and cohesion.

Local issues:

A "local" error is a more minor error, one that is confined to a single clause, rather than being an error which affects meaning across sentences and paragraphs. Local error involves morphology and word choices rather than syntax and cohesion.

7.6. Grammatical error in writing

7.4.1. Error #1: Run-on Sentence or Comma Splice

A run-on sentence is a sentence that joins two independent clauses without punctuation or the appropriate conjunction. A comma splice is similar to a run-on sentence, but it uses a comma to join two clauses that have no appropriate conjunction.

7.4.2. Error #2: Pronoun Errors

Pronoun errors occur when pronouns do not agree in number with the nouns to which they refer. If the noun is singular, the pronoun must be singular. If the noun is plural, however, the pronoun must be plural as well.

7.4.3. Error #3: Mistakes in Apostrophe Usage

Apostrophes are used to show possession. However, you do not use an apostrophe after a possessive pronoun such as my, mine, our, ours, his, hers, its, their, or theirs.

7.4.4. Error #4: Lack of Subject/Verb Agreement

When speaking or writing in the present tense, a sentence must have subjects and verbs that agree in number. If the subject is singular, the verb must be singular. If the subject is plural, the verb must be plural as well.

7.4.5. Error #5: Misplaced Modifiers

To communicate your ideas clearly, you must place a modifier directly next to the word it is supposed to modify. The modifier should clearly refer to a specific word in the sentence.

7.7. Strategies to improve error correction strategies

Allow ESL students time

Composing in a non-native language is very demanding. Students might need help analyzing an assignment, or unpacking the cultural context that native English speakers have readily at hand. Moreover, ESL students might need to read material before writing, which for some is a very slow and laborious process. If possible, provide students with an

assignment early enough that they have time to draft and revise. ESL students need time.

Provide "Live" Feedback for Revision

A responder's comments are less likely to be ignored, and the responder's time more fruitful, if the comments facilitate revision rather than exist in defense of a final grade. If comments are provided on drafts allowing students to revise, rather than provided on a dead text with a final grade, then the process is more likely to make better writers. (Bliss, 2001)

Avoid marking all errors

While both faculty and students might believe that their job is complete only if all errors are marked, more is to be gained from limited and selective marking. Some ESL students insist that all errors are marked on all writing, and well-meaning faculty mark all errors to help students improve, but research shows that marking all errors does not improve student performance in subsequent writing tasks.

One error might be repeated several times in one essay, and by marking each manifestation of one error, the teacher not only does the work for students, but also can frustrate students with a wall of marks that makes it appear that there are more kinds of errors, when there might be only a few. Since ESL students make large numbers of sentence-level errors and may need special guidance with unfamiliar rhetorical patterns, commentary can easily become overwhelming. Also, it is more effective to mark a rule-driven error pattern once, model one correction, and ask the student to find similar errors.

Leki recommends that readers attend to what are stigmatizing errors first:

"Stigmatizing errors are good candidates [for attention], since these are often the same ones made by native speakers and have traditionally been associated with lack of education:

formal conventions of appearance (setting appropriate margins, for example), subject-verb agreements, the occasional misuse of forms that native speakers also misuse (themselves for themselves), or sentence boundary errors. If these types of errors cause irritation or stigmatize students, they should probably not be left to fade out of a student's interlanguage at their own speed".

Give Feedback to Content First

Students need to believe that their readers are as interested in what they have to say as much as or more than they are concerned with sentence-level correctness. It is therefore effective to first give feedback on content. This is not to say that a responder must ignore errors, but rather that there should be clear cues that the reader is engaging with the writer's ideas. After responding to content, a responder can address the most salient errors, but it is best to make limited and prioritized comments on errors.

Make Global and Local Distinctions

It is more effective to address the errors that affect meaning, and to distinguish between "local" and "global" errors. Local errors are those which disturb only a small portion of a text—a missing article, for example, or an incorrect preposition. A global error has a greater effect on understanding and might be, for that reason, considered more "serious" or more appropriate for correction. Global errors may involve incorrect lexical choices but they usually disturb syntax.

Use Peer Responding

Peer groups, when guided and managed, can be very effective for helping writers learn to be critical of their own work. With helpful guidance, such as Peer Response Guides and Rubrics, ESL students can learn to provide helpful responses to others' writing, and to critique their own.

Provide Written Assignments and Instructions

ESL students need hard copy of assignments because ability can vary in listening skills. Students can spend so much cognitive effort trying to understand the assignment if given verbally, that what gets written can be inaccurate and incomplete.

Be aware of political differences

It is easy to assume others' understanding of the belief and value systems that drive our choices. However, it is important and effective to make cultural contexts explicit, and to not assume non- native students understand the cultural and political contexts that native speakers more readily understand.

Make Assignment Expectations and Assumptions Explicit

ESL students find it helpful if professors do more than provide rules and conventions. It is helpful to explain the assumptions behind the conventions, in the context of an awareness of different rhetorics and conventions that may drive students' writing choices. Providing and explaining models of specific kinds of writing can be very effective.

Complement Written Feedback with Conferences When Possible

Oral conferences can be very effective to complement written feedback on ESL students' writing, but professors need to be aware that non-native students might say, out of politeness, that they understand what their professors are saying. Also, some ESL students are unaccustomed to the availability of professors for conferences, and are not familiar with the give-and-take of dialogue expected in a conference, as they are accustomed to more formal and distant educators. Professors may need to explain the purpose of office hours.

