An Examination of ESL Teachers' Treatment of Written Errors

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This thesis is submitted to Bond University in fulfilment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts in Applied Linguistics by Research.

This thesis represents my own work and contains no material which has been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at Bond University or any other institutions, except where due acknowledgement is made.

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Abstract

While various studies have investigated the effectiveness of certain types of error treatment methods, there has been little linguistic research conducted to examine how actual language teachers have been dealing with L2 learners' written errors. The current research was designed to investigate the types of written errors ESL teachers corrected and the types of error treatment methods they used to correct those errors in the context of Bond University on the Cold Coast. Moreover, it was intended to highlight the relationship between the literature and actual practice in terms of error treatment of written work.

In this study, sixty-six students' written texts corrected by nine different teachers were collected and examined. The teachers' treatment of the learner errors found in each sample were identified and classified according to their features. The findings from both quantitative and qualitative data on the patterns of error treatment were analysed, and following this, various comparisons were made.

The results of the study indicated that despite the current trend of language teaching, error treatment was frequently provided by the teachers in the ESL classrooms. Moreover, the teachers constantly corrected the deviations of local aspects of the language, which did not seriously influence the intelligibility.

In addition, the results of the study also demonstrated that the teachers used both explicit types and implicit types of correction methods in a hybrid manner, and they altered their mode of correction depending on the types of errors. They tended to provide explicit correction for wrong vocabulary and sentence construction errors whereas other surface features, such as grammatical and mechanical errors were generally highlighted with implicit correction, especially with correction codes.

The findings of this study suggest that increasing the use of less-time consuming error treatment methods for rule-governed lexical errors and educating learners to be able to carry out self-correction could reduce the teachers' burden of written error treatment. Moreover, constant information exchange would allow the teachers to revise, refine and change their ways to deal with errors. Until clear effectiveness of certain patterns of error treatment is proven by further studies, these suggestions could be made in order to maximise the benefits of the teachers' treatment of written errors.

Table of Contents

Acknov	wledgements	p. ii
Abstra	ct	p. iii
Table o	of Contents	p. iv
Abbrev	viations	p. viii
List of	Tables	p. ix
List of	Figures	p. xi
CHAP'	TER 1 Introduction	
1.1	Introduction and Problem	p.1
1.2	Background to the Problem	p.2
1.3	Purpose of the Study	p.4
1.4	Significance of the Study	p.5
1.5	Scope and Limitations of the Study	p.6
1.6	Concluding Remarks	p.7
СНАР	ΓER 2 Literature Review	
2.1	Introduction	p.8
2.2	Definition of Terms	p.9
	2.2.1 Introduction	p.9
	2.2.2 Definition of error	p.9
	2.2.3 Definition of error treatment	p.12

2.3	Issues of Error Treatment in Second Language Acquisition			p.16
	2.3.1	Introduct	ion	p.16
	2.3.2	Overview	of research on error treatment: Whether or not?	p.16
		2.3.2.1 2.3.2.2 2.3.2.3	Historical background Negative perspectives of error treatment Positive perspectives of error treatment	
	2.3.3	Types of	learner errors: What to correct?	p.28
		2.3.3.2 2.3.3.3	Introduction Pedagogical focus Error frequency Error gravity	
	2.3.4	Types of	error treatment methods: How to correct?	p.37
			Explicit vs. implicit correction Degree of explicitness 2.3.4.3.1 Level of TL proficiency 2.3.4.3.2 Purposes of TL learning 2.3.4.3.3 Types of errors	
2.4 CHAP 7		uding Rem Meth	odology and Procedures	p.48
	Introd			p.51
				•
3.2	Resear	ch Questi	ons	p.51
3.3	Sampl	e Selection	1	p.52
	3.3.1 3.3.2 3.3.3	Introduct Teachers Student v		
3.4	Resear	ch Method	ds	p.56
	3.4.1 3.4.2 3.4.3	Methods Pilot stud Main stud	•	

