

**THE EFFECTS OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK  
ON THE WRITTEN GRAMMATICAL ACCURACY OF  
ESL LEARNERS**

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**THE EFFECTS OF CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK  
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Field of Study: Second Language Acquisition

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## ABSTRACT

### The Effects of Corrective Feedback on the Written Grammatical Accuracy of ESL Learners.

The debate on the value of providing corrective feedback on L2 writing has been prominent since Truscott's (1996) claim on its inefficacy and harmful effects. With the aim of contributing to the discussion, this study reports on the effectiveness of different types of corrective feedback (focused direct, focused indirect, unfocused direct, unfocused indirect) in improving the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners and whether such difference in efficacy is influenced by its efficacy in promoting the noticing function of the Output Hypothesis. 125 ESL learners were divided into four experimental groups and one control group and their progress in written grammatical accuracy was monitored through two treatment and three tests (pretest, posttest, delayed posttest). The results reveal that short-term improvement is demonstrated by the focused direct, unfocused direct, and focused indirect feedback while longitudinal improvement is only recorded by the focused direct feedback. Meanwhile, the unfocused indirect does not show much improvement as compared to the control group. The result also reveals the superior efficacy of direct feedback in playing its role as the facilitator for noticing as opposed to the indirect approach of CF provision.

Keyword: written corrective feedback, direct feedback, indirect feedback, focused feedback, unfocused feedback, second language acquisition, writing accuracy, output, noticing

## ABSTRAK

Kesan Penggunaan Pembetulan Bertulis Dalam Meningkatkan Tatabahasa Penulisan Pelajar.

Perbincangan tentang tahap keberkesanan penggunaan pembetulan bertulis dalam meningkatkan kualiti tatabahasa penulisan para pelajar bermula apabila Truscott (1996) mengklasifikasikan ia sebagai tidak berkesan dan berisiko untuk menyumbang kepada pelbagai implikasi negatif. Sehubungan dengan itu, kajian ini telah mengkaji tentang keberkesanan empat jenis pembetulan bertulis (pembetulan bertumpu langsung, pembetulan bertumpu tidak langsung, pembetulan kolektif langsung, pembetulan kolektif tidak langsung) dalam meningkatkan kualiti tatabahasa penulisan Bahasa Inggeris oleh para pelajar serta mengkaji impak pembetulan bertulis dalam menarik perhatian para pelajar terhadap isu-isu tatabahasa yang mereka hadapi. Seramai 125 orang responden telah dipilih dan dibahagikan kepada empat kumpulan eksperimen dan satu kumpulan kawalan dan tahap kemajuan mereka dalam tatabahasa penulisan telah dipantau melalui dua sesi rawatan dan tiga sesi ujian (ujian sebelum, ujian selepas, ujian pasca). Keputusan kajian ini mendapati bahawa penambahbaikan jangka pendek telah ditunjukkan oleh para pelajar yang menerima pembetulan bertumpu langsung, pembetulan kolektif langsung, dan pembetulan bertumpu tidak langsung manakala penambahbaikan jangka panjang telah ditunjukkan oleh mereka yang menerima pembetulan bertumpu langsung. Walau bagaimanapun, mereka yang menerima pembetulan kolektif tidak langsung tidak merekodkan sebarang penambahbaikan di dalam tatabahasa penulisan mereka. Kajian ini juga mendapati bahawa penggunaan pembetulan bertulis langsung adalah lebih efektif dalam menyedarkan para pelajar tentang masalah-masalah yang wujud dalam tatabahasa penulisan mereka berbanding penggunaan pembetulan tidak langsung.

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## LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CF	:	Corrective Feedback
TL	:	Target Language
IL	:	Interlanguage
L1	:	First Language
L2	:	Second Language
SLA	:	Second Language Acquisition
ESL	:	English as a Second Language
EFL	:	English as a Foreign Language
UG	:	Universal Grammar
LREs	:	Language-Related Episodes
MUET	:	Malaysian University English Test
SVA	:	Subject-Verb Agreement

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## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.0 Overview

In the teaching and learning process of English as a second language (ESL), it is commonly believed that the existence of errors committed by learners in their work potentially indicates a frail in their current understanding of the target language (TL), and that the errors will be permanently registered by them if it is left untreated. This makes both language teachers and ESL learners to often regard the provision of corrective feedback (CF) as a necessity in most language classrooms in order to inform learners about the existence of errors in their work as well as serving as a medium for language teachers to respond to the errors by themselves, particularly when it involves written grammatical accuracy.

However, existing researches on the field of CF and error correction have rendered inconclusive results in answering the question on its effectiveness in assisting language learners to notice the gap between the TL and their current understanding of it and whether its provision is helpful in improving the grammatical accuracy in their writing, especially in the context of second language acquisition (SLA) and ESL. Among the strong notion that dismisses the need for CF in language classroom was propounded by Truscott (1996, 2007) who regarded such practice as ineffective and harmful to the learners' second language (L2) development. Nevertheless, against Truscott's argument is Ferris (1999, 2004, 2006) who argues that such strong notion is premature as insufficient empirical data has been accumulated for a solid decision to be made in determining the effectiveness of CF on L2 writing. Such debate then leads to the growth in the amount of empirical research on the effectiveness of CF in improving the linguistic accuracy in ESL learners' writing as well as the differential effects that one type may have upon another.

Therefore, framed within the noticing function of the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 2005), the research reported in this dissertation investigates the effectiveness of four types of CF in enhancing the grammatical accuracy in the written work of ESL learners through a quasi-experimental study involving a series of pretest, treatment, posttest, and delayed posttest conducted in eight weeks. This was followed by a series of interviews that determines whether the provision of CF does assist ESL learners to notice the errors in their written work, which is essential for them to be able to realize the gap in their interlanguage (IL) that will subsequently lead towards better grammatical accuracy in their writing.

### **1.1 Background of the Study**

Despite the attempt to change the paradigm of English language learning from accuracy-centred to the focus on fluency, most teachers still regard the aspect of grammatical accuracy to have a major role that boosts learners' progress, especially in the context of ESL learning. Such orientation then leads to the believe that grammatical accuracy is of important significance in most ESL classrooms, which creates the tendency for most teachers to feel obligated of providing CF as a response to learners' written grammatical inaccuracies. This leads to the norm for most language teachers to spend their time and energy to provide various forms of CF that highlight and correct the grammatical errors that ESL learners commit in their L2 writing.

Regardless of its large practice in most language classrooms, the issue whether the provision of CF is effective to improve the grammatical accuracy in ESL learners' writing is still an ongoing debate. Researchers like Truscott (1996, 2007) insist that apart from being ineffective, such practice can also pose harmful effects on the learners' L2



development as the correction may prompt them to resort to simple-structured sentences as an avoidance strategy from having to produce the structure again. This suggests that the practice of CF provision in most language classrooms can be ineffective and harmful to the learners' L2 development, and that the time and effort should be spent on alternative activities such as additional writing practice (Truscott, 1996).

Truscott's strong notion and criticism on CF then leads to the growing number of studies that tried to negate such claim by providing empirical evidences that prove the potential benefits that CF has upon the L2 development of ESL learners. For ESL learners to be able to revise their written word more effectively, Hyland & Hyland (2006c) believe that teachers should be resourceful in their pedagogical implementation of CF in order to provide ESL learners with the feedback type that suits their preference and learning style. This is supported by Ellis (2009) who believes that teachers will be benefitted if they are provided with a wide variety of CF typology that will allow them to choose the CF method that best suits their pedagogical needs. This leads to the growing number of research that investigates the effectiveness of different types of CF in promoting accuracy in L2 writing, including those that investigated on the effectiveness of direct feedback (Bitchener, 2008; Farid & Samad, 2012; Farrokhi & Sattarpour, 2012), indirect feedback (Lee, 1997; Van Beuningen, De Jong & Kuiken, 2008; Vyatkina, 2010; Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad, 2012), comprehensive or unfocused feedback (Ellis, 2009; Lee, 2008a), selective or focused feedback (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008a; 2009a; 2010), as well as studies involving other modes of CF such as peer feedback (Lim & Jacobs, 2001; Sato & Lyster, 2012) and computer-mediated feedback (Warschauer, 2002; Burstein, 2003; Liu & Sadler, 2003; Stapleton & Radia, 2009). However, the inconclusive findings reported by these studies suggest the need for further investigation to be conducted upon the topic before a definite conclusion can be achieved.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Among the limitations that halt the effort to obtain a sound decision on the efficacy of CF include the inconsistency between existing findings as well as the lack of comparability between the studies. Despite the existence of several studies (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008; Ferris, 2006; Sheen, Wright & Moldawa, 2009; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008a; 2009b; 2010) that investigated on the effectiveness of CF in improving learner's written grammatical accuracy, empirical evidence to-date are still inconsistent and render inconclusive results whether to agree or disagree with Truscott's hard-on stance on its inefficacy. In addition, Ferris (2004) and Guénette (2007) also point out that the attempt to compare the findings is problematic as most of the existing studies differ greatly in several key parameters. This includes the difference in the participants' age, proficiency, and level of exposure to the TL, whether they were second or foreign language learners, the difference on how CF treatments were operationalized, whether the studies defined writing accuracy from the perspective of grammatical structures alone or whether it includes other aspects such as morphology, vocabulary, and syntax, and whether the writing test required the participants to revise their corrected writing or to attempt new piece of writing, which determined the possibility for them to copy and transfer the given corrections into their consequent writing test and contradicted the role of CF in promoting written grammatical accuracy. These issues therefore indicate the necessity for further investigations to be conducted upon the topic.

### 1.3 Aim of the Study

With the objectives of investigating on the potential effectiveness of CF in improving the written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners, the differential efficacy between four types of CF approaches, and the ability of each CF approach to promote the error noticing function of the Output Hypothesis, the present study reports on an 8-weeks experiment that compares the effectiveness of four different types of CF in improving the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners. The first part of the study was an 8-weeks experiment that investigates whether the four CF approaches namely focused direct, focused indirect, unfocused direct, and unfocused indirect vary in its effectiveness to promote better written grammatical accuracy if it is employed upon four groups of ESL learners with similar age, proficiency, and level of exposure to the English language. The operationalisation of the four CF approaches as well as the targeted grammatical structures of the study were also standardised as part of the constant variables, which makes the four CF approaches as the only manipulated variables in this study. This was followed by an interview session involving three participants from each CF group ( $n = 15$ ) where they were asked to describe whether the feedback that they received enabled them to notice the grammatical errors in their writing. Apart from addressing the gap on the lack of comparability between existing studies, such finding also contributes to the pool of knowledge on the area of CF efficacy particularly in deciding on the CF approach that effectively promotes the noticing function of Output Hypothesis and subsequently in assisting towards SLA.

## 1.4 Research Questions

The findings gained in this study answer the following research questions:

1. What are the effects of providing corrective feedback on the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners?
2. What are the effects of providing different types of corrective feedback on the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners.
3. How do different types of corrective feedback help to promote the error noticing function of output among ESL learners?

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## **1.5 Significance of the Study**

Parallel to Swain's (2005) Output Hypothesis, the finding from this study shall be beneficial to the field of language acquisition particularly in utilising the focused and unfocused implementation of the direct and indirect feedback as a method to enhance language acquisition among ESL learners. The Output Hypothesis suggests that the language acquisition process of most language learners, including ESL learners, are likely to be enhanced if they are aware about the gap in their current IL state as compared to the TL structure. For this to be achieved, these learners need to be provided with a form of feedback that can help them to notice the errors that they produce especially when it involves written grammatical accuracy. As this is often done through the provision of CF, there is a need to determine whether such practice is effective to promote the noticing of errors among learners, whether its effectiveness vary according to the types of CF approach being employed, and whether its efficacy will lead towards better grammatical accuracy in the learners' writing. Such findings will be useful in adding to the pool of knowledge on the effectiveness of CF in promoting language acquisition as well as serving as a typology for CF practitioners to choose the CF method that best suits their learners' needs.

## **1.6 Limitations of the Study**

Despite its careful planning, several shortcomings were encountered throughout the implementation of the study which might affect the data accuracy. Although measures had been taken to minimise such risk, these limitations are worth mentioning for further improvement in future researches.

The first limitation is in terms of external grammatical input. As the finding of this study depends on the participants' progress in written grammatical accuracy, the result may be distorted if the participants receive any external grammatical input apart from the ones provided by the CF. However, as the study involved participants of an intensive English programme, it was not ethical to exclude them from attending any grammar class throughout the 8-weeks experiment. Therefore, to minimise the impact of such issue, the teaching of the targeted structures was delayed until the completion of the study and all teachers were excluded from marking or viewing any of the participants' writings in order to avoid them from intentionally providing additional grammar support to the participants.

The second limitation is related to the targeted grammatical structures of the writing output. As the investigation only concerned on the effectiveness of CF in improving the grammatical accuracy in the participants' writing, the findings may not reflect similar attributes if it is used to address other components in writing such as content, syntax, and vocabulary. Furthermore, as the focused feedback in the study only addresses three grammatical structures (subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and articles), the findings should also be treated with caution especially when discussing about its effects onto other types of grammatical structures.

Another limitation encountered is regarding the scope of the study. As the participants involved are all ESL learners with mixed proficiency in English, the findings of this study may not be applicable to describe the issue in different contexts especially when it involves a group of ESL learners with a specified level of proficiency or in the context of English as a foreign language (EFL) learning. In addition, as most of the participants are within the age of 20 years old, the findings should be treated with cautious

especially in discussing about ESL learners of different age groups such as young or adult learners.

### **1.7 Ethical Considerations**

An ethical consideration was also addressed throughout the course of the study which involved the participants' position as the students of an intensive English programme. In this regard, it was important for the researcher to ascertain that the participants' involvement with the study did not affect their progress in the programme, including from the aspect of their time, involvement with the programme and its activities, as well as the implementation of the syllabus. Therefore, apart from the decision to postpone the teaching of the targeted grammatical structures until the completion of the study, all writing tests, treatment, and interview sessions were done outside the classroom hours with the consent from the programme coordinators and the participants. In addition, since the programme focuses on English for communication, the writing tasks given to the participants did not have direct influence onto the lesson, tasks, and assessments done by the programme.

## **CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.0 Overview**

This chapter provides a thorough overview on the topic of CF and its significant role in the field of SLA and L2 writing, discusses the effectiveness of different types of CF approaches based on existing empirical evidences, and outlines the issues that linger in previous CF studies. This information is useful in forming the foundation of the current study.

### **2.1 Corrective Feedback in Second Language Acquisition**

Corrective feedback (CF) has been a long and common practice in most language classrooms especially in the field of SLA and L2 learning. In the teaching and learning process of ESL, it is commonly believed that the existence of errors in the learners' work potentially indicates a frail in their understanding and such error will be registered as an input if it is left untreated. Therefore, with the assumption that feedback will lead learners towards greater mastery over the use of the targeted language structure (Bitchener, 2009), both teachers and language learners often regard the provision of CF as a necessity which serves as an indication to the learners that their use of the target language is incorrect as well as for the teachers to respond and correct the errors by themselves, particularly when it involves written grammatical accuracy (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 172).



## **2.2 Theoretical Foundations on the Use of CF in L2 Instruction**

The rationale that advocates for the possible benefits of CF and error correction in assisting learners in their language learning process rests on several theoretical grounds related to the field of language acquisition. Among the justifications that support the importance of such practice include the function of CF as an intervention for habit formation as well as its role as a facilitator for error noticing.

### **2.2.1 CF as an Intervention for Habit Formation**

Initially, the practice of CF provision was attributed to the Behaviourism theory (Skinner, 1984) that proposes the idea of language learning through repeated training and habit formation. In such theory, the importance of CF is laid upon the belief that successful L2 learning can only be achieved through the eradication of old habits (erroneous structures) and the formation of new ones (correct structures). For this to be achieved, teachers were encouraged to avoid errors at all costs by implementing immediate correction, reinforcement, repetition, and imitation in order to assist the learners in mastering the targeted linguistic structure (Courchène, 1980, p. 9). Therefore, those who subscribed to the behaviourist language teaching methodology had capitalised on the use of CF as a focus-on-form intervention in reacting to learners' work particularly when it involves grammatical accuracy. This makes the presence of immediate feedback on the learners' language output as significant and instrumental in order to promote the formation of good habits that will avoid the fossilisation of errors in their L2 development.

### **2.2.2 CF as a Noticing Facilitator**

Another fundamental theoretical ground that supports the benefits of CF in L2 learning is the concept of noticing propounded by the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985, 2005). Combining the crucial cognitive linguistic notions of attention and awareness, such concept eradicates the possibility for subliminal SLA by suggesting that L2 learners will be able to convert any language input into conscious intake if they are able to notice “the mismatch or gap between what they can produce and what they need to produce, as well as between what they produce and what the TL speakers produce” (Schmidt, 2001, p. 6). For this to happen, the provision of focus-on-form intervention such as CF that attends to the errors produced by the L2 learners is often regarded as a useful mechanism to raise their awareness over the gaps between their own IL output and the TL input. Such promotion of noticing via CF provision is believed to have an impact in restructuring learners’ developing IL grammar, subsequently leading towards better accuracy in form (Gass, 1997).

### **2.3 Objections Against the Use of CF in L2 Instruction**

Regardless of the wide practice of CF and error correction in most language classrooms, several researchers (Krashen, 1981, 1985; Schwartz, 1993; Truscott, 1996, 2007) have claimed such practice to be ineffective and unnecessary. Such assertion believes that the advocators of CF have overlooked on its detrimental side effects which are drawn from the perspective of both theoretical arguments and its practicality in pedagogical implementation. This includes the segregation between implicit and explicit L2 knowledge, learners’ developmental readiness, as well as the influence that CF provision has towards learners’ affective filter.

### **2.3.1 Implicit vs. Explicit L2 Knowledge**

The first argument against the efficacy of CF treatment is based on Krashen's (1981) proposed distinction between learning and acquisition. Unlike the proponents of the Behaviourists theory who subscribe to the idea that the provision of CF is intended to provide learners with explicit knowledge that will correct the errors in their output and further improve their IL development, Krashen believes that the acquisition of implicit knowledge of a language usually happens unconsciously as opposed to the conscious effort involved in its learning which can only result in explicit knowledge gain. The separation of both implicit and explicit knowledge systems as two entirely distinct entities suggests that the process of internalising linguistic knowledge happens via two fundamentally different ways, resulting in two segregated knowledge bases. Thus, drawing from Krashen's conclusion that explicit knowledge can never be converted into implicit knowledge, Truscott (1996) hence suggests that the provision of explicit linguistic knowledge through CF and error correction will never lead towards L2 acquisition. He further argues that the availability of such explicit knowledge will also lead to the possibility for learners to copy and directly transfer the given correction into their revised or new writing, known as pseudo learning. Therefore, such superficial and transient form of knowledge cannot be considered as a solid evidence for CF efficacy, subsequently denying its facilitating role in SLA.

### **2.3.2 Developmental Readiness**

Another theoretical objection that denies the significance of CF in SLA is related to Krashen's (1981) Natural Order Hypothesis. Drawing from several investigations (Dulay & Burt, 1974; Pica, 1983; Baily, Madden, & Krashen, 1984) upon learners' L2

acquisition in a naturalistic environment, the Natural Order Hypothesis suggests that regardless of their first language (L1) and the pedagogical instruction that they received, L2 learners tend to acquire grammatical features in a predefined order guided by their innate language learning ability. This is aligned with Corder (1967) who suggests that L2 learners will only be able to master linguistic forms based on their own internal learning mechanism and not on the sequence imposed by teachers or textbook syllabus. Similar point is also rendered by Pienemann (1989) who introduced the idea of learners' developmental readiness in his Learnability hypothesis. In his view, Pienemann suggests that learners will only be able to acquire the linguistic features of a language if they have shown developmental readiness. Until such condition exist, features that are beyond the learners' stage of development are unteachable as the acquisition process cannot be steered or modelled to suit formal education. Based on these notions, Truscott (1996) hence deduced that unless the provision of CF in response to learners' linguistic inaccuracy is aligned with their current level of L2 development, such practice will only expose them to structures that they are yet ready to acquire. As a result, no intake will take place, making such practice to be a waste of time. Truscott further adds that as the availability of empirical evidences concerning developmental sequences is scarce and that the need to provide error corrections that cater learners' individual L2 development is impractical and involves tremendous amount of effort and time especially in a large classroom, the provision of aligned practice is yet a feasible objective, making such practice to lose its significance.