VIII. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology adopted for this research consists of two survey questionnaires, a classroom observation and collection of written pieces. One of the surveys was designed for students and the other for teachers; they both are written in English and were distributed to respondents. All of them were students of 7th grade at Instituto Nacional de Camoapa.

8.1. Research Method

The research method for this study is qualitative design approach. Qualitative methods can be used for pilot studies, to illustrate the results of a statistical analysis, in mixed methods studies, and in independent qualitative research projects (c.f. Denzin & Lincoln, 1998). On the other hand, the class of research method for this study is transversal which means that involves a representative subset at one specific point in time.

8.2. Population and Sample

It is expected to have a population of 72 students of 7th grade at Instituto Nacional de Camoapa who are currently learning English as a foreign language. This population is divided into two class groups of 37 students each. The sample was 15 students per group. The students that took the survey were selected randomly and emphasis was put to gender, so boys and girls had equal opportunities.

8.3. Instrument

The instrument is intended to provide academic and non-academic information for policy makers to assist them in making informed decisions. It consists on a paper-based survey which contains diverse type of questions: open questions; open-ended questions; Yes/No questions; multiple choice questions, where the answers can be statements or just options. Many of them use a variety of ranking scales, where one of the most important is the 5-point Likert-type scale, with "1" indicates not important at all, and "5" indicates the extremely important. And as per **Cooper (2006)**, Likert scale is the most frequently used variation of the summated rating scale and it is also simple to construct and likely to produce a high reliable scale.

For the purpose of this research, three instruments were design: teachers' survey instrument, students' survey instrument and a classroom observation. The survey questions range from basic questions such as gender and age to more specific questions about the teachers' strategies and techniques, teachers' practices in class, students perceptions, and so on. The questionnaire contains 33 questions divided into five main sections:

Teachers survey instrument

This survey is intended to know the perspectives teachers have regarding error correction and find out the principal methods and strategies used while teaching writing.

The instrument is divided into two sections: the first one asks personal issues and the second one asks academic aspects which are more concerned with the class. Finally, this tool was applied to teachers in English.

Students survey instrument

It is intended to know the perspectives students have about teachers' strategies, correction methods and there is also a section of propose activities that can be very helpful to improve their classes. In the same section, they can have the opportunity to write their own activities. Similar to the teachers' survey, this survey is also divided into two sections: personal issues and academic aspects. Contrary to the teachers', this survey was design in English but it was applied in Spanish. Besides, The data collected was processes in English.

Classroom observation

This tool will help to support the findings of the two previous surveys. There were 4 classroom observations during a period of three weeks. The classroom observation instrument is divided into two main sections: the first one is going to evaluate overall class, and the second one takes into consideration three important aspects. These are directions before star writing, assessment opportunities and issues concerning rubrics.

Observation is a qualitative data collection procedure of gathering open-ended, direct information by observing participants in order to identify and record behavior and

interactions occurring at research site (Creswell, 2005; Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). One of the main strengths of conducting observations is that allows the research to gather data that covers in real time and encompass the entire context of an event (Corpuz, 2011).

8.3.1. Instrument validity and reliability

To establish the validity of the instrument, Professor Alber Sánchez who was tutoring this study, conducted a review of the items and suggested a few modifications. Additionally, Professors Rolando Téllez and Pedro Vazquez as inviters in the pre- defense suggested modifying some terms used in the instrument.

On the other hand, a pilot study was performed utilizing students of 7th grade who belongs to the school and receive English classes. The purpose of this was to find out how well they understood directions and questions facilitated in the survey questionnaire. Consequently, little modifications were applied to it.

8.4. Data Processing and Analysis

To perform the data analysis and address the research questions a Microsoft Excel Version 2010 was used to design graphics, tables, and charts, among others. This program helped to process the results of all the answers of the survey questionnaire. Besides, the program was involved in measurements of frequencies, means as well as percentages and their corresponding interpretation.

IX. Results and Discussion

The present study sought to explore and investigate teachers' strategies and preferences regarding error correction as well as students' feedback preferences and grammatical errors. Additionally, it is intended to propose some practices to improve the teaching-learning methodology in writing classes, and therefore, better students' writings. The data collected was obtained through survey questionnaires (students and teachers), weekly classroom observations and collection of students' written pieces.

9.1. Teachers' survey

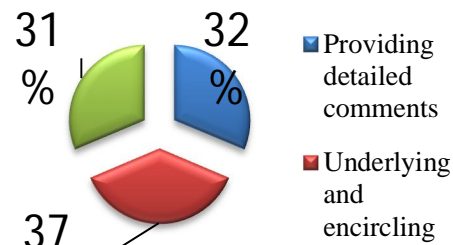
In this survey, it was founded out the level of preparation teachers had regarding error correction, method used, form of revision and perspectives (future ones and concerns) about written error correction.

Teacher's preparation

The present study founded out that both teachers are empirical learners, which is influential in students learning of the language. Besides, the little preparations they have received come from seminars, workshops and trainings given by MINED frequently.