3	5.5	Resear	ch Tools		p.58
		3.5.2		ion ation of learner errors ation of error treatment methods	
3	3.6	Data A	analyses		p.62
			3.6.2.2	ive data Procedure for analysis Sample total Variables	
3	3.7	Conclu	iding Rem	narks	p.67
СНА	PΊ	TER 4	Prese	entation of Results	
4	1.1	Introdu	action		p.68
4	1.2	Descri	ption of E	rror Treatment: Quantitative Findings	p.68
		4.2.1	Introduct	ion	p.68
		4.2.2	Overall f	requency of error treatment	p.69
		4.2.3	Types of	learner errors and frequency of error treatment	p.74
			4.2.3.1 4.2.3.2 4.2.3.3	Introduction Types of learner errors frequently corrected Types of learner errors rarely corrected	
		4.2.4	Overall I	Degree of explicitness of error treatment methods	p.97
		4.2.5	Types of	learner errors and degree of explicitness of ET methods	p.102
			4.2.5.1 4.2.5.2 4.2.5.3	Introduction Types of learner errors explicitly corrected Types of learner errors implicitly corrected	
		4.2.6	Results o	f chi-square test	p.124
			4.2.6.1 4.2.6.2 4.2.6.3	Introduction Overall frequency of error treatment Overall degree of explicitness of ET methods	

4.	3 Descr	riptions of Error Treatment: Qualitative Findings	p.127
		Introduction Characteristics of learner errors ESL teachers corrected Characteristics of error treatment methods ESL teachers used	
4.	4 Concl	luding Remarks	p.148
CHA	PTER 5	5 Interpretation and Discussion	
5.	1 Introd	luction	p.149
5.	2 Overa	all Frequency of Error Treatment	p.149
5.	3 Types	s of Learner Errors and Frequency of Error Treatment	p.156
5.	4 Overa	all Degree of Explicitness of Error Treatment Methods	p.161
5.	5 Types	s of Learner Errors and Degree of Explicitness of ET Methods	p.166
5.	6 Error	Treatment and Course Factors	p.170
		Level of course Type of course Other findings	
5.	7 Impli	cations for Error Treatment in Teaching L2 Writing Skills	p.180
5.	8 Concl	luding Remarks	p.183
Concl	usion		p.184
Refer	ences		p.188
Biblio	graphy	7	p.200
Appe	ndices		p.208
A	ppendix	1: Correction Codes	
\mathbf{A}_{i}	ppendix	2: Sample Texts	
\mathbf{A}_{i}	ppendix	3: Results of Classification	
A.	Appendix 4: Results of AWS Course		

Abbreviations

- ♣ ESL: English as a Second Language
- SLA: Second Language Acquisition
- L2: Second Language
- **EA**: Error Analysis
- **ET**: Error Treatment
- LE: Learner Errors
- **BUELI:** Bond University English Language Institute
- ♣ GE: General English
- ♣ AE: Academic English
- **♣** EAP: English for Academic Purposes
- CFC: Cambridge First Certificate preparation
- ♣ AWS: Academic Writing Skills
- WWPS: Academic Writing Workshop for Postgraduate Students
- Pre-IM: Pre-intermediate
- ♣ IM: Intermediate
- Upper-IM: Upper-intermediate
- AD: Advanced
- **EXC:** Explicit Correction
- ♣ IMC: Implicit Correction

List of Tables

CHAPTER 2		
Table 2-1	More effective and less effective teacher correction strategies	p.29
Table 2-2	Classification of learner errors	p.3
Table 2-3	Description of error categories	p.34
Table 2-4	Example of error chart	p.36
CHAPTER 3		
Table 3-1	Description of the teacher sample and their courses	p.53
Table 3-2	Description of the sample texts	p.55
Table 3-3	76 types of classification codes	p.63
Table 3-4	Variables examined	p.60
CHAPTER 4		
Table 4-1	Overall frequency of error treatment: Sample total	p.70
Table 4-2	Overall frequency of error treatment: Level of course	p.72
Table 4-3	Overall frequency of error treatment: Type of course	p.73
Table 4-4	Distribution of learner errors: Sample total	p.74
Table 4-5	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: Sample total	p.70
Table 4-6	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: Pre-IM to IM level	p.78
Table 4-7	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: IM to Upper-IM level	p.79
Table 4-8	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: Upper-IM to AD level	p.8
Table 4-9	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: Advanced level	p.82
Table 4-10	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: GE courses	p.84
Table 4-11	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: AE courses	p.85
Table 4-12	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: Sample total	p.8′
Table 4-13	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: Pre-IM to IM level	p.89
Table 4-14	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: IM to Upper-IM level	p.90
Table 4-15	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: Upper-IM to AD level	p.92