### **2.3.3 Affective Filter**

The insignificant role of CF in SLA is also proposed by Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter hypothesis. For acquisition to happen successfully, the hypothesis

believes that L2 learners need to feel comfortable and receptive to the language input that they are exposed to, which is determined by the level of their affective filter. In this regard, learners whose filters are low are more likely to feel comfortable and motivated to learn an L2, thus allowing comprehensible input to be perceived and internalized freely and will subsequently lead towards its acquisition. However, if the filter is high, such input is likely to be blocked by the learners' innate language ability, thus preventing acquisition from happening. Truscott (1996) hence suggests that CF provision, particularly when it is not aligned with the learners' developmental readiness, may create unnecessary stress that increases learners' anxiety of committing similar errors in the future. This will lead them to resort to simplified grammar as an avoidance strategy from having to produce the erroneous structures in their future output. As a result, the linguistic complexity of their output will be reduced and their IL development will be limited to only simple and basic linguistic structures. This adds to the argument that proves CF provision as a demeaning practice in SLA.

#### **2.4 Research on the Effectiveness of CF**

For decades, questions on the effectiveness of CF and error correction have been one of the major debates in the field of language acquisition. One of the concerns that lingers particularly among SLA practitioners is regarding its effectiveness in improving the linguistic accuracy of ESL learners, particularly when it is used as a response to their written work. This leads to the emergence of several theoretical and empirical researches that aim to address such issue.

### 2.4.1 Opponents of CF

The debate on the effectiveness of CF as an instrument to improve learners' accuracy in writing began with a controversial claim propounded by Truscott (1996, 2007). As learners' ability to master linguistic forms depends on their developmental readiness (Corder, 1967; Pienemann, 1989) and that the extension of their IL development and L2 repertoire may be distorted if they resort to simplified writing (Krashen, 1982), Truscott (1996, 2007) suggests that the practice of providing CF treatment in language classrooms should be deemed as ineffective, harmful, and bear the possibility of putting the learners' L2 development at stake. In addition, apart from violating several SLA theories such as the acquisition-learning theory (Krashen, 1981), the Natural Order hypothesis (Krashen, 1982), and Pienemann's (1989) Learnability hypothesis, Truscott further argues that the practice of CF provision also raises several practical doubts that pertain to the teachers' capacities of providing adequate and consistent feedback as well as the absence of guarantee on learners' willingness and ability to utilise the feedback to their advantage. This puts the significance of such practice in an unfavourable position particularly in the context of SLA and ESL.

The foundation of Truscott's claim is also formed by several empirical evidences (Semke, 1984; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986; Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992; Polio et al., 1998; Fleck & Leder, 1998; Fazio, 2001) that did not find CF provision to be significantly effective in developing the accuracy in writing particularly among L2 learners. Among the early studies that substantiate such claim is the one by Robb, Ross & Shortreed (1984) involving 134 Japanese college students. Making five types of feedback as its manipulated variables, an examination upon the mean score of each feedback group reveals no significant improvement in written accuracy in the revised writing produced by the students. Similar finding is also reported by Kepner (1991) who

investigated the effects of two types of error correction upon the written accuracy of 60 college students. The finding reports that despite being provided with written error corrections and explicit rule reminder, students in all treatment groups were unable to produce improved written accuracy in all eight journals that they attempted. Such findings demonstrate that the assumption on the availability of more correction will result in better accuracy is false, leading Truscott (1996, 2007) and several other opponents of CF to conclude on its insignificant role in improving students' L2 written accuracy.

Another empirical evidence that denies the role of CF treatment in improving learners' accuracy in L2 writing is also reported in a classroom-based experimental study conducted by Fazio (2001). Making three types of feedback as its manipulated variables, findings from the study reveal that regardless of the type of feedback that they received, all 112 students did not show significant improvement in their grammatical and spelling accuracy. However, instead of resorting to a condemnatory conclusion on the role of CF, Fazio suggests that such finding might be a result from the lack of attentiveness that the students paid in attending to the feedback given in their writing. Based on the finding obtained from the classroom observations as well as the interview session conducted at the end of the study, Fazio found that only a small number of students actually paid attention to the feedback and error corrections provided as a response to their writing. As it is essential for learners to notice or demonstrate awareness to the corrections in order for improvement and accurate production to occur (Schmidt, 1999), Fazio therefore calls for further investigation on the topic.

## 2.4.2 Advocators of CF

However, with the belief that the production of correct TL output possibly marks the absence of error fossilization as well as serving as an indication of good IL development, most L2 teachers tend to regard the production of error-free work as vital and important in the field of SLA. This is supported by several theoretical countenances that approve the practice of error correction from the perspective of language acquisition theories which include the Behaviourism theory (Skinner, 1984) as well as Swain's (1985, 2005) Output Hypothesis. Therefore, despite Truscott's claim over its inefficacy, most teachers still feel morally obligated to correct and respond to learners' written errors, particularly when it involves grammatical accuracy (Vandergrift, 1986; Horowitz, 1986; James, 1998). This makes the role of CF in learners' L2 writing as a perennial concern especially to L2 teachers as well as SLA researchers.

Considering the possible prominence of CF in serving as a medium that facilitates towards improved written accuracy among L2 learners, several researchers (Ellis, 1998; Ferris, 1999, 2006; Chandler, 2003, 2004; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010) have attempted to dismiss Truscott's claim through the provision of several counter arguments. Among the earliest rebuttal was propounded by Ferris (1999) who argues that Truscott's claim over the demeaning effects of CF is one-sided and premature since sparse empirical data is available for a solid conclusion to be determined over the issue. This led to the emergence of several empirical researches that examine the effects of CF provision in L2 writing. Among the earliest study that responded to Truscott's hard-line approach to CF is the one by Ashwell (2000). In the study, four different patterns of feedback were given to 50 Japanese university students who were divided into three experimental groups and one control group. The comparison on their mean accuracy scores revealed that all three experimental groups had shown nett gains in formal accuracy as opposed to the



control group and that the students were identified to have heavy reliance on form-focused feedback as opposed to content-focused feedback. Such findings led Ashwell to conclude on the significant role of CF in improving learners' writing accuracy as well as the superiority of form-focused CF over content-focused CF.

Another empirical evidence that supports the vital role of CF in SLA is the experimental study involving 72 ESL students conducted by Ferris & Roberts (2001). Finding from the study reports that students in the no-feedback control group were less successful in self-editing their own writing as opposed to the two experimental groups. A further analysis upon their writing reveals that despite producing an average of 33.6 errors in every 350-words essay that they attempted, those in the control group were only able to identify an average of six errors on their own, which is similar to the finding by Fathman & Whalley (1990). This brought both studies to conclude on the importance of CF in improving the accuracy in writing among ESL learners as well as its significant role as the facilitator for error noticing as proposed by the Output Hypothesis. Such finding, along with several others, add to the evidences that support the role of CF in improving the written accuracy among L2 learners.

## **2.5 Studies on Differential Effectiveness of Corrective Feedback**

In addition to the debate on the extent of its effectiveness, a growing number of researches have also explored on the allegedly differentiated effectiveness of various types of CF in facilitating improved accuracy in learners' L2 writing. The focus of these studies revolves upon investigating the effectiveness of different methods and approaches of CF provision and its superiority over one another. As the pedagogical implementation of CF is never dependent onto a specific formula, Ellis (2009) emphasises that the

availability of empirical evidences related to such issue is important as it serves as a typology for CF practitioners to choose the CF method that best suits their specific needs.

As the provision of CF is usually determined by the specific goals that language teachers aim to achieve, the decision on how it can best be delivered often relies on the extent of its explicitness in correcting learners' errors and the range of linguistic structures that the teachers aim to address. This segregates the methodology of its implementation into two most common clusters namely direct and indirect feedback as well as focused and unfocused feedback.

### **2.5.1 Direct and Indirect Feedback**

Most early studies that explored on the strategies of CF provision have focused on the dichotomy of direct and indirect feedback. In defining both approaches, Ellis (2009) refers to the former as the provision of error correction that overtly marks and corrects the errors produced by learners in their work, informs them on its location, and supplies them with the right form of its TL-like structures. On the other hand, the latter describes various error correction strategies that encourage learners to self-correct their errors. Unlike direct feedback, indirect feedback does not provide learners with the correct form of the TL. Instead, they are only supplied with several clues that indicate the existence of errors in their work. These clues vary according to their degree of implicitness in highlighting learners' errors and its implementation may include the practice of underlining or circling the errors, putting a cursor to mark the omission of certain words, as well as by stating the number of errors committed in each margin. Rather than receiving explicit corrections from the teachers, learners who receive indirect

feedback are left on their own to resolve and correct the erroneous structures that have been drawn to their attention.

### *Superior Effectiveness of Direct Feedback*

Several researchers have attempted to justify the significance of direct and indirect feedback in improving learners' accuracy in L2 writing and its possible superiority over one another. Due to its straightforward nature in correcting learners' error, those who are in favour of direct feedback suggest that such approach is more beneficial to learners as it reduces the confusion that they may experience if they fail to deduce and understand the error codes used in indirect feedback (Ellis, et al., 2008). Chandler (2003) also believes that the availability of correct TL-like form in direct feedback also offers sufficient, immediate, and clear feedback that approves or rejects the hypothesized corrections that learners may form as they attempt to repair the errors that they have produced. This brings Bitchener & Knoch (2010) to conclude that the availability of immediate and straightforward feedback in direct feedback helps to resolve any confusion that learners may have about the TL and subsequently reduces the possibility of error fossilisation in the learners' IL.

The support for direct feedback is also enhanced by the existence of several empirical evidences (Chandler, 2003; Van Beuningen et al., 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010b; Frear, 2012; Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad, 2012; Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki, 2014) on its superiority over indirect feedback. In a study involving first and second year students at an American conservatory, Chandler (2003) reports that despite the progress shown by both experimental groups, students who received direct correction over their grammatical errors managed to produce significantly better accuracy in the revision of

their writing. Most of them also opted for direct feedback as their preferred CF method as it was the fastest and easiest way for them to comprehend what was wrong with their writing. The advantage for direct feedback is also reported by Van Beuningen et al. (2008, 2012). Although the difference in progress between direct and indirect CF treatments was insignificant in both studies, comparisons made between each treatment group with the control group who received no correction revealed that the progress of those provided with direct feedback significantly outperformed the control group, whereas those who received indirect feedback did not. Similar finding is also reported by Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad (2012) who conducted a t-test on the written grammatical enhancement shown by 80 proficient students over four series of 250-word compositions. Despite the ability of both experimental groups to identify the existence of errors in their writing, the empirical evidence shows that there was a consistent fluctuation in the number of errors produced by those who received direct feedback, thus proving its superiority over indirect feedback.

Apart from the evidences that demonstrate the superior effectiveness of direct feedback in improving learners' written accuracy, another set of studies have also investigated similar issue from the perspective of its longitudinal efficacy. Among all is the one by Bitchener & Knoch (2010b) who conducted a ten-month investigation on the effects of written CF in addressing two functional uses of the English articles in the written works by 52 low-intermediate ESL students. Although the initial analysis over a week suggested direct and indirect feedback to be equally effective, a further statistical analysis revealed that only the effects of the two direct feedback treatments were still present ten weeks later. Such finding is similar to the one reported by Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki (2014) who compared the effects of two types of form-focused written feedback given to 214 Japanese university students. Although the provision of indirect feedback with metalinguistic explanation did lead to short-term improvement in accuracy, direct

correction is proven to be more beneficial to the students' written accuracy in the long term. These findings hence justify the effectiveness of direct feedback in improving learners' accuracy in writing as well as its superiority over the indirect feedback.

### *Superior Effectiveness of Indirect Feedback*

Opposing the role of direct feedback, advocates of indirect feedback have rendered several justifications in support of its significant effectiveness to improve learners' accuracy in their writing. Most researchers believe that one of the advantages of indirect feedback lies in its ability to develop effective metacognitive skills as well as independent revision and editing process among L2 writers (Lalande, 1982; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In such approach, learners are usually provided with error codes or clues like underlining and marginal error count that highlight the existence of errors in their work. For them to be able to self-edit their writing, learners are required to independently configure and deduce the meaning of the error codes, figure out what is wrong with their writing, and produce their own hypotheses that rectify such errors according to its correct TL-like forms. According to Ferris (2006), such process invites learners into a guided learning and problem-solving environment that will engage them into a more profound form of language processing. As a result, learners will be encouraged to reflect on their current progress, take more responsibility for their own development, thus leading towards long-term acquisition of the TL (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008). This is supported by Ferris (2006) who found positive long-term effects for indirect feedback in reducing the number of errors produced by ESL learners. However, such finding should be treated with caution as the positive effect only exists in response to "treatable" error categories and not "untreatable" or yet to-be-learned errors, which prompted Ferris to call for further investigation upon the topic.

In addition, although the use of error codes and clues may seem too complex and time consuming for learners to comprehend (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), it is interesting to note that several L2 learners have expressed their preference for indirect feedback (Leki, 1991; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). The significance of indirect CF is also supported by the existence of empirical evidences (Lalande, 1982; Ferris et al., 2000; Ferris and Helt, 2000; Rennie, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2006; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Storch, 2009) that report on its effectiveness to improve learners' accuracy in writing. In a study involving 72 university ESL students, Ferris & Roberts (2001) report that both experimental groups whose errors were underlined and given error codes significantly outperformed those who did not receive any correction in their writing. Such finding is supported by Truscott & Hsu (2008) where an analysis upon the writing of EFL graduate students in a public university in Taiwan revealed that students whose errors were underlined managed to significantly reduce the errors in their writing as opposed to those who did not receive any CF. Similar finding is also reported by Jamalinesari et al. (2015) where significant improvement in composition writing was demonstrated by EFL learners who received indirect feedback as opposed to those who received direct feedback. Although successful error reduction reported by these studies may not be a solid predictor of learning, such result still indicates the possible significance of indirect feedback in improving learners' accuracy in writing. This is aligned with Frear & Chiu (2015) who reported on the effectiveness of focused and unfocused indirect feedback in improving the writing accuracy of EFL learners in new piece of writing.

#### *No Difference in Effectiveness*

Regardless of the existence of empirical evidences that support the efficacy of direct and indirect feedback, several studies (Semke, 1984; Robb, Ross, and Shortreed,

1986; Frantzen, 1995; Ferris, 2006; Van Beuningen, De Jong, & Kuiken, 2008; Vyatkina, 2010) have also reported for no significant difference between the two approaches. From an experimental study involving 67 intermediate L2 students, Frantzen (1995) reports that neither the grammar supplemented nor the non-grammar treatment groups showed significant advantage in fluency and accuracy in their writing. Similar finding is also reported by Vyatkina (2010) who found that although all treatment groups showed progress in their L2 writing, no significant difference was identified in the overall error rate changes between the groups, suggesting that neither the direct, coded, nor uncoded feedback is superior in its effectiveness upon one another. In addition, Hosseiny (2014) also reported that despite the efficacy of both direct and indirect CF in improving the writing accuracy of EFL learners, no significant difference in improved accuracy was detected between the two experimental groups. As these findings contradict the empirical evidences on the superior effectiveness of either direct or indirect CF, researchers therefore call for further investigation on the topic.

### **2.5.2 Focused and Unfocused Corrective Feedback**

Apart from their interest to investigate on how explicit should CF be in correcting learners' written errors, researchers are also interested to know whether its provision should be comprehensive or selective in addressing learners' errors. This brings to the emergence of another much-discussed contrast in CF methodology related to the difference between unfocused and focused CF. Claimed as a common practice in most language classrooms, the former corresponds to the provision of feedback upon an extensive range of errors that learners commit in their writing. In contrast, focused feedback describes the provision of feedback which is targeted upon a few specific linguistic features while ignoring other types of error available in learners' writing.

### *The Effectiveness of Focused Feedback*

Several theoretical reasons have been proposed by the advocates of focused feedback to justify its superiority over unfocused feedback. Aligned with the cognitive theories of L2 acquisition that stress upon the importance of attention and understanding (Schmidt, 1994; Ellis, 2005), it is believed that learners are more likely to attend to given corrections if it is directed at a single or a limited number of error types. Thus, the attentive provision of correction through focused feedback is seen as an advantage that will enable learners to restructure and improve their IL system as it enables them to examine multiple and repeated corrections on a single type of error. This allows them to obtain the rich information and evidence that they need to understand the nature of the error (Shitani & Ellis, 2013).

In addition to the theoretical foundation, several studies (Sheen, 2007; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009; Sheen et al., 2009; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010a; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010b; Sheen, 2010b; Farrokhi and Sittapour, 2012) have also rendered empirical evidences that justify the relevance of employing focused feedback in responding to learners' written errors. Among the earliest study in this area was conducted by Sheen (2007) who investigated the effects of providing two types of direct feedback that targeted one type of grammatical error. The finding reveals that learners in both experimental groups managed to produce significant improvement in written accuracy as opposed to those in the control group who did not receive any CF. Similar findings was also reported by Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa (2009) who investigated the effects of focused and unfocused feedback upon 80 intermediate ESL learners. In their study, it was revealed that those in the focused CF group achieved the highest scores in grammatical accuracy as compared to the unfocused CF groups. This is supported by Farrokhi & Sittapour (2012) who report that despite the improvement in



grammatical accuracy shown by the experimental groups, highly-proficient EFL learners in the focused CF group managed to significantly outperform those who received unfocused written CF. In addition, Bitchener & Knoch (2010a) also highlight on the longitudinal effectiveness of focused feedback over 10-month period. Such evidences suggest the prominence of focused feedback in L2 writing and its significant effectiveness and pedagogical value over the unfocused feedback.

### *The Effectiveness of Unfocused Feedback*

Despite the theoretical and empirical evidences that justify the efficacy of focused feedback, several researchers and CF practitioners have argued for its insignificance particularly from the perspective of pedagogical practicality. Most language teachers believe that CF is imperative in informing learners about what is right and what is wrong with their work. Thus, they tend to provide learners with as much feedback as possible, assuming that the more comprehensive the feedback is, the more they will improve in the next writing assignment (Lee, 2004; Peterson and McClay, 2010). Therefore, opponents of focused CF believe that the provision of error correction which targets merely one or limited types of error may not suit the purpose of thoroughly attending and improving learners' written grammatical accuracy. They also believe that the pedagogical implementation of such feedback approach in language classrooms may also be problematic as teachers may not always have the luxury to focus on a single type of error every time they respond to learners' writing, apart from its possibility of leaving learners to feel perplexed and demotivated due to the existence of errors that are not addressed in their writing (Hyland, 1998).

Considering the issues associated to focused CF, Van Beuningen et al. (2012) thus suggest the greater advantage that unfocused CF has in facilitating better written accuracy. Due to its nature of addressing all or a wide range of errors produced by learners in their writing, Ellis (2009) and Ferris (2010) hence consider such comprehensive approach to possess the potential for superior effectiveness over focused CF especially in terms of its longitudinal effect upon learners' language accuracy. However, as compared to the growing amount of evidences on the effectiveness of focused CF, empirical evidence that support the benefits of comprehensive or unfocused CF is still scarce with the existing studies rendering inconclusive conclusion. In a study that contrasted the writing performance between a group of EFL learners receiving unfocused CF with a control group whose errors were not corrected, Truscott & Tsu (2008) found that despite its ability to facilitate improvement in learners' accuracy during text revision, the provision of unfocused CF to the experimental group did not lead to accuracy gains as they attempt a new piece of writing, subsequently denying the possibility for its learning effect. However, as the text that the learners wrote during the pre-test contained very few errors, Bruton (2009) believed that such condition might attribute to a ceiling effect which left little room for CF-led improvement to happen in the post-test.