Revision of students' writings

Teachers frequently use underlying and encircling as their preferred form of revision compared to providing detailed comments and explicit error correction. Writing is a time consuming process and therefore underlying and encircling which is used in 37% of cases is a faster method. Meanwhile, the other two forms of writing, take more time and explanation.

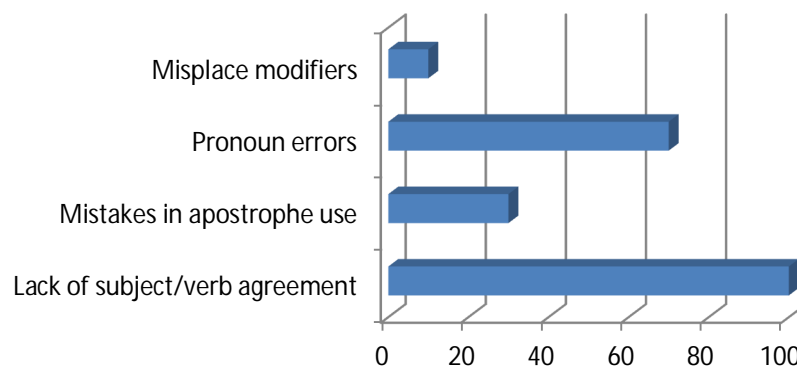


Graphic 1: Different forms of teachers' revision

Most frequent written errors

Errors are important in learning and teaching language. They are important for teachers as they show students accomplishment, on the other hand, they are equally important for learners, as students can learn from these errors (**Journal of education, 2012**).

The results of this study show since teachers' perspective that the most common grammatical error is lack of subject/verb agreement in 100% of the time. No matter if students know the rule and the teacher keep telling them all the time, they always make this mistake repetitively. This result is followed by pronoun errors with 70% of cases which means they do it frequently.



Graphic 2: Percentage of grammatical errors made by students according to teachers' perspective

Teacher's expectations after feedback

Teachers expect their students to make fewer errors in their writing pieces in the coming future. They expect students apply elements taught in class not only to improve their grammatical mistakes (most common) but also in pronunciation.

Problems and concerns in writing classes

Teachers express that students do not copy the words appropriately from the board which causes difficulties when it comes to evaluation of written tasks. It is important to mention that these students are teenagers and they distract

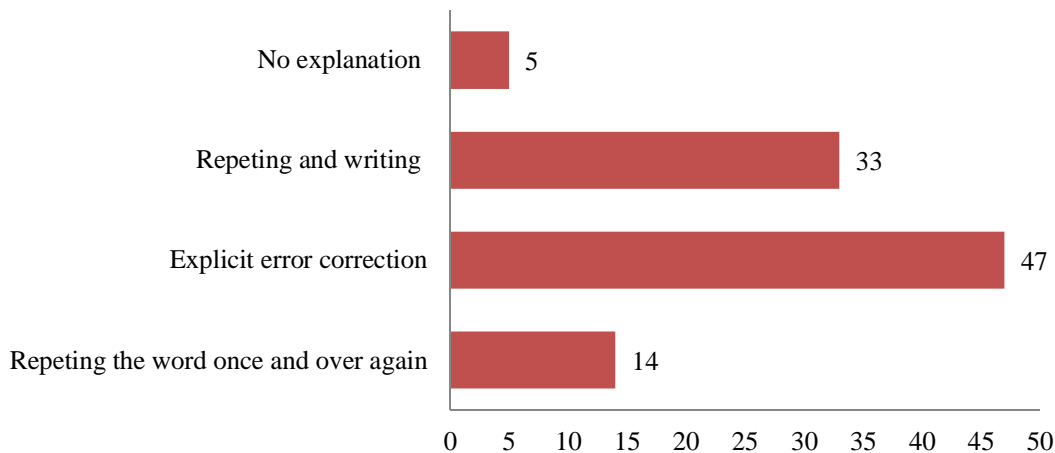
9.2. Students' survey

In the students' survey, it was determine the importance that error feedback has for students and their perspectives about teachers practice in class. Additionally, it was confirmed the current method used by the teacher. The different perspectives related to peer assessment were also covered.

Perspectives about teachers' practices

How teachers correct students' writing errors

Students confirm that direct method (explicit error correction) is used most of the time (47%) to correct written errors. Second in importance, 33% students mentioned the strategy of repeating the word or phrase and writing it in the notebook in an appropriate way.

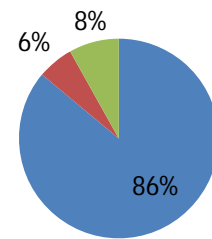


Graphic 3: Strategies of error correction applied by teachers

Students' satisfaction and usefulness of teacher's correction

When asked if students like the way teachers responded to errors, 86% of them answered that they were satisfied. Most students are satisfied with the way the teacher responds to their errors because it helps them to learn and understand the language. Besides, they think they will write well and avoid a future error which is useful to improve their writings tasks.

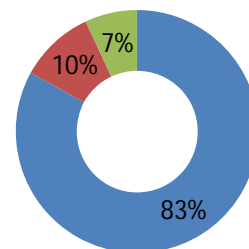
■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes & No



Graphic 4: Students satisfaction regarding teacher's response to errors

On the contrary, 6% of students who said "No" (unsatisfied) feel the teacher corrects them in a bad way. They mention that teachers treat them and sometimes perceive him being mad. Few

■ Yes ■ No ■ Yes, but



Graphic 5: students' response about usefulness of teacher's correction

students answered "Yes and No" which means teachers sometimes correct them and that is okay but in other occasions, he does not.

