

RE-WRITING AND ITS PEDAGOGICAL VALUE: A CASE STUDY

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Resum. La re-escriptura i el seu valor pedagògic: un estudi. Tenint en compte el temps i la energia que els mestres i professors dediquen a la correcció de redaccions i produccions escrites i el poc efecte que aquestes semblen tenir en altres produccions dels aprenents, es va dissenyar la recerca que es presenta en aquest article. Els resultats de l'estudi semblen suggerir que les correccions no faciliten l'aprenentatge. Com presentem aquesta activitat de retroalimentació a l'alumnat i la posició que li donem dins d'un enfocament basat en el procés de l'escriptura seran clau per fer que les correccions siguin facilitadores de l'aprenentatge de la producció escrita.

Paraules clau: destreses de producció escrita, re-escriptura, retro-alimentació, correcció.

Abstract. The research presented in this paper was designed to investigate the fact that, considering the large amount of time and energy teachers devote to the correction of compositions and written work, the effect of this effort on other student learning activities appears to be minimal. The results of this study seem to suggest that correction of this type does not facilitate language learning. The way in which this feedback activity is presented to the students and the status given to it within an approach to the process of writing are key aspects to making corrections helpful in the acquisition of writing skills.

Key words: writing skills, re-writing, feedback, correction.

Introduction

A lot of time and energy is devoted to correcting compositions. It is time consuming for the teacher, who nevertheless goes on marking papers because of her belief that error correction is beneficial for the learner. Correction seems to be worthless if students simply put their corrected piece of writing away

and never look at it again (Harmer 1998). Furthermore, students commit the same errors or similar ones from one essay to the next one. For teachers to see the same mistakes popping up again and again is very frustrating. And the same is true for students when they receive their papers covered in blood-red ink. This may hinder rather than help their second language acquisition.

In order to shed some light on this issue, I intend to show the effect that two different types of feedback have on the learners. The first section of this study will define what is understood by writing as a process and what feedback is. The second section will deal with a case study where two seventeen-year-old students (in their last year of secondary school) will respond to two different types of feedback. Finally, in the third section I will draw some conclusions from the experiment and I will point out some further research.

1 Background

In this section I will define re-writing and I will deal with two main issues about re-writing: (a) process writing and (b) providing feedback. These two points seem to be very influential in the way teachers deal with re-writing in the classroom.

Re-writing is considered as the main exercise for the acquisition of the writing skills. This idea comes from the belief that students should be taught how to write, rather than evaluated on their final product. According to this belief, writing classes should help the student to develop a series of strategies that allow him/her to write better and better texts regarding both their internal organisation and their grammar. It is within this concept of writing as a process where re-writing has a major role. Re-writing is more than an exercise marked "good" or "bad"; it is a very important part within the writing process (Raimes 1983). The teacher's answer does not arrive after, but during that process, and it can even influence it by helping the learner. Hedge 1990 also states that "marking is maximally effective in enabling students to improve only if it provides constructive feedback which can be channelled into the processes of redrafting and editing". Chenoweth 1987 adds that revision and re-writing give the learners the opportunity of exploring their own ideas and developing them in a more successful way. So Chenoweth suggests that learners should be helped to improve their versions -just as good writers do. They are not given that opportunity if they are asked to write on a new topic. Re-writing is considered as a help to improve and develop students' writings and not as a sign of their incapacity. Re-writing is a discovery approach car-

ried out by the learner. And teachers should consider compositions as 'efforts in a developmental process' and not as final products.

Re-writing is, then, a main activity if we consider writing as a process. The question now posed is how students arrive at a better version of their own writing. Probably the issue faced by both teacher and students lies not in the writing but in the nature of the teacher's response to those assignments. Depending on the way teachers respond to compositions, students will feel one way or another and they will respond accordingly. This is an important point because feedback is only valuable if the composition is revised (Cohen 1987:57). Current educational literature points out the relationship between affective and cognitive factors in the learning process: anything which has a negative effect on attitude and motivation may delay acquisition (Pica 1985; Ellis 1994).