Table 4-16	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: Advanced level	p.93
Table 4-17	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: GE courses	p.95
Table 4-18	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: AE courses	p.96
Table 4-19	Overall degree of explicitness of ET methods: Sample total	p.98
Table 4-20	Overall degree of explicitness of ET methods: Level of course	p.100
Table 4-21	Overall degree of explicitness of ET methods: Type of course	p.102
Table 4-22	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Sample total	p.103
Table 4-23	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Pre-IM to IM level	p.105
Table 4-24	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: IM to Upper-IM level	p.106
Table 4-25	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Upper-IM to AD level	p.108
Table 4-26	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Advanced level	p.109
Table 4-27	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: GE courses	p.111
Table 4-28	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: AE courses	p.112
Table 4-29	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Sample total	p.114
Table 4-30	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Pre-IM to IM level	p.115
Table 4-31	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: IM to Upper-IM level	p.117
Table 4-32	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Upper-IM to AD level	p.118
Table 4-33	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Advanced level	p.120
Table 4-34	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: GE courses	p.121
Table 4-35	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: AE courses	p.123
Table 4-36	Results of chi-square test: Overall frequency of error treatment	p.124
Table 4-37	Results of chi-square test: Overall degree of explicitness of ETM	p.125
Table 4-38	Characteristics of verb errors the teachers corrected	p.128
Table 4-39	Characteristics of noun ending errors the teachers corrected	p.129
Table 4-40	Characteristics of article errors the teachers corrected	p.131
Table 4-41	Characteristics of wrong word choices the teachers corrected	p.132
Table 4-42	Characteristics of sentence structural errors the teachers corrected	p.133
Table 4-43	Characteristics of spelling errors the teachers corrected	p.135
Table 4-44	Characteristics of nunctuation errors the teachers corrected	n 136

List of Figures

CHAPTER 3		
Figure 3-1	Formula of the chi-square test	p.65
CHAPTER 4		
Figure 4-1a	Overall frequency of error treatment: Sample total	p.70
Figure 4-1b	Individual teachers' frequency of error treatment	p.70
Figure 4-2	Overall frequency of error treatment: Level of course	p.72
Figure 4-3	Overall frequency of error treatment: Type of course	p.73
Figure 4-4	Distribution of learner errors: Sample total	p.74
Figure 4-5	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: Sample total	p.76
Figure 4-6	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: Pre-IM to IM level	p.78
Figure 4-7	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: IM to Upper-IM level	p.79
Figure 4-8	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: Upper-IM to AD level	p.81
Figure 4-9	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: Advanced level	p.83
Figure 4-10	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: GE courses	p.84
Figure 4-11	Types of learner errors frequently corrected: AE courses	p.86
Figure 4-12	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: Sample total	p.87
Figure 4-13	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: Pre-IM to IM level	p.89
Figure 4-14	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: IM to Upper-IM level	p.91
Figure 4-15	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: Upper-IM to AD level	p.92
Figure 4-16	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: Advanced level	p.94
Figure 4-17	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: GE courses	p.95
Figure 4-18	Types of learner errors rarely corrected: AE courses	p.97
Figure 4-19a	Overall degree of explicitness of ET methods: Sample total	p.99
Figure 4-19b	Individual teachers' degree of explicitness of ET methods	p.99
Figure 4-20	Overall degree of explicitness of ET methods: Level of course	p.100
Figure 4-21	Overall degree of explicitness of ET methods: Type of course	p.102

Figure 4-22	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Sample total	p.104
Figure 4-23	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Pre-IM to IM level	p.105
Figure 4-24	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: IM to Upper-IM level	p.107
Figure 4-25	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Upper-IM to AD level	p.108
Figure 4-26	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Advanced level	p.109
Figure 4-27	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: GE courses	p.111
Figure 4-28	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: AE courses	p.113
Figure 4-29	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Sample total	p.114
Figure 4-30	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Pre-IM to IM level	p.116
Figure 4-31	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: IM to Upper-IM level	p.117
Figure 4-32	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Upper-IM to AD level	p.119
Figure 4-33	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Advanced level	p.120
Figure 4-34	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: GE courses	p.122
Figure 4-35	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: AE courses	p.123
Figure 4-36	Ratio of error treatment methods: Verb errors	p.137
Figure 4-37	Ratio of error treatment methods: Noun ending errors	p.139
Figure 4-38	Ratio of error treatment methods: Article errors	p.140
Figure 4-39	Ratio of error treatment methods: Wrong word choices	p.142
Figure 4-40	Ratio of error treatment methods: Sentence structural errors	p.143
Figure 4-41	Ratio of error treatment methods: Spelling errors	p.145
Figure 4-42	Ratio of error treatment methods: Punctuation errors	p.146
CHAPTER 5		
Figure 5-1	Types of learner errors explicitly corrected: Extreme results	p.166
Figure 5-2	Types of learner errors implicitly corrected: Extreme results	p.167
Figure 5-3	Frequency of spelling error treatment: Level of course	p.177
Figure 5-4	Frequency of punctuation error treatment: Types of course	n 177