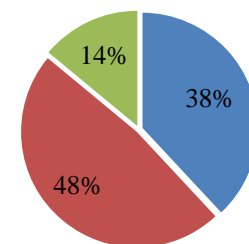
When asked about usefulness of teacher's correction, students answered "Yes" because they find it helpful and understand English little by little. Students mention there is need to correct errors in order to learn the language and it is acceptable that they are not perfect writers. Anyway, they will keep making mistakes. Besides, they expect that it would be significant in the future because students will improve their writing.

On the other hand, 10% of students who responded "No" are the same who are not satisfied and mentioned the same reasons. As observed in figure 4, 7% answered "Yes, but" means that they accept the technique is useful but the teacher is not very helpful.

Frequency and importance of written work

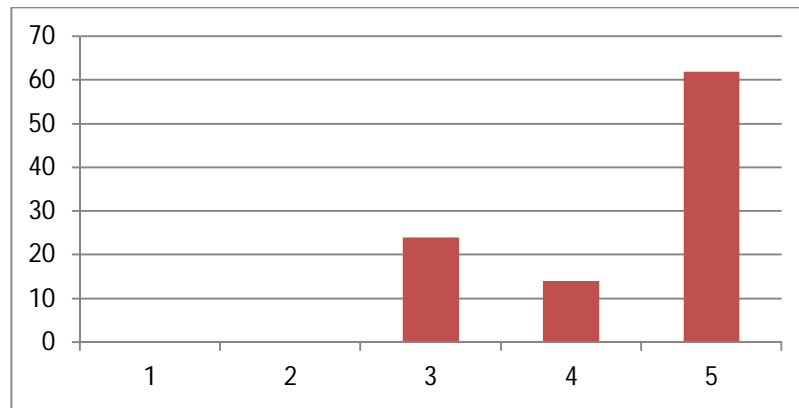
When asked about the frequency of correcting their written work 48% of students answered that teacher sometimes correct their assignments. This means student's written work are not corrected most of the time, and consequently, they are not receiving written feedback. Only 38% responded to be corrected always and 14% thought that they are almost never corrected. Correcting written work is not appealing to teachers as it is a time consuming process. Also, it was notice from the survey that teachers are not very active in correcting their students written papers which might be discouraging.

■ Always ■ Sometimes ■ Almost never



Graphic 6: Student's opinions about correction frequency of written work.

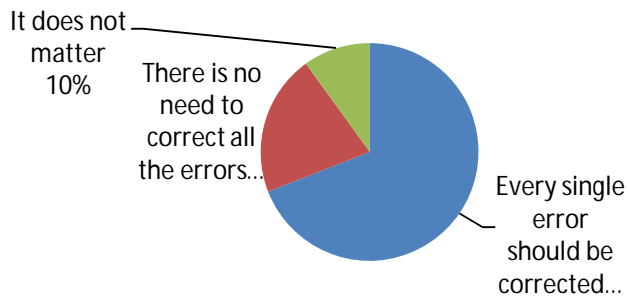
When it comes to importance, even though most students responded that sometimes they are corrected, the survey shows that 62% of students think that receiving feedback is extremely important, giving a “5” in Lickert scale. In the following graphic, “1” means not important at all, and “5” means extremely important.



Graphic 7: Students response about importance of receiving feedback

Students' opinion about receiving specific feedback of written errors

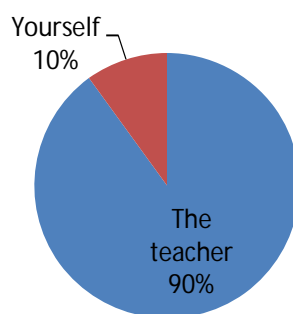
The results show that a significant number of students (69%) think all their errors should be corrected which means they express direct method to be the most effective. However, 21% disagree showing that there is no need to correct all errors which means indirect method should be implemented.



Graphic 8: Students opinion about feedback of written errors

Who should correct written errors?

In regards to who could be the best person to correct the written errors, the study show a significant number, 69% of students. They think the teacher should is the best person because of his experience and they would feel more secure about his correction. On the other hand, if students correct errors themselves, they would feel that things can go wrong.



Graphic 9: Students response to the person who should correct errors

Activities for error correction improvement in writing classes

In this study, a set of activities were proposed to students in order to know their opinion about how to improve their writing classes and overcome errors in written pieces. Besides, they had the opportunity to suggest their own activities. This is helpful for teachers in a way that they can find out a wider range of strategies to improve their classes. **Lee (2009)** argues that since feedback is an important task, teachers' practices may be influential to contribute to effective feedback.

According to the survey, they answered that making translations, looking at pictures or poster on the walls, working with sentences and texts, and finally choosing topic of their

interest are activities that would be very helpful in class. They gave a scale of "5" to all these options. When it comes to proposals, they mentioned the following activities:

1. Labeling: write the names in English to several pictures. This exercise is commonly applied in English classes but they would like to do it more frequently.
2. Better lessons: students argue that lessons are very poor. So, they think the writing techniques they received are not enough.
3. Interactive and dynamic classes: they want a funnier class, with activities that involve answering and asking questions such as dialogues and role plays.
4. Singing in English
5. Constant review of previous lessons.
6. Check written errors in class because most common errors are corrected when they give the assigned task to the teacher.