Avoiding such limitation, Van Beuningen et al. (2008, 2012) then investigated the effects of supplying two groups of secondary school students with direct and indirect unfocused feedback. The result shows that both experimental groups managed to outperform the two control groups in a new piece of writing, with long-term effects was shown by the direct unfocused feedback group. Similar inclination towards unfocused feedback is also shown by Fazilatfar et al. (2014) who examined the effectiveness of unfocused written feedback on the syntactic and lexical complexity in advanced learners' writing. An analysis conducted upon the mean scores of both experimental and control groups revealed that unfocused feedback was effective in improving both the syntactic

and lexical complexity of the experimental group as opposed to the control group, hence suggesting its prominent role in improving learners' accuracy in L2 writing. However, such evidences are still scarce and insufficient for a solid conclusion to be formulated upon the issue, which calls for further investigation into the topic.

#### *No Difference in Effectiveness*

Several studies have also reported for no differential effectiveness between focused and unfocused feedback. Among all is the study by Ellis et al. (2008) who compared the effects of focused direct and unfocused direct feedback on the accurate use of definite and indefinite English articles. From the statistical analysis conducted upon the participants' written grammatical accuracy scores, it was revealed that aside from showing significant gain against the control group, no superiority in improved accuracy was demonstrated by neither the direct focused nor the direct unfocused group against each other, hence suggesting the equal efficacy of both CF approaches. Such finding is supported by Asiah & Lee Luan (2014) and Frear & Chiu (2015) who investigated the efficacy of focused indirect and unfocused indirect feedback on the accurate use of prepositions and verbs in the written work of ESL and EFL learners. The finding reveals that although both treatment groups outperformed the control group in the posttests, no significant difference was reported between the unfocused and focused feedback groups. Since findings from these studies indicate that both focused and unfocused feedback types are equally facilitative and that it contradicts with the existing evidences that prove otherwise, researchers therefore call for further studies to be conducted upon the topic.

## **2.6 Issues in CF Studies**

Despite the availability of various empirical studies that attempted to shed light on the role of CF and error correction in accuracy development as well as SLA, solid conclusion on the topic is yet to be derived due to the conflicting and inconclusive findings reported by these studies. Storch (2010) believes that this could be attributed to several methodological flaws in the research design as well as the comparability issues between the existing studies.

### **2.6.1 Research Design Flaws**

A number of criticisms have been levelled upon early CF studies that highlight on several methodological flaws in its design. Among the highlighted issues include the lack of control group and the use of inappropriate writing task as its test instrument.

#### *Lack of Control Group*

Among the main criticism made upon early CF studies like Fazio (2001), Kepner (1991), Lalande (1982), and Robb et al. (1986) is the absence of a control group. In order to determine the efficacy of CF upon learners' development in accuracy, researchers like Truscott (2004) and Ferris (2004, 2006) agree on the necessity to include a control group that has similar characteristics and attributes with other experimental groups but receive no treatment. They suggest that the existence of a control group is vital as it serves as a benchmark in comparing the effects of CF suppliance between the experimental groups that received CF with the control group that receive none. This creates a controlled environment is essential for reliable findings to be obtained from the experiment.

### *Inappropriate Writing Task*

Another criticism made on the methodological design of early CF studies is the use of inappropriate writing task as its test instrument. Several studies like Fazio (2001), Kepner (1991), and Semke (1984) were criticized for providing CF upon written errors made by learners in their journal entries. In response to such issue, Ferris (2003) pointed out that as the focus of journal writing is to promote learners' written fluency rather than accuracy, the provision of CF may conflict with the initial objective of the task and it may not be effective in promoting accuracy in learners' writing. Several other studies (Ashwell, 2000; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb et al., 1986) were also criticized for evaluating learners' improvement in accuracy through revised texts without requiring them to produce a new piece of writing. Although the provision of CF treatment in these studies was able to assist learners to produce better accuracy in their text revision, Guénette (2007) argued that the learners' ability to revise does not evident the long-term effectiveness of CF particularly in promoting L2 learning.

### **2.6.2 Lack of Comparability**

Apart from the flaws in methodological design, other limitations that lead to the inconclusive result on the role and efficacy of CF is related to the lack of comparability. Russell & Spada (2006) suggest that in attempting to prove the effectiveness of CF as well as the superiority of one type of feedback upon another, it is necessary for researchers to ensure that all experimental groups in every CF study are comparable in order for the comparison to be fair and not influenced by external factors. However, Ferris (2004) and Guénette (2007) point out that because most existing CF studies differ so much in its key parameters, comparison between these studies is problematic. This includes aspects such

as the population of the studies, the treatment used across the studies, as well as the different measures used by the studies to calculate any gains in grammatical accuracy.

### *Population*

One of the limitations that leads to the issue of comparability among existing CF studies is the difference between its populations. In this issue, the majority of participants involved in existing studies were different particularly in terms of their proficiency level of the TL. This is because most researchers tend to select their participants from a group of learners who were readily available within the place where the studies took place and they usually had been clustered into their respective classrooms. As a result, it is likely for these studies to have different sets of participants who varied greatly in terms of their level of English proficiency, age, and the extent to which the participants were exposed and familiar with the TL and its grammatical structures. Such difference hence becomes another manipulated variable apart from the types of CF treatment being investigated, which makes the effort to compare the findings of these studies to be problematic. This calls for further and improved studies that compare the efficacy of different types of CF treatment in a more controlled environment.

### *Treatment*

Apart from the issue of population, another limitation that contributes towards the lack of comparability is in terms of the treatments. Most existing studies that investigated on the efficacy of CF and the superiority of one type upon another vary widely in terms of the way the treatments were exercised. While most studies (e.g. Semke, 1984; Ashwell,

2000) targeted the provision of CF upon both the grammar and the content of learners' writing, there are also studies (Robb et al., 1986; Chandler, 2003) which focused on the provision of CF targeted upon learners' written accuracy while ignoring the aspect of fluency. Apart from that, in studies like Chandler (2003) and Fazio (2001), the provision of CF was sustained upon a number of writing tasks over time while in other studies (e.g. Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris & Roberts, 2001), feedback was provided only once throughout the course of the experiments. Such differences make the comparison between the studies difficult, hence suggesting the need to conduct further studies on the topic with a standardised operationalisation of the CF treatment.

#### *Grammatical Accuracy Measures*

The issue of comparability between existing CF studies is also related to the difference on the types of error that were included in the measurement of accuracy. Although several studies had employed a similar method in measuring the learners' gain in accuracy, these studies differed in terms of the types of targeted errors. A clear example of such issue can be seen in the studies by Lalande (1982) and Kepner (1991). Despite the use of mean score as its method to calculate learners' gain in accuracy, the provision of error correction in the former study was limited to grammar and orthography while the latter targeted the errors in morphology, vocabulary, and syntax. In addition, not only these studies differed in what was counted as an error in accuracy, it also used different measures to calculate the learners' grammatical accuracy. Among the different approaches include calculating the mean score of the errors (e.g. Lalande, 1982; Kepner, 1991), the use of 'error per word' ratio (e.g. Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003), and by identifying the ratio or error free T-units to the total number of T-units (e.g. Robb et al., 1986; Polio et al., 1998). Although these differences are relevant in its respective studies,

such dissimilarities make the comparison of findings to be difficult, hence suggesting for a better uniformity in future CF studies.

## **2.7 Chapter Summary**

This chapter has provided an overview on the efficacy of CF in improving learners' grammatical accuracy in writing as well as its facilitative role to promote the noticing of errors among ESL learners. Among the issues discussed include the role of CF in SLA, the theoretical foundations that support and against the practice of CF provision, as well as the empirical evidences of its efficacy reported by existing CF studies. Such information is important as it is related to the theoretical framework and the methodological design of the study.



## **CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY**

### **3.0 Overview**

The present study aims to expand the insight on the topic of CF by comparing the effectiveness of four types of CF approaches in improving the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners. This chapter presents the methodology of the study which includes the research design, the writing test procedures, the operationalization of the CF treatments, as well as the data analysis process.

### **3.1 Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework of the present study is founded on Swain's (1995; 2000; 2005) Output Hypothesis that highlights on the role of output and negative evidence as part of the influencing factors that promote uptake and accuracy in language learning. The components of such notion include the significance of negative evidence in the learners' output, its relationship with the three functions of the Output Hypothesis, and the facilitative role that CF plays in the equation.

#### **3.1.1 Output Hypothesis and Negative Evidence**

In the early days of language acquisition, language production and output was commonly seen as an end to learners' acquisition process due to the heavy influence of Krashen's (1982; 1985) Input Hypothesis. However, seeing the need for learners to produce the TL in order for the real potential of learning to happen, Swain (1995) later on had widen the role of both language production and output as an extension to the

learning process through the introduction of the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1995, 2000, 2005). The key concept of this hypothesis lies on the believe that output pushes learners to process language more deeply and with more mental effort than input. This provides learners with the opportunity to use the language while progressing in the course of its acquisition and it is achieved through the three functions that output serves namely noticing, hypothesis testing, and metalinguistic.

The first function of output in the Output Hypothesis is noticing. For acquisition to effectively occur, Ellis (1994) believes that there is a need for the noticing of the linguistic forms to happen in learners' oral and written language production. The importance of noticing lies on its possible assistive role in promoting learners to pay some attention to the errors that they commit in their language production which will subsequently inform them about the limitations and the gaps that exist in their IL system as compared to the TL (Schmidt, 1990, 1994, 2001). This is achieved by making the gaps to be sufficiently salient to the learners through the provision of CF in the learners' written work (Swain, 2010, p.100). Conceptually, this is where the role of negative evidence comes into the notion. As an extension to the concept of positive evidence in Chomsky's (1980) theory of Universal Grammar (UG), negative evidence is described as an indication that informs learners about what is not grammatical in the language that they produce, particularly when it involves the process of acquiring a second language. In this case, several researchers (Leeman, 2003; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Rutherford & Sharwood Smith, 1988; White, 1987) regard the provision of CF not only as a mere correction of the learners' errors in their writing but also as an attempt to provide them with sufficient negative evidences that highlight and inform them about the linguistic gaps that exist between their IL and the TL, subsequently leading to the enhancement in their SLA. This is supported by Qi & Lapkin (2001) who reported that learners who demonstrated substantive noticing were able to produce a more accurate subsequent

written work than those who demonstrated perfunctory noticing. This is because substantive noticing involves the learners with high level of language processing which allows them to reason and explain the noticed structures. Meanwhile, perfunctory noticing is considered as a low level of language processing where learners are only made realised about the errors that they have produced without having the ability to explain about the nature of the erroneous structure. However, as Schmidt & Frota (1986) assert that as the learners' deliberation on the gaps in their written output will only occur with the existence of CF that is sufficiently salient, the question on how implicit or explicit should CF be for it to be effective in promoting noticing is still open for discussion.

The second function of output is hypothesis testing. Following the noticing of gaps in their IL development, learners will then engage themselves into a stage of hypotheses testing of the targeted forms known as the language-related episodes (LREs). This process involves the production of modified output by the learners based on the given CF that will stretch their IL system as they attempt to figure out the TL-like structure of their linguistic gap. As a result, learners will be encouraged to take part in a deeper internal processing of the TL's linguistic components that will enhance its intake into their IL system (Ferris, 2002). In addition, as the learners' uptake and retention of the linguistic forms is usually influenced by how extensive their engagement is to the LREs, Chandler (2003) asserts that attention should be given upon providing the type of CF that can engage learners to utilise the feedback as well as supplying them with ample amount of information for them to correspond to the hypothesis testing process.

The hypothesis testing process then leads to the third function of output which is the reflection on the learners' metalinguistic knowledge. Following the completion of noticing and the hypothesis testing process, learners' ability to reflect and resolve the gaps in their linguistic knowledge will then lead to the formation of a new and enhanced

linguistic acquisition in their IL system. However, since the possibility for them to incorrectly resolve the linguistic gaps does exist, Swain (2000) asserts that negative evidence in the form of CF plays a crucial role in guiding the learners to test their linguistic hypothesis in order for the chance of correctly resolving the errors to be greater, and that the hypothesis-testing to metalinguistic phase can be bi-directional as it serves as a trial and error process for the learners to figure out the target-like form of the errors. Through their conscious reflection and engagement, it is hoped that they will be able to internally reflect on what they have learned, control their output, and internalise the linguistic knowledge that they have gained.

In the context of the present study, the three functions of output as proposed by the Output Hypothesis were portrayed in the experiment through the provision of CF during the two treatment sessions. The first session was conducted following the completion of the pre-test where the objective was to highlight and direct the participants' attention towards the grammatical errors that they produced in their writing. This was done through the provision of four different types of CF assigned to each experimental group. Such negative evidence then informed them about the linguistic gaps in the current IL system and it was expected for the participants to form linguistic hypotheses as part of their attempt to address the gaps. This was then followed with the second treatment session that provided the participants with a hypothesis testing opportunity that confirmed or rejected their linguistic hypotheses. The participants' ability to reflect and resolve their linguistic gaps during the two treatment sessions would then assist them to learn and acquire the TL-like grammatical structures and this was reflected by their progress in the post-test and delayed post-test.

### **3.1.2 Corrective Feedback as Noticing Facilitator**

Apart from the significance of output and its functions in assisting learners' progress in SLA, another issue that is worth discussing is the effectiveness of CF in playing its role as the noticing facilitator. For the noticing function of output to happen, Swain (1995, 2005) believes that learners should be saliently exposed to the negative evidences available in their work. This is often translated into real pedagogical practice through the provision of CF as a response to the errors produced by learners in their writing, where the feedback provided will assist them to consciously identify the weakness in their IL system.

However, aside from the conflicting results rendered by existing empirical studies, several investigations on the effectiveness of CF also reveal the likeliness of its failure to promote better written grammatical accuracy due to the learners' inability to be aware of the errors that they produced. This includes the study by Lee (1997) who reports that despite the availability of error correction and feedback, a significant number of participants in her study were unable to detect the errors being highlighted in their essays, particularly those who received indirect feedback. This suggests that the type and strategy used in the provision of CF also plays an important role for its implementation to be effective and able to promote noticing among learners.

With the intention to further investigate upon the issue, interview sessions involving three participants from each experimental group were conducted at the end of the study. The objective of the interview was to elicit the participants' feedback on the effectiveness of the given CF in directing their attention to the grammatical errors in their writing, whether it was helpful for them to comprehend and process the types of error that they produced, and whether it helped them to improve their accuracy in the following writing task. It is hoped that such information will help CF practitioners to decide on the

manner of CF provision that can best play its role as the noticing facilitator and assists the learners' progress in SLA.

### **3.2 Research Design & Procedures**

Despite the existence of empirical evidences on the efficacy of CF in improving learners' written linguistic accuracy and its prominent role in facilitating the uptake and retention of grammatical structures, the issue of methodological incomparability has resulted in the inability for these studies to resort to a mutual consensus in determining whether one type of CF is more effective than the other. In addition, limited data have also been collected from the learners' point of view in order to know whether the provided CF treatment really helps them to notice the negative evidences in their writing and subsequently the linguistic gaps in their IL system. Therefore, aiming to rectify the issue of methodological incomparability, the present study is a comparison on the effectiveness of four different types of CF in improving the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners in a controlled environment. This makes the four CF treatments as the only manipulated variable without receiving any distortion from external variables. An interview was also conducted at the end of the study in order to elicit the learners' experience in attending to the given corrections. It is hoped that such feedback shall provide the information needed to determine which CF treatment is helpful to promote the noticing function of output in order to facilitate the uptake and retention of linguistic features especially by ESL learners.

### 3.2.1 Research Design

With the purpose of investigating the effectiveness of different types of CF in improving the written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners, this study employs a quasi-experimental research design which is grounded upon Swain's (1995, 2005) Output Hypothesis as its theoretical framework. Upon receiving a consent from the institution, 125 ESL students were randomly selected to participate in this 8-week study. A briefing was conducted with these students which explained about the purpose, procedures, and parts of the study that they would be directly be involved in and those who agreed to take part were asked to sign a consent form (see Appendix A) before being randomly and equally assigned into four experimental groups and one control group.

**Table 3.1: Participants' Grouping.**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>CF TREATMENT</b>	<b>TARGETED STRUCTURES</b>
FD	Focused Direct	Prepositions Definite and Indefinite Articles Subject-verb Agreement
FI	Focused Indirect	Prepositions Definite and Indefinite Articles Subject-verb Agreement
UD	Unfocused Direct	All grammatical errors
UI	Unfocused Indirect	All grammatical errors
CT	Control Group	-

The experiment began by measuring the participants' initial level of performance in grammatical accuracy through a pretest conducted in week 1. This was followed by two treatment sessions in week 2 and week 3 where the grammatical errors produced by the FD, FI, UD, and UI group were attended through the provision of four different types of CF treatment namely focused direct feedback, focused indirect feedback, unfocused

direct feedback, and unfocused indirect feedback (see Table 3.1). Meanwhile, being the control group, those in the CT group received no correction but rather general commentaries such as ‘Good work!’ and ‘Well done!’. Upon the completion of the treatment sessions, the participants’ short term and long term gains in written grammatical accuracy was measured in the posttest and delayed posttest conducted in week 4 and week 8. Finally, three participants from each group were randomly selected to participate in an individual interview which gathered their feedback and opinion whether the error corrections provided were helpful in facilitating the noticing of errors. The Gantt chart (see Figure 3.1) below illustrates the complete research design.

	PROCEDURE	WEEK							
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Gain approval from the institution.								
2.	Briefing to all participants.								
3.	Gather consent from participants.								
4.	Cluster participants into groups.								
5.	Pre-test								
6.	Treatment 1								
7.	Treatment 2								
8.	Post-test								
9.	Delayed Post-test								
10.	Interview								

**Figure 3.1: Gantt Chart for Research Design.**



### 3.2.2 Participants

This study involved 125 Malaysian ESL learners who enrolled in a private college in Seremban 2, Negeri Sembilan for a two-months English course as a preparatory programme prior to their undergraduate study. These participants have gone through the same Malaysian education system and syllabus from the primary (Year 1 until Year 6), secondary (Form 1 until Form 5), and upper secondary level (Lower 6 and Upper 6), which makes a total of 13 years of formal schooling. All of them were 20 years old and the female formed the majority with 78.4 percent ( $n = 98$ ) followed by male with 21.6 percent ( $n = 27$ ). They came from various ethnics namely Malay ( $n = 45$ ), Chinese ( $n = 26$ ), Indian ( $n = 18$ ), and indigenous ethnics of Sabah and Sarawak which include Iban ( $n = 10$ ), Bidayuh ( $n = 7$ ), Kadazan ( $n = 11$ ), and Dusun ( $n = 8$ ).

At the beginning of the study, all participants declared English as their second language (L2) with their respective mother tongue as their first language (L1). Their level of English proficiency varied between low, intermediate, and high proficiency. This was determined according to their achievement in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) where those who obtained Band 1 and Band 2 were considered to have low proficiency, Band 3 and Band 4 as intermediate proficiency, and Band 5 and Band 6 were considered as high proficiency. Although several grammatical inaccuracies were detected in their writing and speaking, most participants still managed to construct simple, compound, and complex sentences in their writing with functional knowledge in grammar, syntax, and meaning conveyance. Upon being thoroughly explained about the purpose, procedures, and the parts of the study that they would be directly involved, those who agreed to take part in the study were asked to provide their consent by signing a consent form (see Appendix A) and they were randomly and equally divided into four experimental groups namely Focused Direct (FD,  $n = 25$ ), Focused Indirect (FI,  $n = 25$ ),

Unfocused Direct (UD,  $n = 25$ ), and Unfocused Indirect (UI,  $n = 25$ ), and one Control Group (CT,  $n = 25$ ). In the interest of excluding the influence of biased language proficiency upon the groups' progress in written grammatical accuracy, measures had been taken to make sure that all groups consisted equal number of participants with high, intermediate, and low proficiency.

### **3.2.3 Writing Test**

A guided writing task (see Appendix B) adapted from Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) was administered in the three tests and two treatment sessions. In each session, participants were given 15 minutes to read a short story adapted from the local Malaysian Aesop fables. It was then collected and they were allotted with 40 minutes to re-write the short story in 350 words while being guided by sequential pictures. Word prompts containing key vocabulary items and nouns related to the story were provided next to each picture in order to assist the participants in remembering the storyline as well as to stimulate the production of the targeted grammatical structures. No further assistances were provided and the use of dictionaries were not allowed. Upon completion, all participants submitted their essays and it was marked according to the CF assigned to their respective group. Similar procedures were used in all tests and treatment sessions. However, different Aesop fables were assigned to each session in order to avoid the possibility for the participants to memorise the task.