9.3. Teachers' and students' feedback preferences

Very few studies have investigated teachers beliefs and perceptions regarding error correction; and even fewer that the explore the correspondence or difference between students's preferences and actual teaching practice in written error correction (**Yates & Kenkel, 2002; Lee, 2004**)

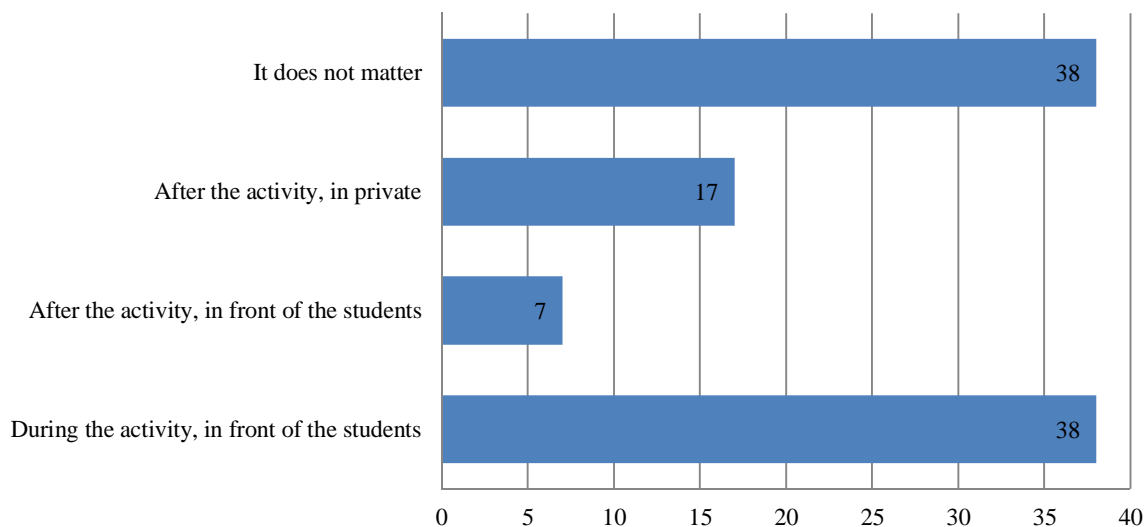
Teachers' feedback method and students feedback preferences

Teacher's question: When do you correct your students' written work? (A: During the activity, in front of the students, B: After the activity, in private, C: At home, but discussed later, D: It does not matter)

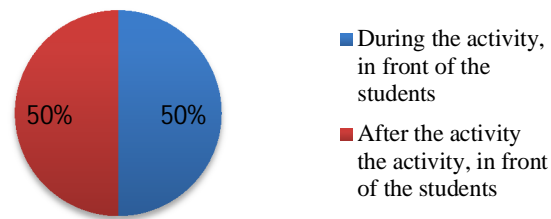
Students' question: When do you prefer to receive feedback in writing class? Students' question: When do you prefer to receive feedback in writing class?

According to the survey, 38% of students prefer to receive feedback during writing activities, in front of other students. The same percentage (38%) shows that the same amount of students do not mind about correction time. This result is consistent with 50% of teachers who also answered that prefer correct students during or at the end of the activity in front of the class.

These findings support the argument that students as well as teachers prefer correction time of written assignments to be publicly. This indicates that direct method is the best choice for them.



Graphic 8: Students opinions about correction time of their written work



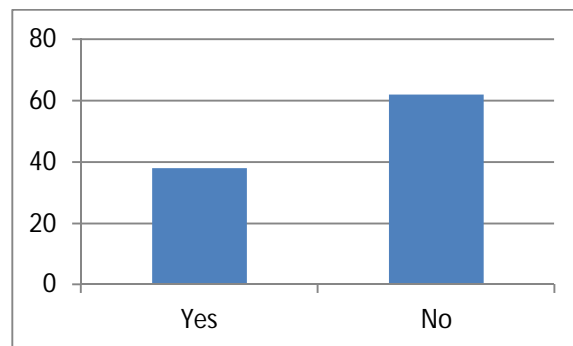
Graphic 9: Teachers' opinions about correction time of their students

Peer feedback and students' self-correction

Peer feedback

Teacher's question: Do your students mind if other students correct your students' works?

Students' question: Do you mind if other students correct your own work?



Graphic 10: Students' response about peer-correction

The study shows that teachers think their students will not mind other students correcting their work. In the case of students, 62% of them are willing to receive peer correction which has demonstrated to be useful in previous research. On the other hand, only 38% are concerned if other students correct their work because they would be

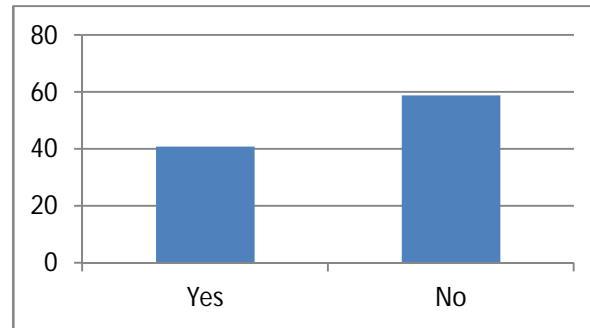
embarrassed if any of his or her classmates take a look at their mistakes. Regarding teachers opinion, they think students would not mind peer-editing. Teachers find this activity entertaining as it makes their students to be involved in the writing process, making the process more interesting and active. As the survey shows, both teachers and students are aware of the importance of peer-editing and respond positively with minor differences in percentage terms. So, this practice should be supported.

Students' self-correction

Teacher's question: Do your students mind if you ask them to correct their works themselves?

Students' question: Do you mind if the teacher sometimes asks you to correct your own work?

With regard to the subjects' views whether or not they would like to correct their own work 59% of the students replied that they would gladly correct themselves without external intervention, while 41% of the students disliked the idea. Students who do not mind the idea express that this will help them to figure out what was wrong, look at errors briefly and get a better preparation in English writing. In that way, they will be aware of their written errors but some think that if they correct themselves, they would not do it appropriately. Regarding teachers opinion, they think students would not self-editing.



Graphic 11: Students' preference about self-editing

Teachers' error correction practice may not allow students to learn how to correct and locate their own errors, even though it does (Lee, 2009). Self-correction of written work is easier for students and is less threatening to learners. However, they may not have enough qualification to carry it out totally independently.

X. CONCLUSIONS

Teachers may need training and practice in error correction strategies, in order to make more effective and beneficial for learners. The fact that they are only empirical learners of the language is a disadvantage, but they try hard and there is willingness to learn new things.

The range of feedback strategies applied by teachers is limited and their competence in giving error feedback is also questionable, even by students. Therefore, it is necessary to make classes richer in vocabulary, strategies and techniques. Additionally, students pointed out that the class environment should be funnier and dynamic.

The study has shown that the teachers mainly relied on one single error feedback strategy, namely direct error feedback (underlying/encircling and correcting errors). However, students and teachers are somehow satisfied with this method and they find it useful.

During classes, it was observed that there is potential for peer assessment but students show fear of it because they are not aware of its usefulness. Besides, students seem themselves as incapable to assess themselves or their classmates.

Students gave importance to activities would be very helpful in class. These are: making translations, looking at pictures or poster on the walls, working with sentences and texts, and finally choosing topic of their interest. They also suggested six activities that they want the teacher take into consideration for future lesson and they think these will help them improve their writings.

The most common grammatical errors made by students are related to subject/verb agreement which means they still do not understand how English language works.

Therefore, there is need to explain the differences of the target language and mother tongue.

XI. RECOMMENDATIONS

The results suggest that teachers need to experiment with a wider range of error feedback strategies. Looking at indirect feedback may be a start to try new things which students would find interesting.

Students need to be aware that they have the capability to correct others as well as themselves. It necessary that they change their mind and the teacher cannot be the only one involved in the correction process.

There is need to provide students with rich vocabulary and techniques in order to make classes more interesting and fruitfully. In this way, students would not perceive that the class is poor or lacks of something.

Teachers would benefit if they take into consideration students' opinion about the activities that they can apply in English classes. In this way, they both will get involved in the process of learning and fewer errors in writing would be made.

Teachers as well as students need to discuss what the best way is for them about giving feedback to their written pieces. New activities should be implemented, so, students would feel more comfortable and motivated to receive the class.

XII. ANNEXES

XIII. REFERENCES

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SURVEY FOR TEACHERS



**Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua
UNAN-MANAGUA**

Faculty of Education and Languages

**Survey Questionnaire for Error Correction in Writing
Second Semester 2013**

Survey for Teachers

The current survey is intended to get information about error correction strategies that English teachers apply to correct their students' written pieces. Additionally, it will serve to propose some techniques to improve the writing tasks. This survey questionnaire will help to contribute to the process of teaching-learning in the classroom. The data obtained will be confidential and the findings will be presented in a general way.

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

CASE NUMBER:

Use a tick (✓) to indicate your response where appropriate

1.1 Gender

Female Male

1.2. Age

20-25 26-30 30-35 35+

II. ACADEMIC ASPECTS

Use a tick (✓) to indicate your response where appropriate

2.1. What is level of preparation in the English area?

- | | |
|------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| I am an empirical learner | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I took English courses | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I did not finish the English major | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I graduated from university | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Other, please specify: | <input type="checkbox"/> |

2.2. Have you received any preparation regarding writing?

Yes No

2.3. If your answer is “Yes” in question 2.2, please mention how often?

Almost never Sometimes Frequently Always

2.4. If your answer is “Yes” in question 2.2, please mention what kind?

2.5. Have you participated in any of the following activities regarding writing?

Seminars	<input type="checkbox"/>	Trainings	<input type="checkbox"/>
Conferences	<input type="checkbox"/>	Updates	<input type="checkbox"/>
Workshops	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other(s):	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.6. When do you correct your students’ written work?

At the end of the activity, in front of the other students	<input type="checkbox"/>
During the activity, in front of the students	<input type="checkbox"/>
After the activity, in front of the students	<input type="checkbox"/>
After the activity, in private with student(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>
At home, but discussed later	<input type="checkbox"/>
It does not matter	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.7. How do you usually correct your students’ writings? And how often?