In order to check on the suitability and feasibility of the writing task, a pilot study was conducted prior to the actual implementation of the study. Based on the feedbacks received, all participants agreed that the locality of the Aesop fables helped them to have better understanding about its content. The 350-words writing task was also feasible for

them to complete within the given 40-minutes with the word prompts proven to be effective and sufficient in lowering their anxiety of having to remember the storyline. However, the reading time was increased from 10 to 15 minutes in order for the participants to have ample time to comprehend the fable. It was decided that the writing task for each test and treatment session should be conducted using fables of different titles in order to avoid the participants from recalling the previous written work. However, the purpose and procedures for each session remained the same.

### **3.2.4 Interview**

As part of the attempt to investigate whether the four types of CF were effective facilitators for noticing, an individual interview was conducted after the completion of the delayed post-test on week 8. Three participants with high, intermediate, and low proficiency were selected from each experimental group ( $n = 12$ ) and the interview was guided by a set of questions (see Appendix C) adapted from Miller (2014) that elicited the participants' feedback and experience in attending to the given CF. This included aspects such as the participants' strategy in attending to the given corrections, the effectiveness of the given CF to saliently highlight and inform them about the errors in their writing, whether the given CF led towards noticing, and the implication of such noticing towards their improvement in subsequent writing. All interview sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim, which included the participants' pauses and non-verbal fillers. The findings from the interview were then used to support the quantitative findings in order to determine whether the CF approaches were effective in promoting the noticing function of output among the participants.

Due to their mixed proficiency in English, a small number of participants had faced minimal difficulties to comprehend the interview questions as well as in providing their responses. Therefore, prompting were used to facilitate their understanding and to elicit their responses. However, such assistance was kept to minimal and precautions were taken to ensure that it would not influence their original ideas.

### **3.3 Targeted Structures**

Prior to the treatment sessions, an error analysis was conducted upon the participants' pretest in order to identify the common linguistic inaccuracies in their writing. From the analysis, a total of 4839 errors involving 13 types of grammatical structures (see Table 3.2) were identified and prepositions, subject-verb agreement (SVA), and the referential indefinite article 'a' for first mention and the referential definite article 'the' for subsequent mention were among those with the highest frequency. The analysis was then tallied with the annual reports of the Malaysian University English Test (MUET) and it was found that similar structures were also reported as among the linguistic errors commonly produced by Malaysian ESL learners in their MUET writing examination for seven consecutive years (MUET Annual Report, 2010, 2011, 2012, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016). This justifies the selection of prepositions, SVA, and the definite and indefinite article as the targeted grammatical structures for the focused direct and focused indirect feedback.

**Table 3.2: Types of Errors Produced by the Participants.**

	Type	Total Errors Produced	Percentage (%)	Mean
1.	Tenses	715	13.33	5.72
2.	Word Choice	601	11.21	4.81
3.	Preposition	564	10.52	5.51
4.	Subject Verb Agreement	500	9.32	4.00
5.	Singular / Plural Form	376	7.01	3.01
6.	Articles	374	6.97	2.99
7.	Word Order	366	6.82	2.93
8.	Word Form	295	5.50	2.36
9.	Spelling	260	4.85	2.08
10.	Verb Form	251	4.68	2.01
11.	Capitalization & Punctuation	224	4.18	1.79
12.	Missing Word	178	3.32	1.42
13.	Redundancy	135	2.52	1.08
	<b>TOTAL</b>	4839	100.00	

Furthermore, although studies like Sheen (2007), Bitchener & Knoch (2010), and Asiah & Lee Luan (2014) had looked into preposition, articles, and SVA in their investigation, the majority of them had employed a highly focused feedback that addressed these grammatical structures as a single targeted structure. This resulted in the limited availability of studies to-date that investigate on the effectiveness of CF, particularly focused feedback, if it is used to address more than one type of grammatical structure. This further justifies the selection of preposition, articles, and SVA as the targeted grammatical structures of the present study.

On the other hand, the provision of the two variants of unfocused CF was targeted upon all 13 types of grammatical errors. This simulated the common practice in real language classrooms where the purpose of providing feedbacks and error corrections is to improve learners' overall grammatical accuracy and not just one or two types of grammatical structures. In addition, as the marking process was solely conducted by the researcher, deliberate cautions had been taken in protecting the intra-rater reliability.

### **3.4 Treatment**

With the aim of investigating the effectiveness of different CF approaches in improving the grammatical accuracy in ESL learners' writing, the present study has employed four different types of feedback as its manipulated variables. This section provides the information on how these feedback types were operationalised and the procedures of conducting the treatment sessions.

#### **3.4.1 Operationalisation of CF Treatment**

In the context of real language classrooms with learners of mixed ability, the question of how CF should be provided is usually determined by the number of linguistic structures that the teachers aim to address and the extent of its explicitness in correcting learners' errors. Therefore, most teachers often fall back on the concept of focused and unfocused feedback with direct and indirect correction as the variation in its operational approach. As the provision of CF is never dependent onto a specific approach, the present study intends to add to the pool of knowledge by comparing the effectiveness of focused direct feedback, focused indirect feedback, unfocused direct feedback, and unfocused

indirect feedback in improving the written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners, and the operationalisation of these manipulated variables was standardised based on the typology of written CF proposed by Ellis (2009).

For the purpose of this study, focused feedback was operationalised as the provision of CF that addressed three grammatical structures as opposed to the highly focused feedback that only addressed one type of grammatical structure. This stimulated its real pedagogical implementation in most language classrooms where teachers tend to attend to more than one type of grammatical inaccuracies that the learners committed in their L2 writing.

#### *Focused Direct Feedback*

Given to the FD group, focused direct feedback was operationalised by crossing out the erroneous structures in the participants' writing, the use of a cursor to indicate any missing structures, and the provision of the correct structures written above the errors. This informed the participants on the existence of grammatical errors in their writing, its specific location in the essay, as well as its TL-like structures. However, the focused direct feedback only addressed three types of grammatical structures namely preposition, the definite and infinite articles, and subject-verb agreement and neglected other types of grammatical errors. Figure 3.2 shows an example of the focused direct feedback in this study.

walks  
A stray dog is hungry. It ~~walk~~ around the town to look for food.

**Figure 3.2: Example of Focused Direct Feedback.**

*Focused Indirect Feedback*

Focused indirect feedback was given to the FI group by crossing out the grammatical errors in the participants' writing and inserting a cursor to indicate any missing structures. This directed their attention on the existence of grammatical errors in their writing and informed them on its specific location in the essay. Similar to the focused direct feedback, the provision of focused indirect feedback only addressed the participants' errors on preposition, the definite and infinite articles, and subject-verb agreement and neglected other types of grammatical errors. However, they were not provided with the TL-like structures of the errors and they were left with no further information about the nature of the errors. Figure 3.3 shows an example of the focused indirect feedback in this study.

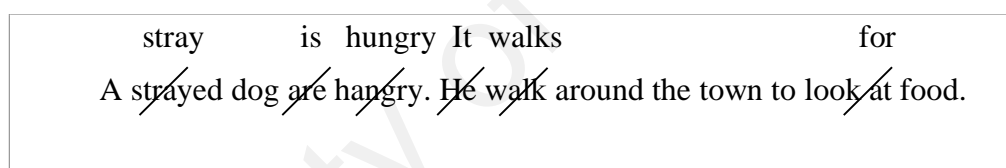
A stray dog is hungry. It ~~walk~~ around the town to look for food.

**Figure 3.3: Example of Focused Indirect Feedback.**



### *Unfocused Direct Feedback*

Given to those in the UD group, unfocused direct feedback was operationalised by crossing out the erroneous grammatical structures in the participants' writing, inserting a cursor to indicate any missing structures, and the provision of the correct form above the erroneous structures. This directed the participants' attention on the grammatical errors that they produced in their writing, highlighted its specific location in the essay, and informed them about the TL-like form of the erroneous structures. However, unlike the focused direct feedback, the provision of unfocused direct feedback addressed all thirteen types of grammatical inaccuracies produced by the participants in their writing. Figure 3.4 shows an example of the unfocused direct feedback used in this study.



**Figure 3.4: Example of Unfocused Direct Feedback.**

### *Unfocused Indirect Feedback*

Unfocused indirect feedback was provided to the UI group by crossing out their written grammatical errors and by inserting a cursor to indicate a missing structure. This informed them about the existence of grammatical errors in their writing and its specific location in the essay. Similar to the direct focused feedback, the provision of unfocused indirect feedback addressed all thirteen types of grammatical inaccuracies in the participants' writing. However, they were not provided with the TL-like forms of the grammatical inaccuracies. Figure 3.5 shows an example of the unfocused indirect feedback used in this study.

A strayed dog are hangry. He walk around the town to look fo food.

**Figure 3.5: Example of Unfocused Indirect Feedback.**

### 3.4.2 Treatment Session Procedure

A total of two treatment session were conducted in the second and third week of the study. In the first session, all participants were asked to complete a 350-words writing task with similar format and procedures as the ones conducted in the three series of tests. Upon completion, their essays were collected and marked by the researcher according to the type of CF treatment assigned to their respective group. It was then returned to the participants on the following week and they were given 15 minutes to attend to the corrections. This was where the noticing function of Output Hypothesis happened where the corrected errors, or the negative evidences, directed the participants' attention to the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing and subsequently informed them about the gaps in their current IL system. Once noticing took place, the participants then moved to the hypothesis testing phase where they began to derive their own linguistic hypotheses on the possible correct form of the erroneous grammatical structures.

Once the 15 minutes was over, the corrected essay was collected and the participants were assigned with another writing task. At this stage, the participants' linguistic hypotheses would help them to rectify the linguistic gaps in their IL system as part of their attempt to avoid from repeating similar errors in the new writing. The essay was then collected, marked, and returned to them in the following week. At this point, the corrections given in the second essay approved or rejected the participants' linguistic

hypotheses, and such ability to reflect and resolve the gaps in their linguistic knowledge would lead to the formation of a new and enhanced linguistic acquisition in their IL system, which was reflected by their performance in written grammatical accuracy during the posttest and delayed posttest.

### **3.5 Data Analysis**

The data analysis process of the present study comprises two premises. It began with a quantitative comparison on the grammatical accuracy scores between the four experimental groups and the control group in order to identify the effectiveness of the four CF approaches in improving the participants' written grammatical accuracy. This was followed by a qualitative analysis conducted upon the participants' responses during the interview sessions, which provided the information on the efficacy of the four CF approaches in serving as the facilitators for noticing.

#### **3.5.1 Quantitative Analysis on Grammatical Accuracy**

Addressing research question 1 and 2, the quantitative analysis statistically compared the groups' grammatical accuracy scores across the three tests in order to identify whether the provision of focused direct, focused indirect, unfocused direct, and unfocused indirect feedback was effective in improving the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners, and whether the efficacy of these CF approaches varied from one another. The analysis began by calculating the grammatical accuracy scores of the experimental and control groups followed by the use of two-way repeated measures

ANOVA to compare the groups' performance across the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest.

### *Grammatical Accuracy Score*

The present study operationalised grammatical accuracy as the correct use of the targeted grammatical structures in its appropriate language contexts. In the marking process, every accurate use of the targeted structures was given a score of '1' while every incorrect attempt was marked with '0'. The Suppliance in Obligatory Context (SOC) measurement adapted from Ellis et al. (2008) was then used to calculate the grammatical accuracy score for each essay using the formula as shown in Figure 3.6.

$$\text{Grammatical Accuracy Score} = \frac{\text{Number of correct suppliance in obligatory context}}{\text{Number of correct and incorrect suppliance (Total produced)}} \times 100$$

**Figure 3.6: Formula for Calculating Grammatical Accuracy Score**

Once the percentage of grammatical accuracy of each participant was obtained, the grammatical accuracy score for each group was then calculated by adding the participants' individual grammatical accuracy percentage and dividing it with the total number of participants in each group ( $n = 25$ ). The grammatical accuracy scores of all groups were then recorded in the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) software version 21.0 in order for the statistical analysis to be conducted.

### *Two-way Repeated Measures ANOVA*

The quantitative analysis in the present study is a comparison between two independent variables namely the four types of CF treatments (focused direct, focused indirect, unfocused direct, unfocused indirect) and the three test times (pretest, posttest, delayed posttest) in order to see its relation with the groups' performance in written grammatical accuracy as the dependent variable. Such two-factor analysis was completed using a two-way repeated measures ANOVA which compared (1) the grammatical accuracy scores of each group across the three tests in order to determine the efficacy of CF provision in improving the participants' written grammatical accuracy, as well as comparing (2) the grammatical accuracy scores between the four experimental groups across the three tests in order to determine any differential effectiveness between the four CF approaches in improving the participants' written grammatical accuracy. The findings from the quantitative analysis served as the answer to research question 1 and 2, where it determined (1) whether the provision of CF significantly improved the participants' written grammatical accuracy across the three tests, and (2) whether such improvement was influenced by the type of CF treatment that they received.

#### **3.5.2 Qualitative Analysis on Interview**

Meanwhile, research question 3 was addressed by administering a deductive qualitative analysis upon the participants' responses in the interview. All audio-recorded interviews were verbatim transcribed (see Appendix D) and the participants' responses were then analysed and coded according to several aspects as detailed in Table 3.3 below.

**Table 3.3: Coding System for the Analysis of Interview**

<b>CODE</b>	<b>ASPECT</b>
Strategy	The participants' strategy to comprehend and attend to the given corrections.
Negative Evidence	The ability of the given CF to saliently highlight and inform the participants about the errors in their writing.
Noticing	The effectiveness of the CF treatment to promote noticing among the participants.
Subsequent Improvement	The ability of the noticing to assist the participants towards improved grammatical accuracy in subsequent writing.

The main purpose of the analysis was to elicit information on (1) the participants' strategy in attending to the given corrections, (2) the effectiveness of the given CF to saliently highlight and inform them about the errors in their writing, (3) whether the given CF led towards noticing, and (4) the implication of such noticing towards their improvement in subsequent writing. The coded responses were then analysed in order to find any thematic patterns that could answer the question on the effectiveness of the four types of CF approaches in playing its role as the facilitator of noticing.

## **CHAPTER 4: RESULTS & DISCUSSION**

### **4.0 Overview**

This chapter presents the findings obtained from the data analysis procedures employed in the study. It begins by meeting the assumptions of normality and homogeneity of variance followed by the findings that address the three research questions.

The data analysis process of the present study consisted two premises. The first premise involved a quantitative comparison on the grammatical accuracy of the four experimental groups and the control group in order to identify the effectiveness of the CF approaches in improving the participants' written grammatical accuracy. This was followed by a quantitative comparison on the grammatical accuracy of the experimental groups in order to determine the possibility of differential effectiveness between the four types of CF. Meanwhile, the second premise involved a qualitative analysis on the participants' responses during the interview sessions, which provided the information on the efficacy of the four CF approaches in serving as the facilitators for noticing.

### **4.1 Assumptions of Normality & Homogeneity of Variance**

Prior to conducting the parametric tests that measured the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, several tests were implemented in order to meet two important assumptions namely the assumptions of normality and the assumption of homogeneity of variance.

#### **4.1.1. Tests of Normality**

The assumption of normality determines whether the data gathered from the three tests in the experiment were drawn from a normally distributed population using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The result shows that the FD group had recorded non-significant values of  $p = .041$ ,  $p = .036$ , and  $p = .028$  in the pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest due to the existence of several outliers. However, these outliers were retained as they were minimal and did not affect the Skewness and Kurtosis values of the group. Meanwhile, the Shapiro-Wilk test for the other groups were above .05 which ranged from  $p = .071$  to  $p = .760$ . As no significant difference was found between the dependent variable and the normal distribution, it implied that the assumption of normality had been met.

#### **4.1.2 Test of Homogeneity of Variance**

The second assumption proposes that the variability of scores for all groups should be similar and of equal variance. This was determined through the Levene test for homogeneity of variance where the result shows that the  $p$ -values for the pretest ( $p = .90$ ), posttest ( $p = .64$ ), and delayed posttest ( $p = .095$ ) were greater than .05. As no significant difference was found in the three tests, it implied that the variance of the five groups were equal. Hence, the assumption of homogeneity of variance had been met.

In order to exclude the influence of biased language proficiency on the groups' progress in written grammatical accuracy, measures had been taken to make sure that all groups consisted equal number of participants with high, intermediate, and low proficiency, which was determined through their MUET score. This was then followed by a two-way ANOVA analysis that examined the interaction effects between the five groups in the pretest. The result indicates that no significant difference was found between



the pretest scores of the five groups, hence suggesting that the linguistic competency of all participants across the five groups were comparatively equal before the treatment and that the groups' difference in its targeted structures did not have any effects on the participants' performance.

## 4.2 Results

### 4.2.1 Results for Research Question 1

**What are the effects of providing corrective feedback on the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners?**

The first research question investigates whether the provision of CF is effective in improving the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners. This was achieved by comparing the short-term gain (pretest to posttest) in written grammatical accuracy between the four experimental groups with the control group, as shown in Table 4.1.

**Table 4.1: The Groups' Performance in Written Grammatical Accuracy**

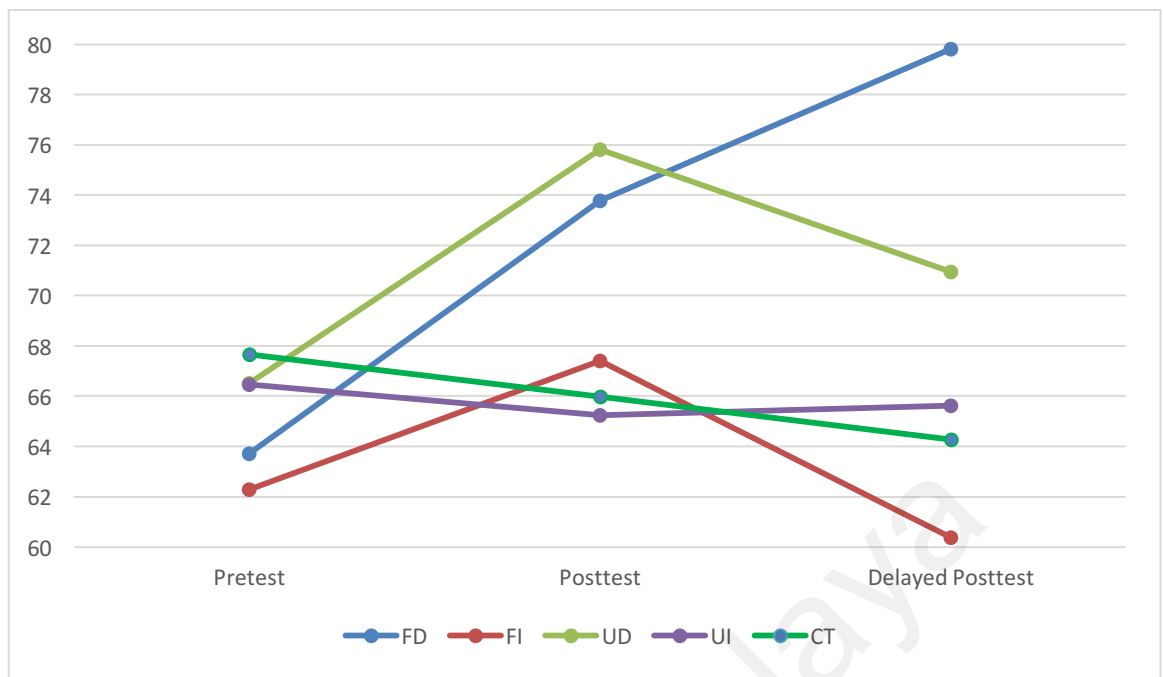
<b>GROUP</b>	<b>PRETEST</b>	<b>POSTTEST</b>	<b>DELAYED POSTTEST</b>
CT	M = 67.67	<i>M</i> = 65.99 ( <i>p</i> = .892)	<i>M</i> = 64.29 ( <i>p</i> = .745)
FD	M = 63.73	<i>M</i> = 73.78 ( <i>p</i> = .000)	<i>M</i> = 79.83 ( <i>p</i> = .000)
FI	M = 62.29	<i>M</i> = 67.42 ( <i>p</i> = .005)	<i>M</i> = 60.38 ( <i>p</i> = .000)
UD	M = 66.52	<i>M</i> = 75.83 ( <i>p</i> = .000)	<i>M</i> = 70.96 ( <i>p</i> = .004)
UI	M = 66.48	<i>M</i> = 65.24 ( <i>p</i> = 1.000)	<i>M</i> = 65.63 ( <i>p</i> = 1.000)

Findings from the analysis reveal that significant short-term improvement was demonstrated by the FD group ( $p = .000$ ), the FI group ( $p = 0.05$ ), and the UD group ( $p = .000$ ), while no significant improvement was demonstrated by the UI group ( $p = 1.000$ ). Meanwhile, as the control group that did not receive any CF, the CT group had recorded a decline in their written grammatical accuracy across the three tests. From 67.67 in the pretest, their grammatical accuracy scores had decreased to 65.99 in the posttest ( $p = .892$ ) followed by another decline to 64.29 in the delayed posttest ( $p = .745$ ). This suggests that the absence of CF treatment has resulted in the inability for the CT group to improve or maintain their written grammatical accuracy, and that the provision of CF through focused direct, focused indirect, and unfocused direct is effective to improve the written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners, with the exception of the unfocused indirect feedback.