	Never	Almost never	Sometimes	Frequently	Always
Using error correction codes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Provided detailed comments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Underlying and encircling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Explicit error correction	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (Please, specify):	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.8. What are the most common grammatical errors made by students?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Usually	Every time
Pronoun errors	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mistakes in apostrophe use	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of subject/verb agreement	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Misplaced modifiers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2.9. Do your students mind if other students correct your students' works?

Yes No

2.10. Do your students mind if you ask them to correct their works themselves?

Yes No

2.11. After providing error corrections in your student's writing, what do you expect them to do afterwards?

2.12. In your opinion, what is the best way to go about error correction? Please, explain your answer

2.13. In your experience as a teacher, what concerns and problems, if any, do you have in correcting student errors in writing?

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COLABORATION!

**STUDENTS' SURVEY
INSTRUMENT IN
ENGLISH**



**Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua
UNAN-MANAGUA**

Faculty of Education and Languages

**Survey Questionnaire for Error Correction in Writing
Second Semester 2013**

Survey for Students

This survey is intended to know the perspectives students have regarding error correction in their writing pieces. Besides, it will contribute to provide some information which would be helpful to improve the writing classes and written pieces.

I. PERSONAL INFORMATION

CASE NUMBER:

Use a tick (✓) to indicate your response where appropriate

1.1 Gender

Female Male

1.2. Age

10-12 13-15 16+

II. ACADEMIC ASPECTS

2.1. Do you like the way your current teacher responds to your errors in your writings?

2.2. Can you please describe how your teacher corrects your writing errors?

2.3. Do you find the way your teachers correct your writing to be useful?

2.11. How would you like your error to be treated?

Every single error should be corrected

There is no need to correct all the errors
(only important error should be corrected)

It does not matter

2.12. Who do you think should correct the errors in your writing?

Yourself

Teacher

Your Peers (Classmates)

2.13. What kind of activities would be useful for error correction in writing, and in what way?

	No way!					Definitely!
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Games						
Correction from your peers						
Translations						
Looking at posters or pictures placed on walls						
Working with sentences						
Working with texts						
Listening and writing, e.g. through dictation or short messages						
Free writing						
Other:						
Other:						
Other:						

THANK YOU FOR YOUR COLABORATION!

**STUDENTS' SURVEY
INSTRUMENT IN
SPANISH**



Universidad Nacional Autónoma de Nicaragua

UNAN-MANAGUA

Facultad de Educación e Idiomas

Encuesta de la corrección de errores en la escritura del Inglés

Segundo Semestre 2013

Encuesta para estudiantes

Esta encuesta tiene como objetivo conocer las perspectivas que los estudiantes tienen acerca de la corrección de errores en sus trabajos de escritura. Consecuentemente, esto contribuirá a obtener cierta información, la cual será útil para mejorar los trabajos de escritura así como las clases.

I. Información Personal

Número de caso:

Use un check (✓) para indicar su respuesta en según convenga

1.1 Género

Femenino

Masculino

1.2. Edad

10-12

13-15

16+

II. Aspectos académicos

2.1. ¿Estas satisfecho con la manera en que corrigen tus errores?

2.2. ¿Podrías describir cómo tu maestro corrige tus errores de los escritos en inglés?

2.3. ¿Crees que la manera en que te corrige tu maestro es buena y significativa?

2.4. ¿Con que frecuencia tu maestro corrige tus trabajos escritos?

Siempre A veces Casi nunca Nunca

2.5. ¿Cuándo quisieras ser corregido por tu maestro en las actividades de escritura del inglés?

Al final de la actividad, delante de los estudiantes

Durante la actividad, delante de los estudiantes

Después de la actividad, delante de los estudiantes

Después de la actividad, en privado

No importa

2.6. ¿Te importaría si otros estudiantes corrigen tus trabajos de escritura de la clase de inglés?

Sí No

2.7. Si tu respuesta es “Sí” en la pregunta 2.4, explique ¿Por qué?

2.8. ¿Te importaría si el maestro a veces te pide corregir tu propio trabajo de escritura?

Sí No

2.9. Si tu respuesta es “Sí” en la pregunta 2.6, explique ¿Por qué?

2.10. En una escala de 1 a 5, donde “1” significa no importante, “5” significa extremadamente importante y “3” significa moderadamente importante, ¿Qué tan importante crees que es recibir retroalimentación de tus trabajos escritos?

No importante

Extremadamente importante

1

2

3

4

5

2.11. ¿Cómo te gustaría que tus errores fueran tratados?

Todos los errores deberían ser corregidos

No es necesario corregir todos los errores
(Solo los más importantes deben de ser corregidos)

No importa

2.12. ¿Quién crees que debería corregir los errores de tus escritos en Inglés? ¿Por qué?

Tú mismo El maestro Tus compañeros

2.13. ¿Qué tipo de actividades serían útiles para mejorar la corrección de errores de tus escritos? Y ¿De qué manera?

	De ninguna manera					Definitivamente
	0	1	2	3	4	5
Juegos relacionados a escritura del Inglés						
Correcciones por parte de tus compañeros						
Traducciones						
Al mirar posters y figuras en las paredes						
Trabajar con oraciones						
Trabajar con textos						
Ejercicios de escucha y escritura del Inglés, por ejemplo, dictados o al escuchar mensajes cortos						
Escritos de tema libre						
Otro:						
Otro:						
Otro:						

¡GRACIAS POR SU PARTICIPACION!