#### **4.2.2 Results for Research Question 2**

**What are the effects of providing different types of corrective feedback on the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners.**

The second research question investigates whether there exists differential effectiveness between the four CF approaches in improving the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners. This is determined by comparing the experimental groups' gain in written grammatical accuracy across the three tests (see Figure 4.1), particularly from the aspect of short-term and longitudinal gains.



**Figure 4.1: Progress in Written Grammatical Accuracy**

#### 4.2.2.1 Short-Term Improvement in Accuracy

Short-term gain in written grammatical accuracy was determined by comparing the groups' grammatical accuracy scores during the pretest and the posttest. The highest improvement is shown by the FD group where their score in written grammatical accuracy had increased from 63.73 to 73.78 in the posttest, with the significant  $p$ -value of  $p = .000$ . This is followed by the UD group where their scores in written grammatical accuracy had significantly improved from 66.52 to 75.83, with  $p = .000$ . Finally, the least short-term improvement in grammatical accuracy was recorded by the FI group where their scores in written grammatical accuracy had increased from 62.29 to 67.42 with the significant  $p$ -value of  $p = .005$ .

Meanwhile, no short-term gain in written grammatical accuracy was recorded by the UI group where their grammatical accuracy score had slightly decreased from 66.48

to 65.24, with a non-significant  $p$ -value of  $p = 1.000$ . Such finding indicates that short-term improvement in written grammatical accuracy is only promoted by the focused direct, focused indirect, and unfocused indirect feedback, with the exception on unfocused indirect feedback.

#### **4.2.2.2 Longitudinal Improvement in Accuracy**

Longitudinal gain in written grammatical accuracy was determined by comparing the groups' progress between the posttest and the delayed posttest. Among the four experimental groups, only the FD group had demonstrated a gain in longitudinal accuracy where the group's grammatical accuracy score had significantly increased from 73.78 to 79.83, with the  $p$ -value of  $p = .000$ . Their performance in the delayed posttest is also significantly higher as compared to their initial performance during the pretest, with a difference in score of 16.10 ( $p = .000$ ).

On the other hand, other experimental groups had shown no longitudinal improvement in their written grammatical accuracy. The UD group had recorded a significant decline from 75.83 to 70.96 in their longitudinal accuracy, with the  $p$ -value of  $p = .004$ . However, despite such decrease in accuracy, their performance in the delayed posttest is still significantly better than their pretest, with a score difference of 4.45 ( $p = .040$ ). This shows that although unfocused direct feedback is not entirely effective to further improve the participants' written grammatical accuracy in the long run, traces of improved accuracy are still visible in their delayed posttest as compared to their initial performance prior to receiving the CF treatment. This indicates the possible potential for unfocused direct feedback to promote better written grammatical accuracy in the long run.

In addition, similar decrease in longitudinal written grammatical accuracy was also demonstrated by the FI and UI group. From the score of 67.42 in the posttest, the grammatical accuracy score of the FI group had significantly decreased to 60.38 in the delayed posttest, with the p-value of  $p = .000$ . Their performance in the delayed posttest is also slightly lower than their pretest, with a non-significant difference of 1.90 ( $p = .852$ ). Meanwhile, although the grammatical accuracy score of the UI group had slightly increased from 65.24 in the posttest to 65.63 in the delayed posttest, such improvement was small and insignificant ( $p = 1.000$ ), hence indicating no longitudinal gain in their written grammatical accuracy. The group's performance in the delayed posttest was also lower than the pretest with a non-significant score difference of 0.852 ( $p = 1.000$ ). This suggests that neither the focused indirect nor the unfocused indirect feedback is effective to improve or sustain the participants' longitudinal gain in written grammatical accuracy.

#### **4.2.3 Results for Research Question 3**

**How do different types of corrective feedback help to promote the error noticing function of output among ESL learners?**

The third research question investigates on how the four CF approaches play its role as the facilitator of noticing. This can be discussed from the aspect of the participants' strategy in attending to the corrections, the effectiveness of the CF approaches to saliently highlight the negative evidences, the efficacy of the CF treatments to promote noticing, and the ability of such noticing to assist towards improved accuracy in subsequent writing.

### 4.2.3.1 Strategy in Attending to CF

The first interview question required the participants to describe their actions and response upon receiving the corrected essays. This elicits the strategy that they had employed as they attempted to attend and comprehend the CF treatment given to their errors.

**Table 4.2: Strategy to Comprehend CF by the Experimental Groups.**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
FD	2 High Proficiency	<b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b>  A: Uhhh... I read all the errors I made... and... I read the corrections given.
	6 Low Proficiency	<b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b>  A: First, I... read sentence by sentence. Next... I... search what grammatical mistakes I do (in my essay).
	15 Intermediate Proficiency	<b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b>  A: Uhhh... I read back the essay... and... I see so many mistakes in my essay. I read (the essay) and... I refer to the corrections in my essay.
UD	52 Low Proficiency	<b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b>  A: Uhhh... when I received the corrected essay... I just read the answer (error corrections). I try to see... (identify) what (kind of) errors in my essay... because... I want to use it (the corrections) in my next essay and... not do the same mistakes.
	60 High Proficiency	<b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b>

		<p>A: Uhhh... when I receive my corrected essay, I try to look every error that I made during my writings. I try to... analyse the errors to see what kind of errors I make. From that, I can know what type of (correct) grammar I should use.</p>
	<p>65 Intermediate Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b></p> <p>A: First... when I get the corrected essay, I read the corrected essay and the correction made (given). Second, I try to... identify the errors that I have done and I remember not to do the same mistake.</p>
FI	<p>33 High Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b></p> <p>A: First of all, I read back my essay and... I was confused. I got many mistakes in my essay but... when I was in school... my teacher will... give some correction for me. But in this exam, it doesn't have correction words (TL-like corrections) in my essay.</p>
	<p>40 Intermediate Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh...I read my essay and look for correction. I don't know what my errors on my essay and I just... read it back because I... don't know what is my mistake.</p>
	<p>51 Low Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I just read the essay because when only give (given)... cross (error crossing) I don't know what to do and... what other word to write (how to correct). I try to think what I need to improve but... it is confusing because I didn't know what I need to improve.</p>
UI	<p>78 High Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I feel so lost that time. There are so many fault that I do in my essay, but... uhhh... I don't know what was wrong in my essay.</p>

	84 Intermediate Proficiency	<p><b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... firstly, I read the essay and try to understand the correction. I don't know what to do. I just feel something wrong with my essay and... about my grammar.</p>
	94 Low Proficiency)	<p><b>Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I just read the essay and... I thought... "Why there were many errors marked in my essay?" and... I keep reading.</p>

Based on their response (see Table 4.2), it was found that the participants' initial approach in attending to the CF treatment was similar across the four experimental groups. Upon receiving the corrected essays, all participants proceeded to read their essays while paying close attention to the given corrections with the intention of getting an insight on the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing. However, such objective was only achieved by those in the FD and UD group where they admitted to have utilised the given "corrections" and "answers" in order to identify the grammatical inaccuracies that they had committed in their writing. In comparison to the other experimental groups, it is believed that the connotations of "corrections" and "answers" used by those in the FD and UD group contextually refer to the TL-like corrections made available by the direct feedback.

Meanwhile, although the use of error crossing in the FI and UI group had informed them about the existence of errors in their writing, their responses of "I don't know what was wrong" and "I didn't know what to improve" suggest that the absence of TL-like corrections in the indirect feedback may have halted their attempt to understand the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing. According to Participant 33 in the FI group,



such condition differed with his past experience of learning English in school where the provision of corrections and TL-like answers was a common and expected practice by the teacher. Hence, the absence of such information in the indirect feedback had resulted with the majority of them feeling confused as they attempted to use the given CF corrections in order to determine their written grammatical inaccuracies. Therefore, it can be concluded that despite the participants' strategy of using the given corrections to determine and comprehend their written grammatical inaccuracies, such strategy was only made feasible by the TL-like corrections in the direct feedback.

#### 4.2.3.2 Highlighting Negative Evidences

The second interview question elicited the participants' feedback on the effectiveness of the four CF approaches in highlighting the negative evidences in their writing and subsequently informing them about their written grammatical inaccuracies.

**Table 4.3: The Effectiveness of CF to Highlight Negative Evidences.**

GROUP	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
FD	2 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b></p> <p>A: It was effective. I know the cross means I did mistakes and... I also know the correct answer from the... answer that you write. From that, I know what was wrong with my essay.</p>
	6 Low Proficiency	<p><b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b></p> <p>A: When you give me answer, I can know my errors. Then, I... write back (rewrite) the correction and... I try to remember the correct answer (TL-like corrections)... and... I avoid to repeat the same mistake in the next task.</p>

	15 Intermediate Proficiency	<p><b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b></p> <p>A: When you give me the correction, I can know my mistake, and fix my wrong (errors).</p>
UD	52 Low Proficiency	<p><b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I think the corrections help me to... know my error but... I'm still not sure if it's (the grammatical attempts) totally wrong or... if... I still can use it (the attempted grammar structures) in another essay.</p>
	60 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... when I read the corrections in my corrected essay, I can find my mistakes and I can know... what is the mistake that I did, whether it is in... present tense or past tense, or... if I have use wrong words. Emmm... I also try to remember what my mistake is, then I memorise (the corrections) and use (the corrections) in the next essay.</p>
	65 Intermediate Proficiency	<p><b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I think it was effective. From the correction, I find that I have made some mistakes.</p>
FI	33 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I think it is confusing because there is only cross and there is no answer. I didn't know whether it was... present tense or past tense, or if... I need to add 's' or 'ed'. ... I think I need you to give me answer (TL-like corrections) because I am so weak in grammar.</p>
	40 Intermediate Proficiency	<p><b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b></p>

		A: Uhhh... you only tick the right one (grammatical attempts) and cross on the error and... I need to find the correct answer by myself. But I prefer to get answers (TL-like corrections) because... I can know what is wrong in my essay.
	51 Low Proficiency	<b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b>  A: Emmm... no. I think I need you to cross my mistake and... write the correct answer. I can learn more from that.
UI	78 High Proficiency	<b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b>  A: Emmm... when I see words with cross, I know it's wrong but... I don't know the answer. So... I try to find the answer.
	84 Intermediate Proficiency	<b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b>  A: No. Because I don't know if I use the correct grammar and... I don't know if... I write the words wrong or not (use the correct words).
	94 Low Proficiency	<b>Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?</b>  A: Uhhh... I don't know what to do so I just read it again and again.

From their responses (see Table 4.3), it was found that all participants in the four experimental groups were able to deduce the function of word-crossing used by the four CF approaches as an indication of incorrect production of grammatical structure. However, the ability to reason and understand the nature of their erroneous TL attempts was only portrayed by those in the FD and UD group. Apart from being informed about their inaccurate grammar production, the majority of them also admitted that the

availability of the TL-like corrections provided by the direct feedback had enabled them to understand what was wrong with the erroneous structures as well as informing them about its correct structure. On the other hand, the majority of participants in the FI and UI group did not find the provision of indirect feedback to be effective in helping them to understand the nature of their grammatical inaccuracies. Although these participants were informed about their ungrammatical TL production through the word-crossing, the absence of TL-like corrections in the indirect feedback had given them with near-to-no information on what was wrong with their essays. Hence, most of them were left confused which resulted in their inability to utilise the indirect corrections to their advantage and they even stated their preference of being provided with TL-like corrections. This suggests that the provision of direct feedback through focused and unfocused manner is more superior than the indirect feedback in highlighting the negative evidences in the participants' writing as well as in informing them about the nature of the errors and its TL-like structures.

Meanwhile, Participant 52 in the UD group mentioned that despite the ability of the unfocused direct feedback to inform her about the errors in her writing, she was still unsure whether the erroneous structures being highlighted by the corrections were wrong in situ or whether it might be correct if it was used in a different context. As such remark was made by a participant with low proficiency, this suggests that the ability of unfocused direct CF to inform ESL learners about the nature of their written errors may decrease if it involves those with low proficiency.

### 4.2.3.3 Efficacy to Promote Noticing

The third interview question explores on the efficacy of the four CF approaches to promote noticing among the participants. This was determined by asking them to describe and explain any errors that they were able to identify in their writing based on the given corrections.

**Table 4.4: The Efficacy of Focused Direct Feedback to Promote Noticing in the FD Group.**

GROUP	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
FD	2 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Grammatical errors. So many wrong grammar like using prepositions like 'on' and 'at'. And... I always forgot to put 's' and 'es' on certain words. Like 'see', we (I) have to change it to 'sees'.</p> <p><b>Q: Can you tell me why do you need to add 's'?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I don't know.</p>
FD	6 Low Proficiency	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I do not put 's'. Like word 'walk', I do not put 's', like 'walk', 'walks'.</p> <p><b>Q: Can you explain why?</b></p> <p>A: No, I'm not sure why. I see this word [<i>pointed to a correct SVA form</i>], I put 's' and you tick, but this word [<i>pointed to an incorrect SVA form</i>] I didn't put 's' and you cross it. So, I know I must put 's'. Then, I look at the answer (TL-like correction) that you give to know the correct answer.</p> <p><b>Q: Any other errors that you produced?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I don't put some words like 'a' and 'the'. I also put... emmm... wrong word. In the essay, I put 'at', actually the correct word is 'on'.</p>

		<p><b>Q: Can you tell me what type of error is this?)</b></p> <p>A: I think it's preposition.</p>
	<p>15 Intermediate Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I was confused on how to use correct grammar. Like the word that should put 's'. For example, 'walk', it should be 'walks'. And 'reach'. I spelled 'reach'. It should be 'reaches'.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know why you should put 's'?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I don't know. Maybe because of... uhhh... present tense.</p>

The participants' responses in Table 4.4 indicate that focused direct feedback effectively assisted those in the FD group to realise the inaccurate TL production in their writing. This included structures like 'on' and 'at', 'a' and 'the', and incorrect omission of 's' and 'es' on certain words, which then prompted their noticing towards the gaps in their TL production particularly on the aspects of prepositions, the definite and indefinite articles, and SVA. However, as they attempted to rectify such inaccuracies, the only linguistic hypothesis that they were able to devise was on the need to add the suffix 's' and 'es' on certain words, which only addressed their inaccurate production of the SVA. Although they were unable to identify such grammatical structure as SVA nor were they able to explicitly explain about its grammatical rule involving the agreement between singular or plural subjects with the verbs, such linguistic hypothesis had served as a guideline in their future production of the structure. On the other hand, despite their ability to identify their incorrect usage of 'on' and 'at' as an error in prepositions as well as being aware about their inaccurate usage of 'a' and 'the' in their writing, no linguistic hypotheses were derived by these participants to address such inaccuracies. This brings to an assumption that these participants are familiar with these structures but the

complexity of its grammatical rules has limited their understanding, which prompted their inaccurate production.

An interesting point that is worth discussing is on how the error-crossing technique and the TL-like corrections were utilised by the participants in order for them to determine the nature of their errors. During the interview, Participant 6, who has low proficiency of the English language, admitted that his noticing on the gaps in his production of SVA was prompted by his action of comparing his incorrect productions of SVA which were crossed with his correct productions of SVA which were ticked. The comparison had made him realise about the absence of suffix ‘s’ in his incorrect production of SVA and this hypothesis was then confirmed by the TL-like corrections written above the crossed errors. Such process is in-line with the role of CF in promoting learners’ noticing and metalinguistic reflection of the TL as proposed by the Output Hypothesis. These evidences hence suggest that focused direct feedback effectively promotes the participants to notice their inaccurate production of the three targeted grammatical structures, provides them with immediate opportunity to confirm their linguistic hypotheses, and is beneficial to participants with mixed proficiency, particularly those with low proficiency.

**Table 4.5: The Efficacy of Unfocused Direct Feedback to Promote Noticing in the UD Group.**

GROUP	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
UD	52 Low Proficiency	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... only some of it. For example, I should put ‘s’... Like “It suddenly look”, I should put ‘s’ at the back of ‘look’.</p>

		<p><b>Q: Do you have any idea why you should have put ‘s’?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I don’t know.</p> <p><b>Q: Any other errors that you could identify?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... no. Mostly, I forgot the ‘s’.</p>
	<p>60</p> <p>High Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... there are some mistakes that I do. For example... emmm... spelling error. I write ‘unfortunately’ and I forgot to put the ‘e’. Besides that, I always forget to put the letter ‘s’. For example, ‘wants’, ‘eats’, ‘feels’, and ‘learns’.</p> <p><b>Q: Can you explain why do you need to put ‘s’?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I don’t know. Maybe it’s because of the present tense.</p> <p><b>Q: Any other errors that you did?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... yes. Some of the tenses also was not correct, such as... past tense and present tense. For example, when I put ‘was’, it should be ‘is’.</p> <p><b>Q: Any other errors that you could identify?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... yes. I remember I write ‘the’ but I should use ‘a’.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know the difference between ‘the’ and ‘a’?</b></p> <p>A: I think... ‘the’ is for people or animal, but... ‘a’ is for... something else.</p>
	<p>65</p> <p>Intermediate Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Mostly, I forgot to put ‘es’ and ‘s’. Like ‘find’, ‘finds’.</p>



		<p><b>Q: Look at this error. You wrote ‘make’ but I crossed it and I wrote ‘makes’. Do you know why?)</b></p> <p>A: Because... I didn’t put ‘s’.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know why you should put ‘s’?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... no. I don’t know.</p> <p><b>Q: Any other errors that you could identify?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... yes. In the essay, it’s actually ‘it’, but... I write ‘he’.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know why you should use ‘it’ instead of ‘he’?</b></p> <p>A: I think because... it’s a dog, animal, not people.</p> <p><b>Q: Any other errors that you did in your essay?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... yes. I write ‘got’. Actually, it’s ‘gets’.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know why you should use ‘gets’ instead of ‘got’?</b></p> <p>A: I think it’s because of present tense, not past tense.</p>
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Meanwhile, the provision of unfocused direct feedback in the UD group (see Table 4.5) was less effective to comprehensively address the participants’ inaccurate production of the 13 grammatical structures. From the perspective of noticing, the participants’ noticing did not comprehensively cover all 13 grammatical structures being addressed in their writing and the only noticing that was mutually shared by them was on their error of omitting ‘s’ and ‘es. This led them to develop a linguistic hypothesis on the need to add the suffix ‘s’ and ‘es’ on certain words and although they were unable to identify such grammatical structure as SVA nor explicitly explain about its rules, such linguistic hypothesis had served as a guideline as they produced the structure in the subsequent writing.