CLASSROOM OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT



CLASSROOM OBSERVATION INSTRUMENT

Name of the school: _____

Address: _____

Teacher's name: _____

Date of observation: _____

Group: _____

Time observation began: _____

Subject observation: _____

Time observation ended: _____

Observer's name: _____

Number of students: _____

Instructions

This class observation guide is divided two sections: the first part is composed of general aspects concerning the class environment. Every aspect contains a set of parameters which will help to get the intended data. However, the second section evaluates the writing activities held during class period. At the end of the instrument, there is a section for overall comments for the observer to express any other information that should be taking into consideration and that would be helpful for the class evaluation.

Section 1

For each statement given on the left column, the observer will write the data obtained in the right column. This will be done taking account the aspect given along with its parameters which are an idea of what is intended to get.

Aspects and parameters	Class observation
1. Quality of the "INPUT" in the class: level of difficulty, instruction received, teacher's attitude, strategies that meet diverse students learning needs.	
2. "TALKING TIME": use of the English language in class for writing purposes, amount of use of L1 and L2, teacher's talking time, student's talking time, level of understanding.	
3. "ENVIRONMENT" of the class: is it a tense or relax atmosphere? Does the teacher express naturally? Is the class given in a formal or informal way?	
4. "MOTIVATION": attitude and interest by students at the moment of performing activities.	
5. "PARTICIPATION": observe if students participate, willingness to participate, initiatives by students or teachers .	

6. "ERRORS": type of errors and diverse correction strategies, correction method implemented.	
7. "INTERACTION": involvement of the teacher and students to perform the different activities.	
8. "DIDACTIC MATERIALS": observe if the teacher elaborates material, is there printed material? Do students get materials?	
9. "CREATIVITY": observe if the teacher implements a variety of procedures, dynamic activities, etc.	
10. "WORKING IN GROUPS": observe if cooperative learning is implemented, do students mostly work individually, in pairs or in groups?	

Section 2

In section 2, three aspects will be evaluated: the given directions before start writing, the assessment opportunities students have and rubrics.

Directions for writing assignments

	Yes	To some extent	Could have been done	Should have been done	No
Gives students a clear purpose for writing					
Provides a clear and specific set of instructions for the writing assignment					
Assigns writing tasks that extent content-area					
Assigns writing tasks that asses what students know and can do					
Provides students with prewriting strategies					
Provides students with rich vocabulary that may be useful in the writing assignment					

Assessment opportunities

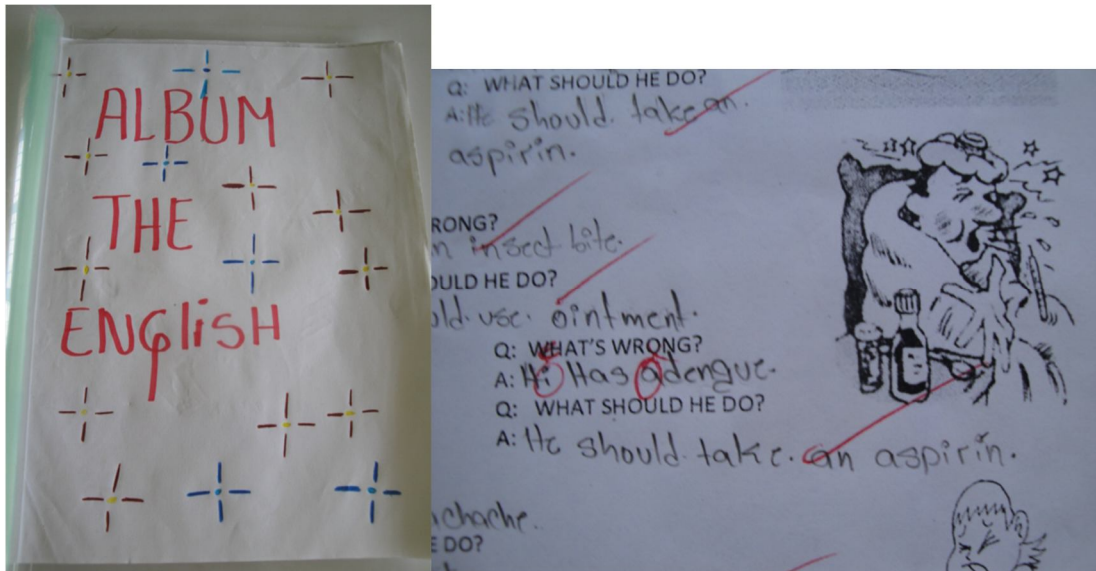
	Yes	To some extent	Could have been done	Should have been done	No
Teachers assessment					
Provides students with the opportunity to ask the teacher for thoughts, help, suggestions, and critiques.					
Peer assessment					
Provides students with the opportunity to ask their peers for thoughts, help, suggestions, and critiques.					

Issues concerning rubrics

	None	Very little	little	Some	A lot
Provides opportunities for students to revise with the help of their peers					
Provides timely, specific feedback on students assignments					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher only checks the finished homework 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher focus on grammar and spelling 					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The teacher checks for content, organization and tone 					

Observer's overall comments:

WRITTEN ERRORS IN ENGLISH ASSIGNMENTS



STUENTS SURVEY