In addition, the participants' ability to notice their errors was also dependent on their level of proficiency of the English language. For Participant 52 whose English proficiency was low, her noticing was limited to the SVA only while those with intermediate and high proficiency like Participant 65 and Participant 60 were able to notice and rectify their errors involving SVA, tenses, pronoun, spelling, and articles. This shows that apart from its limited effectiveness to promote noticing that comprehensively addresses a variety of the grammatical structures, the participants' ability to fully utilise unfocused direct feedback to their advantage is also affected by their level of proficiency of the TL.

**Table 4.6: The Efficacy of Focused Indirect Feedback to Promote Noticing in the FI Group.**

GROUP	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
FI	33 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why they were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I didn't add something in some words. The word need to have 's' and I didn't add 's'. For example... the word 'looks' need to add 's', but... I didn't put the 's'. And 'give', it also need to add 's' but I don't put 's'.</p> <p><b>Q: Look at this sentence "It loses its bone after open its mouth". In this sentence, I placed a tick on the word 'loses', but I crossed the word 'open'. Do you know why?</b></p> <p>A: Yes, because I need to put 's' at the word 'open'.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know why?</b></p> <p>A: No, I don't know.</p> <p><b>Q: Can you tell me any other errors that you have produced?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I think some mistake in preposition. For example, the sentence "He feels pity on Goofy". 'On' is wrong.</p>

		<p><b>Q: How do you know on is wrong?</b></p> <p>A: It's because the word is crossed.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know the correct answer for this error?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... no.</p> <p><b>Q: Why?</b></p> <p>A: Because there is no correction.</p>
	<p>40</p> <p>Intermediate Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why it was wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Yes. First, I was wrong in this word, 'going'. I use 'going' but... the correct answer is I need to use 'fall'. "The big bone going down" is wrong. I need to use "The big bone fall down". Second, I was wrong in... preposition. Such as... "Goofy goes to the old bridge carefully" but the correct answer is "Goofy goes... at the old bridge carefully". Third is past tense... I use the wrong word. I think here... [<i>pointed to the sentence "The poor Goofy fill upset"</i>]. I need to use... 'felt' because it is... past.</p>
	<p>51</p> <p>Low Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why they were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... no. I don't know what my errors.</p> <p><b>Q: Why?</b></p> <p>A: Because... you just mark it... and... give no answer (TL-like corrections). I don't know my error on my essay.</p>

Nevertheless, the provision of focused indirect feedback to the FI group had resulted in the participants' partial noticing to their inaccurate production of the three targeted grammatical structures. Their responses during the interview (see Table 4.6) indicate that greater advantage was shown by highly proficient ESL learners like Participant 33 who managed to utilise the error-crossing technique in noticing his errors

of omitting the suffix ‘s’ and ‘es’ and his incorrect production of prepositions, with the exception on the articles. His ability to form linguistic hypotheses that rectified such errors was also limited to SVA and he admitted to not being able to rectify his prepositional errors due to the lack of TL-like corrections. On the other hand, such advantage was not demonstrated by low proficient learners like Participant 51 who admitted to have experienced a certain difficulty to determine what was wrong with his essays due to the absence of the TL-like corrections.

Interestingly, although the focused indirect feedback had effectively assisted Participant 40 to notice the grammatical inaccuracies in her writing, it only attended her inaccurate production of preposition and not articles and SVA. In addition to her incorrect attempt of rectifying her prepositional errors as well as her inability to notice her erroneous production of articles, Participant 40 had also wrongly inferred the highlighted SVA errors in her writing as the errors in wrong word used and past tense. This suggests that apart from its effectiveness to promote noticing being dependent on the learners’ level of proficiency as well as its limited ability to address all three targeted grammatical structures, the efficacy of focused indirect feedback might also be jeopardised if learners are unable to comprehend and deduce the error codes used by the indirect feedback.

**Table 4.7: The Efficacy of Unfocused Indirect Feedback to Promote Noticing in the UI Group.**

GROUP	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
UI	78 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why they were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I only know some mistake but not all. For example, “The butcher’s shop saw Goofy.” I was supposed to write “The butcher saw Goofy.”</p>

		<p><b>Q: Do you know why it was incorrect?</b></p> <p>A: Because the man is the butcher but... the butcher's shop is... his shop.</p> <p><b>Q: Anything else?</b></p> <p>A: I think... I put (use) the wrong past tense and present tense. Like... emmm... in one sentence, it is present but... I put past in my essay.</p> <p><b>Q: And how did you know past tense was wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Because... when I look another words in the sentence behind, I put present and it's right, and I know it's present.</p> <p><b>Q: Any other errors that you could identify?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... no.</p>
	<p>84</p> <p>Intermediate Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why they were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I don't know. I don't think so.</p> <p><b>Q: Let's have a look at this sentence "Goofy see the butcher.". I put a cross on the word 'see'. Do you know why?</b></p> <p>A: No, I don't know.</p> <p><b>Q: How about this one? "Goofy use its mouth to bite the bone.". I crossed the word 'use'. Do you know why this word is wrong?</b></p> <p>A: No, I don't know.</p> <p><b>Q: What if I write the answer? [The researcher wrote 'uses' on top of the error] Now, do you know what was wrong with this error?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... yes. I don't put 's'.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know why you should put 's'?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... no. I don't know.</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">94</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Low Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... no. Not at all.</p> <p><b>Q: So, what did you do when you could not identify the correct answers to the errors?</b></p> <p>A: I just ignore and... I just... continue reading my essay.</p> <p><b>Q: Let's look at this sentence "Goofy bite bone using his mouth." I crossed the word 'bite' and 'his' and I put a cursor before the word 'bone'. Do you know why?</b></p> <p>A: No, I don't know.</p> <p><b>Q: [The researcher wrote 'bites', 'its', and 'the' above the error.] How about now?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... yes. I don't put 's' on the word 'bite'.</p> <p><b>Q: Anything else?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I use wrong word. It should be 'its'. I also forgot to put 'the'.</p> <p><b>Q: Can you tell me why these structures were incorrect?</b></p> <p>A: No, I don't know.</p>
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In addition, the provision of unfocused indirect feedback was also less effective to promote noticing among those in the UI group. The participants' responses (see Table 4.7) indicate that only Participant 78, who is a highly proficient ESL learner, was able to utilize the comprehensive indirect feedback to determine his inaccurate TL production. This was achieved through his action of comparing the crossed erroneous structures with similar structures which were correct and ticked. He was also able to produce the correct TL-like answers that addressed his inaccuracies. However, his noticing did not

comprehensively address all 13 grammatical structures and it was limited to prepositions and tenses only.

Meanwhile, other participants had demonstrated no noticing ability throughout the treatment sessions. Both Participant 84 and 94 were unable to notice and explain any grammatical inaccuracies that were highlighted in their writing, and they were only able to do so when they were provided with its TL-like corrections during the interview. However, they were still unable to determine the nature of the errors nor explicitly explain about its grammatical rules. They also admitted that their inability to utilise the unfocused indirect corrections to their advantage had prompted them to ignore the corrections and the highlighted errors during the treatment sessions. These evidences suggest that apart from its inability to address all 13 grammatical structures, the efficacy of unfocused indirect feedback to promote noticing is also dependent on the participants' linguistic ability. In addition, it is also suggested for its provision to be accompanied by metalinguistic information in order to maximize the chances for its efficacy as it might be too complex to be comprehended by ESL learners, especially those with limited proficiency.

#### **4.2.3.4 Improving Accuracy in Subsequent Writing**

The fourth interview question explores on the ability of the CF approaches in assisting the participants to improve their written grammatical accuracy in the subsequent writing tasks. This was achieved by eliciting the participants' responses on how the corrections provided as well as the noticing promoted by the CF were able to help them to perform better in their next writing.

**Table 4.8: The Efficacy of Focused Direct and Unfocused Direct Feedback to Promote Improved Accuracy in Subsequent Writing in the FD and UD Group.**

<b>GROUP</b>	<b>PARTICIPANT</b>	<b>RESPONSE</b>
FD	2 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I know what was wrong with my essay and... I try not to repeat the same mistake in the next essay. I also remember to put 's' and... 'es' on certain words when I do my next writing.</p>
	6 Low Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... the corrections give me help because... it make me know how to use right word in my essay especially "a" and "the", and also... put 's' on some words.</p>
	15 Intermediate Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... I remember the correction in the essay and from that... I learn the mistake that I have done and... I try to avoid the same mistake. I also realise that my grammar has some mistake, so... I make sure what is the correct grammar that I should use before I write the next essay.</p>
UD	52 Low Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... When I didn't put 's', you put 's'. So, I remember when I want to put (use) a word, I will put 's'.</p> <p><b>Q: Do you know the rule of adding 's' to these words?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... no, I don't know. I just put 's'.</p>
	60 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p>



		A: First, when I read the corrections in my corrected essay, I can find my mistakes and... I can know what is the wrong that I did. I try to remember what my mistake is, then I memorise to the next essay. Actually, when I write the essay, I was just depending on my own knowledge that I have gained from school. But after reading the corrected essays, I notice that my grammar is... not up to the level that will satisfy the markers. So, from there, I know that I need to improve more.
	65 Intermediate Proficiency	<b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b>  A: Emmm... I remember the mistake that I have done, so that I don't do the same mistake in the next writing task.

During the interview, participants in the FD and UD group (see Table 4.8) admitted that the error corrections provided by the focused and unfocused variants of direct feedback had helped towards their improved grammatical accuracy in the subsequent writing task. This was because aside from being made aware about the existence of grammatical error in their TL production, the availability of the TL-like answers had also informed them with its correct structure. The majority of them then were able to utilise such noticing to formulate linguistic hypotheses that helped them to avoid from repeating similar errors in their subsequent writing. In addition, feedbacks gathered from Participants 15 and Participant 60 from the FD and UD group indicate that as a result from their noticing and awareness towards the gaps in their current linguistic capacity, their attempt of the subsequent writing tasks was accompanied by their conscious awareness on grammatical accuracy. This suggests that focused and unfocused direct feedback are effective in promoting ESL learners to notice their inaccurate production of the TL, able to assist their understanding to the nature of the errors and hypothesise on its

rectification, as well as helping to nurture their conscious awareness to accurately produce the structures in their subsequent writing.

**Table 4.9: The efficacy of focused indirect and unfocused indirect feedback to promote improved accuracy in subsequent writing in the FI and UI group.**

GROUP	PARTICIPANT	RESPONSE
FI	33 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: Uhhh... I try to remember my errors in the last essay and... I try to improve in my next essay. But... it's better if I get the answer (TL-like corrections) because I can know more about what is wrong with my essay.</p>
	40 Intermediate Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: I think it's very important if you give me answer (TL-like corrections). It's because I have many mistakes in my essay. So, when I know the answer, I can do some revision to make my essay better.</p>
	51 Low Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: No, it did not. The correction didn't help at all because... I don't know what was wrong in my essay. I hope that I know what is wrong in my essay.</p>
UI	78 High Proficiency	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: In my opinion, it doesn't help me... because... I need to know the correct answer. When you did not give the correct answer (TL-like corrections), I do not know what my mistake is and... what is the correct answer. Sometimes... maybe... I did not put some words, or sometimes... you cross some words in my essay. But I'm not sure why because you did not write the answer (TL-like corrections).</p>

	<p style="text-align: center;">84</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Intermediate Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm. I think it's not really helpful. I cannot make my grammar good because there is no correction and... I did not know what is my mistake. If the errors are not marked (corrected), then... I will not know what I have done wrong and what is my weaknesses in English.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">94</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Low Proficiency</p>	<p><b>Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?</b></p> <p>A: Emmm... no. Not really. The correction does not help me at all. I wish I get the answer (TL-like corrections) so that... I can know what I did wrong. I prefer you cross my error and give answer (TL-like corrections).</p>

Meanwhile, less efficacy was demonstrated by the focused and unfocused indirect feedback in helping those in the FI and UI group (see Table 4.9) to maintain and further improve their grammatical accuracy in subsequent writing. The majority of them responded that both variants of the indirect feedback did not inform them about the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing. They also expressed their preference of being provided with the TL-like corrections as it would inform them about the nature of their errors as well as its correct TL-like structures. Such evidences suggest that the efficacy of both focused and unfocused indirect feedback may be maximized if its provision is accompanied by TL-like corrections or any forms of metalinguistic information as it will likely inform ESL learners about the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing as well as helping them to determine and understand the nature of such errors.

## **CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION**

### **5.0 Overview**

This chapter contains the conclusion that answers the research questions under investigation. It begins by discussing the effects of CF provision on learners' written grammatical accuracy, the differential effectiveness of the four types of CF approaches, as well as its efficacy in promoting noticing among the learners. This is followed by several recommendations that address the limitations encountered by this study in order for it to be improved in future studies.

### **5.1 Discussion on Findings**

The findings of the present study can be discussed from three perspectives. This includes the effects of providing CF on learners' written grammatical accuracy, the effectiveness of the four different types of CF approaches under investigation, and the efficacy of the CF approaches in promoting noticing among the learners.

#### **5.1.1 The Effects of CF on Written Grammatical Accuracy**

The first research question investigates on the effects that CF provision has upon the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners. The findings show that the focused direct feedback, unfocused direct feedback, and focused indirect feedback effectively facilitate towards improved grammatical accuracy in the learners writing. Meanwhile, less efficacy is demonstrated by the unfocused indirect feedback where its provision leads towards no progress in the learners' written grammatical accuracy, which is similar to the

control group who receive no CF treatment. Although the extent of its effectiveness varies from one approach to another, the result shows that the provision of CF treatment does lead towards improved performance in written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners, with the exception of unfocused indirect feedback.

The Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1995, 2005) suggests that focus-on-form interventions like CF serves as a facilitator that promotes ESL learners to notice the linguistic gaps in their current IL system as opposed to the TL-like structures. This creates an intertwined relationship between the effectiveness of a CF approach with its ability to promote noticing among the learners. From the interview, learners in the FD, UD, and FI group admitted that the provision of the focused direct, unfocused direct, and focused indirect feedback effectively assists them in noticing the grammatical inaccuracies that they had produced in their writing. Although the extent of its effectiveness varies from one approach to another, the learners' utilisation of these CF approaches to identify the types of grammatical errors in their writing as well as their progress in written grammatical accuracy shows that the ability of these CF approaches in promoting error noticing does have an influence over its effectiveness to improve their written grammatical accuracy. Meanwhile, those in the UI group responded that the unfocused indirect feedback is less effective in informing them about the grammatical errors in their writing. This limits their noticing on the linguistic gaps in their IL and subsequently affects their ability to improve their written grammatical accuracy throughout the experiment. Therefore, it can be concluded that the effectiveness of a CF approach in assisting towards improved written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners is influenced by its ability to promote noticing, and such advantage is portrayed by the focused direct, unfocused direct, and focused indirect feedback.

## 5.1.2 The Effectiveness of Different Types of CF

The second research question investigates on the effectiveness of providing four different types of CF on the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners. This can be discussed from the aspect of its short-term and longitudinal benefits in improving the learners' written grammatical accuracy. In each aspect, these approaches are compared from the perspective of its explicitness in correcting the learners' errors (direct and indirect feedback) as well as the extent of its comprehensiveness in addressing the targeted grammatical structures (focused and unfocused feedback) in order to determine the benefits of each method.

### 5.1.2.1 Short-Term Improvement

The findings indicate that the effectiveness to promote short-term improvement in written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners is demonstrated by the focused direct, unfocused direct, and focused indirect feedback, with the exception of the unfocused indirect feedback.

#### *Direct Over Indirect Feedback*

The learners' performance in written grammatical accuracy shows that the highest short-term improvement is recorded by both focused and unfocused variants of the direct feedback. Meanwhile, such advantage is only demonstrated by the focused provision of the indirect feedback and it is only half as effective as the two direct feedbacks. Such pattern suggests the superior efficacy that the direct feedback has in promoting short-term improvement in written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners.

Due to its straightforward nature in correcting learners' errors, Ellis et al. (2008) believe that direct feedback possesses the ability to reduce the potential confusion that learners may experience if they fail to deduce the error codes used in the indirect feedback. During the interview, the majority of learners in the FD and UD group admitted that both focused and unfocused variants of the direct feedback saliently highlight the negative evidences in their writing. The availability of the TL-like corrections also effectively assists them to figure out and understand the nature of their erroneous TL-production. This is contrary with the confusion caused by the focused indirect feedback to the FI group, which leads them to misinterpret the indirect feedback as errors other than the three targeted grammatical structures. This finding hence adds to the pool of knowledge on the superior effectiveness of direct feedback over the indirect feedback in promoting short-term improvement in written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners, along with existing studies like Chandler (2003), Van Beuningen et al. (2008), Bitchener & Knoch (2010b), Frear (2012), Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad (2012), and Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki (2014).

#### *Focused Over Unfocused Indirect Feedback*

On the other hand, the unfocused provision of the indirect feedback does not lead towards any short-term improvement in the written grammatical accuracy of the ESL learners. As compared to the focused indirect feedback, such result indicates that the effectiveness of the indirect feedback in facilitating towards short-term improvement might be limited if it is used to comprehensively address a vast variety of grammatical structures.

Stressing on the importance of attention and understanding, Schmidt (1994) believes that the objective of providing ESL learners with indirect feedback in order to encourage them to independently reflect and be responsible on their own TL development will be better achieved if it is directed at a single or limited number of grammatical structures. As indirect feedback may be slightly complex to be deduced as opposed to the direct feedback, Ellis (2005) suggests that its selective provision that targets a limited number of grammatical structures may increase its likeliness of being attended by the learners. Meanwhile, such advantage is not offered by the unfocused indirect feedback as its comprehensive approach provides the learners with an abundance of linguistic information that might be too complex for them to process, particularly by those with low proficiency. This is evident by the learners' noticing ability where the provision of the focused indirect feedback facilitates those in the FI group to notice the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing as opposed to the less efficacy of the unfocused indirect feedback in promoting error noticing in the UI group. Hence, such finding adds to the pool of knowledge on the effectiveness of focused feedback (Bitchener, 2008; Sheen, Wright, & Moldawa, 2009; Farrokhi & Sittapour, 2012) as well as the efficacy of the indirect feedback (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Storch, 2009).

### *Conclusion*

Regardless of its comprehensive or selective nature of addressing the grammatical inaccuracies in the ESL learners' writing, the direct feedback is proven to possess a greater advantage in promoting short-term improvement. Meanwhile, similar advantage is only demonstrated by the focused provision of the indirect feedback. However, such approach is only half as effective as the direct feedback, hence indicating the superior



efficacy that the direct feedback has in promoting short-term improvement in the written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners.

### **5.1.2.2 Longitudinal Improvement**

The effectiveness to promote longitudinal improvement is determined by looking at the ability of the CF approaches to retain and further improve the learners' written grammatical accuracy at the end of the 8-weeks study. The findings reveal that such quality is only demonstrated by the focused direct feedback while the unfocused direct, focused indirect, and unfocused indirect feedback have shown no efficacy for long-term benefits in improving the learners' written grammatical accuracy.

#### *Longitudinal Benefits of Focused Direct Feedback*

Provided with the focused direct feedback, learners in the FD group have recorded further improvement in the delayed posttest at the end of the 8-weeks experiment. As such performance is significantly better than their posttest as well as their pretest prior to the treatment sessions, it indicates that the provision of the focused direct feedback effectively facilitates towards the learners' retention of grammatical accuracy across the 8-weeks experiment, hence leading towards their longitudinal improvement in written grammatical accuracy.

Aligned with Chandler (2003), it is believed that the provision of the direct feedback has provided those in the FD group with sufficient and clear assistance in order for them to form linguistic hypotheses that rectify the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing. These hypothesised corrections are then immediately approved or rejected by the

TL-like corrections, which reduces the possible confusion and error fossilisation in their IL system. Such benefits are demonstrated in their ability to form linguistic hypotheses that address the three targeted grammatical structures of prepositions, articles, and SVA, and these hypothesised corrections had served as the guiding principles for their production of similar structures in the subsequent writing task. In addition, the selective provision of the direct feedback is also believed to have provided these learners with the opportunity to examine multiple and repeated corrections on the three targeted grammatical structures. According to Shitani & Ellis (2013), this supplies them with the rich information and evidences that further amplify their understanding towards the targeted structures, along with the immediate approval on their hypothesised corrections provided by the TL-like corrections. Therefore, such evidence is aligned with the findings by Bitchener & Knoch (2010a, 2010b) and Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki (2014) on the effectiveness of direct and focused feedback to promote longitudinal improvement in written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners.

#### *Focused Over Unfocused Feedback*

Meanwhile, although the unfocused direct feedback does not lead towards any longitudinal improvement in the written grammatical accuracy of the UD group, their performance at the end of the 8-weeks experiment is still significantly better than their initial performance during the pretest prior to receiving the CF treatment. As compared to the focused direct feedback, this finding suggests that the effectiveness of direct feedback to promote longitudinal improvement in learners' written grammatical accuracy might be limited by its comprehensive nature of addressing the targeted grammatical structures.

Although the direct feedback has provided these learners with immediate and rich linguistic information that minimises their confusion towards the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing and reduces the potential of error fossilisation in their IL system (Chandler, 2003), its comprehensive provision that addresses 13 types of grammatical structures has provided the learners with an abundance of information that may have been too vast and complicated for them to process. This suggests the greater advantage that the focused direct feedback has where its selective provision that addresses a limited number of grammatical structures is more feasible and comprehensible, hence increases its likeliness of being attended by the learners. Such attentive and selective approach will also provide them with the opportunity to examine multiple and repeated corrections on a single type of error, which supplies them with the rich information and evidences that they need in order to notice, understand, and figure out the nature of the erroneous structure (Shitani & Ellis, 2013). This assists in their internalisation of the targeted grammatical structures, hence leading towards their longitudinal improvement. Such advantage is evident by their difference in noticing where those in the UD group are only able to identify 6 out of the 13 grammatical structures being addressed in their writing as opposed to the FD group who managed to identify all 3 targeted grammatical structures. This finding hence challenges the proposition by Ellis (2009) and Ferris (2010) on the potential superior effectiveness of unfocused over focused feedback in promoting longitudinal improvement in learners' written grammatical accuracy.

#### *Direct Over Indirect Feedback*

On the other hand, both focused and unfocused provision of the indirect feedback do not lead towards any longitudinal improvement in the written grammatical accuracy of the ESL learners. Apart from having no further improvement in their delayed posttest,

the final performance of those in the FI and UI group have also significantly decreased at the end of the 8-weeks experiment and are of similar level with their initial performance during the pretest prior to being provided with the CF treatment.

Such finding can be discussed from two perspectives. First, comparison on the written grammatical accuracy between the FD and FI group shows that although the provision of both focused direct and focused indirect feedback lead towards short-term improvement, the latter is unable to assist those in the FI group to retain or further improve their written grammatical accuracy in the long run. In this context, although the selective provision of both CF approaches has provided the learners with the opportunity to examine multiple and repeated corrections on the three targeted grammatical structures (Shitani & Ellis, 2013), those in the FI group admitted that the absence of the TL-like corrections in the focused indirect feedback provides them with no useful information that can assist them in understanding the nature of their errors. Therefore, unlike the provision of the direct feedback to the FD group, the indirect feedback provided to the FI group eliminates the advantage of providing learners with immediate, sufficient, and clear feedback that approves or rejects the hypothesised corrections of their grammatical inaccuracies, which increases the possibility for error fossilisation in their IL system and limits its efficacy in promoting long-term improvement in their written grammatical accuracy (Chandler, 2003; Shitani & Ellis, 2013). Therefore, such finding highlights on the longitudinal benefits that the direct feedback has particularly in improving the written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners, along with existing empirical evidences like Frear (2012), Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad (2012), and Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki (2014).

Meanwhile, the second discussion compares the learners' progress between the pretest and the delayed posttest in order to determine the effectiveness of the CF

treatments in promoting the retention of written grammatical accuracy at the end of the 8-weeks experiment. The result shows that such advantage is demonstrated by the focused and unfocused direct feedback, where although further improvement is only recorded by the former, both direct feedbacks do facilitate towards significant improvement in the delayed posttest of the FD and UD group as compared to their pretest prior to being provided with the CF treatment. On the other hand, the focused and unfocused indirect feedback do not lead towards any improvement in the delayed posttest of the FI and UI group, where their performance in written grammatical accuracy at the end of the 8-weeks experiment is similar to their initial performance prior to receiving the CF treatment. In this context, although researchers like Ashwell (2000), Ferris & Roberts (2001), Ferris (2006), and Bitchener & Knoch (2008) suggest that the indirect feedback possesses the advantage of promoting long-term language acquisition by engaging learners into a guided reflection and problem solving process that encourages them to reflect on their current progress and take responsibility for their own language development, Ellis et al. (2008) believe that the effectiveness of such advantage might be reduced if learners are unable to effectively interpret and understand the error codes used in the indirect feedback. This is evident by the limited efficacy of the unfocused indirect feedback in assisting the UI group to notice and understand the types of grammatical structures involved in their inaccurate TL production as well as the confusion caused by the focused indirect feedback that leads those in the FI group to misinterpret the corrections directed on the three targeted grammatical structures of prepositions, articles, and SVA as errors of other structures. In addition, the learners also admitted that these issues are caused by their confusion due to the absence of the TL-like corrections. Such disadvantage is addressed in the direct feedback where the TL-like corrections immediately approve or reject their linguistic hypotheses. This provides them with immediate, sufficient, and clear feedback on the hypothesised corrections that address the grammatical inaccuracies in

their writing, reduce the error fossilisation in their IL, and facilitate towards their longitudinal retention of the grammatical structures (Chandler, 2003). These evidences hence add to the merits that direct feedback has in promoting the retention of written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners.

### **5.1.3 The Efficacy to Promote Noticing**

The third research question investigates on how the four different types of CF approaches help to promote noticing among ESL learners. The discussion on the effectiveness of CF in improving the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners is always aligned with its role as the facilitator for error noticing. Swain's (1995, 2005) Output Hypothesis suggests that the language acquisition process of L2 learners will be further stimulated if they are able to notice the linguistic gaps that exist in their current IL system as compared to the TL-like structures. In this context, the provision of focus-on-form interventions like CF is seen as an important aspect that saliently highlights the negative evidences in the learners' writing, promotes their noticing towards the linguistic gaps in their IL, and subsequently assists them in rectifying their linguistic inaccuracies. This creates a correlation between the effectiveness of a CF approach in improving learners' grammatical accuracy with the extent of its efficacy in promoting noticing.

The learners' responses during the interview indicate that all of them share a similar strategy in attending to the given CF. They began by reading and scanning the corrected essays while paying attention to the remarks and corrections given. The purpose of such action is for them to gain as much information as possible that informs them on the grammatical errors that they had produced in their writing, which subsequently leads to their noticing towards the linguistic gaps in their IL. However, the effectiveness of

these CF approaches to promote noticing varies according to its explicitness in correcting the grammatical errors as well as its comprehensiveness in addressing the learners' errors.

### *Direct Feedback as Effective Noticing Facilitator*

Based on the findings, it is shown that the direct feedback possesses superior efficacy in playing its role as the facilitator of noticing. During the interview, learners from the FD and UD group admitted that the use of the error-crossing technique and the availability of the TL-like answers in the direct feedback saliently highlight the negative evidences in their writing. Aligned with Chandler (2003), such information provides them with clear and sufficient assistances that inform them about their inaccurate production of the TL and direct their attention towards noticing the grammatical inaccuracies that exist in their IL. This is evident by their ability to explain the grammatical structures involved with their inaccurate TL production such as the missing of suffix 's' and 'es', the inaccurate usage of certain words like 'the' and 'a', and incorrect spelling of the word 'unfortunately'.

However, the effectiveness of such noticing in facilitating towards improved grammatical accuracy in the learners' subsequent writing is influenced by its selective and comprehensive nature of addressing the learners' written grammatical accuracy. In this context, the focused provision of the direct feedback thoroughly addresses the three targeted grammatical structures as opposed to the unfocused direct feedback that only manages to address six out of the thirteen targeted grammatical structures. Aligned with Shitani & Ellis (2014), the former provides those in the FD group with the opportunity to examine multiple and repeated corrections on a limited number of grammatical structures, which supplies them with the rich information and evidences that further amplify their

understanding towards the targeted structures. This enables them to better comprehend and internalise the structures and it is evident by their further improvement in written grammatical accuracy at the end of the 8-weeks study. On the other hand, the unfocused direct feedback supplies the learners with an abundance of linguistic information that might be too vast and complex for them to process and comprehend, hence limiting their further improvement in written grammatical accuracy during the delayed posttest. Such findings hence suggest on the superior efficacy that the direct feedback has in promoting noticing among ESL learners, with the noticing promoted by the focused direct feedback proven as having superior efficacy in facilitating towards longitudinal improvement in written grammatical accuracy.

#### *Limited Noticing by Indirect Feedback*

Meanwhile, the efficacy of the indirect feedback in playing its role as the facilitator of noticing is limited to the focused indirect only. Apart from indicating its limited efficacy in promoting noticing as compared to the direct feedback, the finding also shows that the utilisation of indirect feedback in achieving such purpose is accompanied by two risks. The first risk suggests that although the independent revision and editing process promoted by the indirect feedback may assist in the development of metacognitive skills among L2 learners (Lalande, 1982; Ferris & Roberts, 2001), researchers like Hyland & Hyland (2006) and Ellis et al. (2008) believe that the use of error codes and indirect clues in its provision may be too complex and confusing to be comprehended and processed by learners. Such disadvantage is displayed by the inability of those in the UI group in utilising the unfocused indirect feedback to notice the grammatical inaccuracies that they had produced in their writing. In this context, the use of error codes in the indirect feedback along with its comprehensive provision that



addresses thirteen types of grammatical structures may have been too vast and complex for the learners to comprehend and process. This provides them with insufficient information on the grammatical inaccuracies that they had produced in their writing, limits their noticing towards the linguistic gaps that exist in the IL, and resulted in their stagnant progress in written grammatical accuracy throughout the 8-weeks experiment.

On the other hand, the second risk suggests that the effectiveness of indirect feedback to promote noticing may also be jeopardised if the ESL learners fail to comprehend the error codes used, particularly when it involves learners with low proficiency (Ellis et al., 2008). In this context, although the provision of the focused indirect feedback to the FI group reduces the complexity of the indirect feedback by providing them with the opportunity to examine multiple and repeated corrections that supply them with the rich information and evidences on the three types of targeted grammatical structures, the extent of its efficacy in promoting noticing is still dependent on the learners' ability to comprehend the error codes used in the corrections, which might be a disadvantage to those with low proficiency. This is evident by its limited efficacy that only benefitted those with high and intermediate proficiency as well as the learners' misinterpretation of the indirect feedback directed upon the three targeted grammatical structures of prepositions, articles, and SVA as errors of other structures. The learners also admitted that the focused indirect feedback also provides less assistance in order for them to retain similar grammatical accuracy in the subsequent writing as portrayed by their decrease in written grammatical accuracy at the end of the 8-weeks experiment. These evidences hence suggest that although the indirect feedback possesses the ability to promote noticing among ESL learners, its efficacy is limited to the focused indirect feedback, has the possibility of being influenced by the learners' level of proficiency, and does not assist in retaining learners' written grammatical accuracy in subsequent writing.

## *Conclusion*

The findings reveal that superior efficacy to promote noticing among ESL learners is demonstrated by the focused and unfocused direct feedback, with the former offering better assistance in their subsequent writing. Meanwhile, limited efficacy is shown by the focused indirect feedback where the noticing is influenced by the learners' level of proficiency and it does not assist in retaining their written grammatical accuracy in their future writing.

### **5.2 Conclusion**

In conclusion, the findings suggest that the focused direct feedback is the most advantageous CF among the four approaches under investigation. This is because the direct feedback provides the learners with sufficient, immediate, and clear feedback that responded to their hypothesized corrections, reduces their confusion to the grammatical inaccuracies, and lowers the possibility for error fossilisation in their IL (Chandler, 2003). Meanwhile, its focused and selective provision also helps to enhance their understanding towards the targeted grammatical structures by providing them with the opportunity to examine multiple and repeated corrections that supply them with sufficient and rich information that they need in order to understand the targeted grammatical structures (Shitani & Ellis, 2013). This resulted in their superior efficacy to promote ESL learners towards noticing the linguistic gaps in their IL, provides them with sufficient assistances to rectify their inaccurate production of the TL, and subsequently facilitates towards short-term and longitudinal improvement in the written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners.

Meanwhile, less effectiveness is shown by the unfocused provision of the direct feedback particularly from the aspect of longitudinal improvement. In this context, although the direct feedback offers similar benefits that reduces their confusion to the grammatical inaccuracies and lowers the possibility for error fossilisation in their IL, its unfocused and comprehensive provision may have provided the learners with an abundance of information on the thirteen types of targeted grammatical structures that may be too vast for them to process and internalise. This resulted in its efficacy to promote limited noticing among the ESL learners which only addresses six out of the thirteen targeted grammatical structures. As a result, although it facilitates towards the learners' retention of written grammatical accuracy at the end of the 8-weeks experiment, the unfocused direct feedback only promotes short-term improvement in the learners' written grammatical accuracy and leads them towards no longitudinal improvement.

On the other hand, although the focused indirect feedback also leads towards short-term improvement in the learners' written grammatical accuracy, the learners' performance is only half as effective as the direct feedback. This is because although its selective nature of addressing the learners' errors provides them with the opportunity to examine multiple and repeated corrections that supply them with sufficient and rich information that they need in order to understand the targeted grammatical structures (Shitani & Ellis, 2013), the effectiveness of the indirect feedback is dependent on the learners' ability to comprehend the error codes and indirect clues used in the corrections, and it is also prone to be misinterpreted especially by low-proficient ESL learners. As a result, although the focused indirect feedback leads towards short-term improvement and promotes the ESL learners towards noticing the linguistic gaps in their IL, the extent of its effectiveness is influenced by the learners' level of proficiency and it does not assist them towards long-term improvement in written grammatical accuracy.

Finally, the provision of the unfocused indirect feedback does not lead to either short-term or longitudinal improvement in the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners. This is because apart from the learners' confusion in understanding the grammatical inaccuracies in their writing which is caused by the indirect feedback, its unfocused provision that addresses thirteen types of grammatical structures also provides the learners with an abundance of linguistic information that may have been too vast and complex for them to comprehend and process. This resulted in its inefficacy to promote the ESL learners' noticing to the linguistic gaps in their IL, provides them with no information nor assistance on how to rectify their inaccurate production of the TL, and subsequently does not lead towards any short-term or longitudinal improvement in the written grammatical accuracy of ESL learners.

### **5.3 Recommendation**

This section contains several recommendations that might be put into consideration in the future implementation of similar studies. This includes the aspects of the double barrel corrections, the learners' level of proficiency of the TL, the role of motivation, the treatable and untreatable errors, as well as different operationalisation of the indirect feedback.

#### **5.3.1 Double Barrel Corrections**

One of the issues that was encountered during the marking process is related to the double barrel corrections, which particularly involved the indirect feedback. As the operationalisation of the indirect feedback is done by using the error-crossing technique

that is not accompanied by any metalinguistic information that specifies and informs the participants about the types of grammatical structures being targeted, there is a possibility for a crossed error in the indirect feedback to consist of more than one type of grammatical inaccuracies. For example, the use of the error-crossing technique to highlight the participants' inaccurate production of the SVA could also highlight their errors in verb form and wrong verb used. However, measures have been taken in minimising the impact of such issue in order to avoid such limitation from affecting the reliability of the findings.

### **5.3.2 ESL Learners with Mixed Proficiency**

As part of the attempt to closely simulate the implementation of CF in real pedagogical environment, all experimental and control groups in this study consist of ESL learners with mixed proficiency in the English language. Therefore, the findings reported in the present study might not represent the pedagogical implementation of CF upon a group of learners with similar or streamed ability.

### **5.3.3 The Role of Motivation in CF Efficacy**

Due to the absence of the TL-like corrections, several participants who were provided with the indirect feedback had expressed their preference of being provided with the direct feedback. These participants also admitted that their inability to comprehend the indirect feedback had led them to ignore the CF during the treatment sessions, which leads towards their decrease or stagnant performance in written grammatical accuracy. This arises the question whether the provision of CF according to the learners' preference

will increase their motivation of attending to the corrections, and whether such aspect plays a vital role that influences their ability to improve in their written grammatical accuracy. Therefore, it is suggested for future CF studies to include the influence of learners' motivation as part of their consideration.

#### **5.3.4 Treatable & Untreatable Errors**

Another aspect that is not covered in the present study is the effectiveness of CF in addressing the learners' treatable and untreatable errors. In this context, several researchers (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2006, 2010) suggest that the studies on the effectiveness of CF should also investigate whether its efficacy to address the learners' treatable errors (i.e., errors that can be addressed by the reminder of the grammatical rules) will prove to be equally valuable if it is used to address more complex linguistic features such as lexical issues or sentence structures. This calls for further investigation into the topic.

#### **5.3.5 Other Methods of Indirect Feedback**

The sole use of the error-crossing technique to operationalise the indirect feedback in this study has resulted in its complexity to be processed by ESL learners, particularly when it is used to comprehensively address a vast number of grammatical structures. Therefore, future CF studies may consider to include metalinguistic information in order to provide the learners with some kind of clues that prompt and assist their effort to deduce and understand the indirect feedback.

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## APPENDIX A

### *CONSENT FORM*

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As a Malaysian ESL learner, you are hereby invited to take part in a research study with the title of “The Effects of Corrective Feedback on the Written Grammatical Accuracy of ESL Learners.” This document is part of a process called “informed consent” to allow you to understand this study before deciding your participation.

This study is being conducted by a researcher named Hanif Asyraf bin Hashim who is a Master of English as a Second Language student at University Malaya (matric number TGB 130034).

#### **Background Information:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the provision of different types of feedback will bring different performance in the written grammatical accuracy among ESL learners. This research will be administered for a total of eight (8) weeks.

#### **Procedures:**

If you agree to be in this study, you will be asked to:

- Complete three (3) tests sessions which include the pre-test (Week 1), post-test (Week 4), and delayed post-test (Week 8),
- Attend two (2) treatment sessions that will be conducted on Week 2 and Week 3,

This study is upon voluntary basis. Everyone will respect your decision of whether or not you choose to participate in the study. You will not be treated differently if you decide not to be in the study. If you decide to join the study now, you can still change your mind later. You may stop at any time. Being in this study will not pose any risk to your safety or wellbeing.

#### **Privacy:**

Any information that you shall provide throughout the study will be kept as confidential and shall be used for academic and research purposes only. The researcher will never use your personal information for any purposes outside of this research project. Also, the researcher will not include your name or anything else that could identify you in the study reports. Data will be kept secure by the researcher and the Faculty of Languages and Linguistics, University Malaya for record keeping purpose.

**Contacts and Questions:**

Further enquiry about the research study can be addressed to the researcher at 0137910883 or email [hanif.hashim@siswa.um.edu.my](mailto:hanif.hashim@siswa.um.edu.my).

Please keep this consent form for your record. If you decide to withdraw from the research study, please return this consent form to the researcher for cancellation purpose.

**Statement of Consent:**

I have read the above information and I understand the study well enough to make a decision about my involvement. By signing below, I hereby declare my agreement to the terms described above and I agree to participate in this research study.

**Respondent's Declaration**

.....

Name:

Date:

**Researcher's Declaration**

.....

Name:

Date:

## APPENDIX B

**Instruction: Read the story carefully for 15 minutes.**

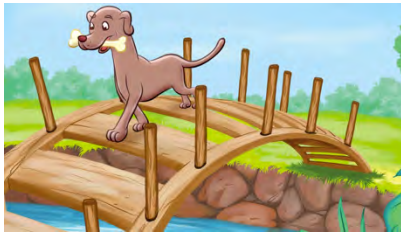
### Goofy and Its Bone



**One day, a stray dog name Goofy is feeling hungry. Goofy walks around the town to look for food. It stops in front of a butcher's shop.**



**The butcher gives Goofy a big bone with some meat on it. Goofy bites the bone with its mouth and runs back home.**



**On its way home, Goofy has to cross a bridge. The bridge is very old and lays over a small river.**



**As Goofy is standing on the bridge, it looks down and sees its own reflection in the river. However, Goofy is a foolish dog. It thinks that the reflection is another dog with a nice big bone in its mouth. Goofy feels greedy and it wants the other bone too.**



**Goofy tries to scare the other dog by barking as loudly as possible. But as soon as Goofy opens its mouth, the bone in its mouth falls into the river.**



**The poor Goofy is upset to lose its bone. Now, it has no food left. Goofy finally learns its lesson. From now on, it makes a promise to never be greedy again.**



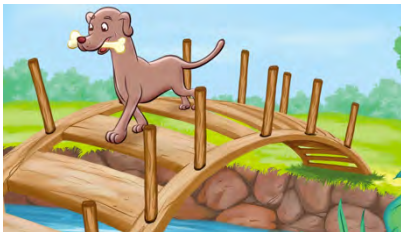
**Instruction: In 40 minutes, write a story about “Goofy and Its Bone” by using the pictures and words below as a guide. Your story should be in 350 words.**



**stray dog – Goofy – hungry – town – food – butcher's shop**



**butcher – Goofy – big bone – meat – mouth – home**



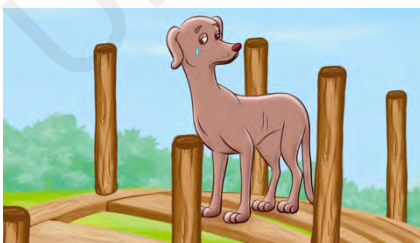
**way home – Goofy – bridge – old – small river**



**bridge – own reflection – river – Goofy – foolish dog – reflection – another dog – nice big bone – mouth – greedy**



**Goofy – scare – other dog – barking – mouth – bone – river**



**poor Goofy – upset – lose – bone – no food – lesson – promise**

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Questions.

1. What did you do when you received the corrected essay?
2. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?
3. What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?
4. How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

University of Malaya

## APPENDIX D

### PARTICIPANT 2

Q: Good morning. Have a seat.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for your willingness to be in this interview. Before we start, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: My ID is 2.

Q: Thank you. Now, in this interview, I will ask a few questions about the experiment that you have participated, and I want you to answer my question based on your own experience. Is that okay?

A: Yes. No problem.

Q: Great. Okay, now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed these essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Emmm... yes, yes. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... I read all the errors I made... and... I read the corrections given.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: It was effective. I know the cross means I did mistakes and... I also know the correct answer from the... answer that you write. From that, I know what was wrong with my essay.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?

A: Grammatical errors. So many wrong grammar like using prepositions like 'on' and 'at'. And... I always forgot to put 's' and 'es' on certain words. Like 'see', we (I) have to change it to 'sees'.

Q: Can you tell me why do you need to add 's'?

A: Emmm... I don't know.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: Emmm... I know what was wrong with my essay and... I try not to repeat the same mistake in the next essay. I also remember to put 's' and... 'es' on certain words when I do my next writing.

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: Okay. You are welcome. Thank you.

## PARTICIPANT 6

Q: Hello! Good morning. Have a seat.

A: Hi! Good morning, sir.

Q: Firstly, thank you for participating in this interview. Before we start, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: My ID is 6.

Q: Thank you. Now, I will ask some about the experiment that you have participated, and I want you to answer based on your own experience participating in the experiment. Okay?

A: Okay.

Q: Okay, now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have done these essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Yes, sir. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

P: First, I... read sentence by sentence. Next... I... search what grammatical mistakes I do (in my essay).

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: When you give me answer, I can know my errors. Then, I... write back (rewrite) the correction and... I try to remember the correct answer (TL-like corrections) and... I avoid to repeat the same mistake in the next task.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?

A: Emmm... I do not put 's'. Like word 'walk', I do not put 's', like 'walk', 'walks'.

Q: Can you explain why?

A: No, I'm not sure why. I see this word [*pointed to a correct SVA form*], I put 's' and you tick, but this word [*pointed to an incorrect SVA form*] I didn't put 's' and you cross it. So, I know I must put 's'. Then, I look at the answer (TL-like correction) that you give to know the correct answer.

Q: Any other errors that you produced?

A: Emmm... I don't put some words like 'a' and 'the'. I also put... emmm... wrong word. In the essay, I put 'at', actually the correct word is 'on'.

Q: Can you tell me what type of error is this?)

A: I think it's preposition.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: Uhhh... the corrections give me help because... it make me know how to use right word in my essay especially "a" and "the", and also... put 's' on some words.

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: You are welcome. Thank you.

## PARTICIPANT 15

Q: Good morning. Please take a seat.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for willing to be in this interview. Before we begin, can you please tell me your ID number?

A: Emmm... My ID is 15.

Q: Thank you. Now, I will ask a few questions about the experiment, and I want you to answer my question based on your own experience of participating in this experiment. Okay?

A: Yes. Okay, no problem.

Q: Good. Okay, now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed the essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Yes. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... I read back the essay... and... I see so many mistakes in my essay. I read (the essay) and... I refer to the corrections in my essay.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: When you give me the correction, I can know my mistake, and fix my wrong (errors).

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?

A: Emmm... I was confused on how to use correct grammar. Like the word that should put 's'. For example, 'walk', it should be 'walks'. And 'reach'. I spelled 'reach'. It should be 'reaches'.

Q: Do you know why you should put 's'?

A: Uhhh... I don't know. Maybe because of... uhhh... present tense.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: Emmm... I remember the correction in the essay and from that... I learn the mistake that I have done and... I try to avoid the same mistake. I also realise that my grammar has some mistake, so... I make sure what is the correct grammar that I should use before I write the next essay.

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: You are welcome. Thank you.

### PARTICIPANT 33

Q: Hello, good morning. Have a seat, please.

A: Thank you, sir

Q: Thank you for your willingness to be in this interview. Before we start, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: My ID is 33, sir.

Q: Thank you. So, today, in this interview, I will ask a few questions about the experiment, and I want you to answer my question based on your own experience of being in the experiment. Okay?

A: Okay, sir.

Q: Great. Now. Do you remember, on Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed the essays, I marked it, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Yes, sir. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: First of all, I read back my essay and... I was confused. I got many mistakes in my essay but... when I was in school... my teacher will... give some correction for me. But in this exam, it doesn't have correction words (TL-like corrections) in my essay.

Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: Uhhh... I think it is confusing because there is only cross and there is no answer. I didn't know whether it was... present tense or past tense, or if... I need to add 's' or 'ed'. ... I think I need you to give me answer (TL-like corrections) because I am so weak in grammar.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why they were wrong?

A: Emmm... I didn't add something in some words. The word need to have 's' and I didn't add 's'. For example... the word 'looks' need to add 's', but... I didn't put the 's'. And 'give', it also need to add 's' but I don't put 's'.

Q: Look at this sentence "It loses its bone after open its mouth". In this sentence, I placed a tick on the word 'loses', but I crossed the word 'open'. Do you know why?

A: Yes, because I need to put 's' at the word 'open'.

Q: Do you know why?

A: No, I don't know.

Q: Can you tell me any other errors that you have produced?

A: Emmm... I think some mistake in preposition. For example, the sentence "He feels pity on Goofy". 'On' is wrong.

Q: How do you know on is wrong?

A: It's because the word is crossed.

Q: Do you know the correct answer for this error?

A: Emmm... no.

Q: Why?

A: Because there is no correction.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: Uhhh... I try to remember my errors in the last essay and... I try to improve in my next essay. But... it's better if I get the answer (TL-like corrections) because I can know more about what is wrong with my essay.

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: Okay. You are welcome. Thank you.

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## PARTICIPANT 40

Q: Good morning. Have a seat.

A: Thank you, sir.

Q: Thank you for your willingness to participate in this interview. Before we begin, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: My ID is 40.

Q: Thank you. Now, today, I will ask a few questions about the experiment that you have participated, and I want you to answer my question based on your experience of being in the experiment. Okay?

A: Okay, sir.

Q: Great. Okay, now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed these essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Emmm... yes, yes. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... I read my essay and look for correction. I don't know what my errors on my essay and I just... read it back because I... don't know what is my mistake.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: Uhhh... you only tick the right one (grammatical attempts) and cross on the error and... I need to find the correct answer by myself. But I prefer to get answers (TL-like corrections) because... I can know what is wrong in my essay.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why it was wrong?

A: Yes. First, I was wrong in this word, 'going'. I use 'going' but... the correct answer is I need to use 'fall'. "The big bone going down" is wrong. I need to use "The big bone fall down". Second, I was wrong in... preposition. Such as... "Goofy goes to the old bridge carefully" but the correct answer is "Goofy goes... at the old bridge carefully". Third is past tense... I use the wrong word. I think here... [*pointed to the sentence "The poor Goofy fill upset"*]. I need to use... 'felt' because it is... past.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: I think it's very important if you give me answer (TL-like corrections). It's because I have many mistakes in my essay. So, when I know the answer, I can do some revision to make my essay better.

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: Okay. You are welcome. Thank you.



## PARTICIPANT 51

Q: Good morning. Have a seat, please.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for your willingness to be in this interview. Before we start, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: My ID is... fifty... one.

Q: Are you sure?

A: Yes. 51.

Q: Okay. So, in this interview, I will ask a few questions about the experiment, and I want you to answer based on your own experience of participating in the experiment. Do you understand?

A: Yes. I understand.

Q: Good. Now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed the essays, I marked the essays, and then, I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Emmm... yes, yes.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... I just read the essay because when only give (given)... cross (error crossing) I don't know what to do and... what other word to write (how to correct). I try to think what I need to improve but... it is confusing because I didn't know what I need to improve.

Q. How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: Emmm... no. I think I need you to cross my mistake and... write the correct answer. I can learn more from that.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why they were wrong?

A: Emmm... no. I don't know what my errors.

Q: Why?

A: Because... you just mark it... and... give no answer (TL-like corrections). I don't know my error on my essay.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: No, it did not. The correction didn't help at all because... I don't know what was wrong in my essay. I hope that I know what is wrong in my essay).

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: Okay. You are welcome. Thank you.

## PARTICIPANT 52

Q: Good morning. Have a seat, please.

A: Good morning, sir. Thank you, sir.

Q: Thank you for your willingness to be in this interview. Before we start, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: My ID number is 52, sir.

Q: Thank you. Now, in this interview, I will ask some questions about the experiment that you have participated, and I want you to answer my question based on your own experience. Is that okay?

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Great. Okay, now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed these essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Emmm... yes, yes. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... when I received the corrected essay... I just read the answer (error corrections). I try to see... (identify) what (kind of) errors in my essay... because... I want to use it (the corrections) in my next essay and... not do the same mistakes.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: Uhhh... I think the corrections help me to... know my error but... I'm still not sure if it's (the grammatical attempts) totally wrong or... if... I still can use it (the attempted grammar structures) in another essay.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?

A: Emmm... only some of it. For example, I should put 's'... Like "It suddenly look", I should put 's' at the back of 'look'.

Q: Do you have any idea why you should have put 's'?

A: Emmm... I don't know.

Q: Any other errors that you could identify?

A: Emmm... no. Mostly, I forgot the 's'.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: Emmm... When I didn't put 's', you put 's'. So, I remember when I want to put (use) a word, I will put 's'.

Q: Do you know the rule of adding 's' to these words?

A: Emmm... no, I don't know. I just put 's'.

Q: Is there anything else that you would like to tell me about the experiment?

A: No, sir.

Q: Okay, Thank you very much.

A: Okay. You are welcome. Thank you, sir.

## PARTICIPANT 60

Q: Good morning. Please have a seat.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for your willingness to be in this interview. Before we start, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: My ID is... 60.

Q: Thank you. Okay. Now, I will ask a few questions about the experiment that you have participated, and I want you to answer my question based on your own experience. Is that okay?

A: Yes. Okay.

Q: Great. Now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed the essays, I marked it, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Do you remember?

A: Yes.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... when I receive my corrected essay, I try to look every error that I made during my writings. I try to... analyse the errors to see what kind of errors I make. From that, I can know what type of (correct) grammar I should use.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: Uhhh... when I read the corrections in my corrected essay, I can find my mistakes and I can know... what is the mistake that I did, whether it is in... present tense or past tense, or... if I have use wrong words. Emmm... I also try to remember what my mistake is, then I memorise (the corrections) and use (the corrections) in the next essay.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?

A: Emmm... there are some mistakes that I do. For example... emmm... spelling error. I write 'unfortunately' and I forgot to put the 'e'. Besides that, I always forget to put the letter 's'. For example, 'wants', 'eats', 'feels', and 'learns'.

Q: Can you explain why do you need to put 's'?

A: Emmm... I don't know. Maybe it's because of the present tense.

Q: Any other errors that you did?

A: Emmm... yes. Some of the tenses also was not correct, such as... past tense and present tense. For example, when I put 'was', it should be 'is'.

Q: Any other errors that you could identify?

A: Emmm... yes. I remember I write 'the' but I should use 'a'.

Q: Do you know the difference between 'the' and 'a'?

A: I think... 'the' is for people or animal, but... 'a' is for... something else.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: First, when I read the corrections in my corrected essay, I can find my mistakes and... I can know what is the wrong that I did. I try to remember what my mistake is, then I memorise to the next essay. Actually, when I write the essay, I was just depending on my own knowledge that I have gained from school. But after reading the corrected essays, I notice that my grammar is... not up to the level that will satisfy the markers. So, from there, I know that I need to improve more.

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: Okay. You are welcome. Thank you.

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## PARTICIPANT 65

Q: Hello. Please have a seat.

A: Thank you.

Q: Thank you for being in this interview. Before we start, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: Yes. My ID is 65.

Q: Thank you. Now, in this interview, I will ask you a few questions about the experiment that you have participated, and I want you to answer my question based on your own experience. Is that okay?

A: Yes.

Q: Great. Okay, now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed these essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Emmm... yes. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: First... when I get the corrected essay, I read the corrected essay and the correction made (given). Second, I try to... identify the errors that I have done and I remember not to do the same mistake.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: Uhhh... I think it was effective. From the correction, I find that I have made some mistakes.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?

A: Mostly, I forgot to put 'es' and 's'. Like 'find', 'finds'.

Q: Look at this error. You wrote 'make' but I crossed it and I wrote 'makes'. Do you know why?)

A: Because... I didn't put 's'.

Q: Do you know why you should put 's'?

A: Uhhh... no. I don't know.

Q: Any other errors that you could identify?

A: Uhhh... yes. In the essay, it's actually 'it', but... I write 'he'.

Q: Do you know why you should use 'it' instead of 'he'?

A: I think because... it's a dog, animal, not people.

Q: Any other errors that you did in your essay?

A: Uhhh... yes. I write 'got'. Actually, it's 'gets'.

Q: Do you know why you should use 'gets' instead of 'got'?

A: I think it's because of present tense, not past tense.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: Emmm... I remember the mistake that I have done, so that I don't do the same mistake in the next writing task.

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: Okay. Thank you.

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## PARTICIPANT 78

Q: Good morning. Please have a seat.

A: Thank you, sir.

Q: Firstly, thank you very much for your willingness to be in this interview. Before we start the interview, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: Sure. My ID is 78.

Q: Thank you. Now, in this interview, I will ask a few questions about the experiment, and I want you to tell me your experience of participating in the experiment. Okay?

A: Yes. No problem.

Q: Great. Okay, now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed these essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Emmm... yes, yes. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... I feel so lost that time. There are so many fault that I do in my essay, but... uhhh... I don't know what was wrong in my essay.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: Emmm... when I see words with cross, I know it's wrong but... I don't know the answer. So... I try to find the answer.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why they were wrong?

A: Emmm... I only know some mistake but not all. For example, "The butcher's shop saw Goofy." I was supposed to write "The butcher saw Goofy."

Q: Do you know why it was incorrect?

A: Because the man is the butcher but... the butcher's shop is... his shop.

Q: Anything else?

A: I think... I put (use) the wrong past tense and present tense. Like... emmm... in one sentence, it is present but... I put past in my essay.

Q: And how did you know past tense was wrong?

A: Because... when I look another words in the sentence behind, I put present and it's right, and I know it's present.

Q: Any other errors that you could identify?

A: Emmm... no.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: In my opinion, it doesn't help me... because... I need to know the correct answer. When you did not give the correct answer (TL-like corrections), I do not know what my mistake is and... what is the correct answer. Sometimes... maybe... I did not put some words, or sometimes... you cross some words in my essay. But I'm not sure why because you did not write the answer (TL-like corrections).

Q: Okay, I think that is all. Thank you very much.

A: Okay. You are welcome. Thank you.

## PARTICIPANT 84

Q: Hello! Good morning. Please have a seat.

A: Good morning, sir. Thank you.

Q: Thank you for attending this interview. Before we start, can you please tell me your ID number?

A: My ID number is 84.

Q: Thank you. Now, in this interview, I will ask a few questions about the experiment that you have participated, and I want you to answer my question based on your own experience of being in the experiment. Is that okay?

A: Okay, sir.

Q: Great. Now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed the essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Emmm... yes, yes. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... firstly, I read the essay and try to understand the correction. I don't know what to do. I just feel something wrong with my essay and... about my grammar.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: No. Because I don't know if I use the correct grammar and... I don't know if... I write the words wrong or not (use the correct words).

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why they were wrong?

A: Uhhh... I don't know. I don't think so.

Q: Let's have a look at this sentence "Goofy see the butcher.". I put a cross on the word 'see'. Do you know why?

A: No, I don't know.

Q: How about this one? "Goofy use its mouth to bite the bone.". I crossed the word 'use'. Do you know why this word is wrong?

A: No, I don't know.

Q: What if I write the answer? [*wrote 'uses' on top of the error*] Now, do you know what was wrong with this error?

A: Emmm... yes. I don't put 's'.

Q: Do you know why you should put 's'?

A: Emmm... no. I don't know.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: Emmm. I think it's not really helpful. I cannot make my grammar good because there is no correction and... I did not know what is my mistake. If the errors are not marked (corrected), then... I will not know what I have done wrong and what is my weaknesses in English.

Q: Okay. Thank you very much.

A: You are welcome. Thank you, sir.



## PARTICIPANT 94

Q: Good morning. Please have a seat.

A: Thank you, sir.

Q: Thank you for your willingness to be in this interview. Before we start, can you tell me your ID number please?

A: My ID number is 94.

Q: Thank you. Now, in this interview, I will ask a few questions about the experiment that you have participated, and I want you to answer my question based on your own experience of being in the experiment. Do you understand?

A: Yes. I understand.

Q: Great. Okay, now. On Week 2 and Week 3, I asked you to write these essays [*showed the essays*]. And when you have completed these essays, I marked the essays, and then I returned the corrected essays to you. Remember?

A: Emmm... yes, yes. I remember.

Q: What did you do when you received the corrected essay?

A: Uhhh... I just read the essay and... I thought... "Why there were many errors marked in my essay?" and... I keep reading.

Q: How effective was the correction in informing you about the errors in your essay?

A: Uhhh... I don't know what to do so I just read it again and again.

Q: What were the errors that you committed? Can you explain why these structures were wrong?

A: Emmm... no. Not at all.

Q: So, what did you do when you could not identify the correct answers to the errors?

A: I just ignore and... I just... continue reading my essay.

Q: Let's look at this sentence "Goofy bite bone using his mouth." I crossed the word 'bite' and 'his' and I put a cursor before the word 'bone'. Do you know why?

A: No, I don't know.

Q: [*Wrote 'bites', 'its', and 'the' above the error.*] How about now?

A: Emmm... yes. I don't put 's' on the word 'bite'.

Q: Anything else?

A: Emmm... I use wrong word. It should be 'its'. I also forgot to put 'the'.

Q: Can you tell me why these structures were incorrect?

A: No, I don't know.

Q: How did the corrections given help you to do better in the following writing task?

A: Emmm... no. Not really. The correction does not help me at all. I wish I get the answer (TL-like corrections) so that... I can know what I did wrong. I prefer you cross my error and give answer (TL-like corrections).

Q: Okay. Is there anything else that you would like to share with me?

A: Emmm... no, sir.

Q: Alright then. Thank you very much.

A: You are welcome, sir. Thank you very much.

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