The most usual ways of giving feedback in the English classroom will now be outlined. Most researchers claim that the learner needs some kind of assistance during the process to promote revision and re-writing of the text. One of the feedback methods is written comments. According to Raimes 1983, these are more effective if they are questions, suggestions or praises than if they are comments such as "Good", "You need to work more on that", "Not bad". She adds that suggestions should be specific. Sommers 1984, where we can find many suggestions about how to comment on a piece of writing, analyses the comments given to the first and second drafts of a text by thirty five teachers and a computer. The conclusion is that the comments made by most teachers are arbitrary and some students do not even understand them. Another conclusion for Sommers seems to be that "the teacher appropriates the text from the student by confusing the student's purpose in writing the text with her own purpose in commenting it. Students make the changes the teacher wants rather than those that the student perceives are necessary". He adds that most of these comments encourage the students to think of their drafts as finished drafts; the meaning is there and it is finished, what needs to be revised is one word or one grammar structure. This is probably due to the fact that teachers make the comments with the preconception that they have to find mistakes, and so they find what they look for: mistakes. Sommers 1984 and Hedge 1990 make a difference between redrafting and editing. These two processes are included in what we call re-writing. Following Hedge 1990:145, redrafting is the process that good writers go through as they evaluate, rethink, and rewrite parts of their texts whereas editing is the activity which involves checking for accuracy and making final revisions. Students should first focus on redrafting and only when this is done should

editing come over.

A second type of feedback is conferencing. It is a procedure in which the teacher and the writer work together face to face on what the writer has written so that advice is provided on an individual basis. Goldstein et al. 1990 carried out a research to see if improvement in compositions was due to conferencing. They concluded that revisions are successful only when there is negotiation and when the student realises what it is he should improve, why and how. This was one of the issues that Sommers 1984 raised. In fact, and even though they do not mention it, these authors assume that negotiation may lead to better retention of what has been discussed and this retention may facilitate learning. Something similar is suggested by White & Arndt 1991 when they mention that discussion can be one of joint negotiation of meaning, whereas written comments tend to be one-way.

As it is not always possible to have conferences, Chenoweth 1987 proposes that only one writing assignment be used and the conference held with the whole class. This would motivate learners to revise their own texts. Something similar is suggested by Allwright et al. 1988. According to these authors, learners should analyse and discuss the differences between a non-native learner's composition and the re-writing done by a native.

None of the articles mentioned give a clear answer to the question of which type of feedback helps acquisition but they help analyse the qualities of other studies that do try to answer the question I am dealing with. After analysing four groups who have been given different feedback treatment – (a) praise, (b) criticism, (c) praise and (d) criticism and no feedback-, Cardelle & Corno 1981 conclude that the written performance of students learning a foreign language can benefit most from focusing on homework errors in a motivationally favourable manner. The test results of the group which received written feedback with both praise and criticism are much better than the results from the other groups. If this is true, we could state that re-writing facilitates language learning if the comments are motivating. Something known and difficult to rebut is the fact that motivation generates learning and that “the student does not improve his skill if his work is not corrected” (Thompson 1952). However, little is said about how to correct or how to motivate students.

Lalande 1982 proposes a third type of feedback: the teacher underlines the mistake and uses an error correction code. This kind of activity is presented to the student as a problem-solving activity. In the experiment he carried out, the group of learners who solve the problem is the group that performs better. The point Lalande raises in the article is that it is not the

re-writing activity in itself that makes students write better texts, but the use of problem solving activities within the revision. This idea is also suggested by Allwright et al. 1988. Thanks to the cognitivist theory we know that this type of activity may facilitate learning because it requires the student to process language at a deep level, which favours retention. Revision should be approached as a process of discovery where the student learns to look for answers, to find solutions that improve his/her written production.

What has been said about feedback seems to be in contradiction with the results presented by Semke 1984. She says that error correction does not facilitate accuracy and, furthermore, it may have a negative effect on the learners' attitude, especially if they have to correct their writings themselves. From the four groups included in her experiment (comments, corrections, comments and corrections, corrections by the students), the one that receives comments is the one that shows the best results; whereas the group that has to correct their mistakes by themselves is the one that gets the worst results in the post-test. This is due, according to Semke, to their lack of motivation.

From the review of literature we can conclude that, even if providing feedback is seen as a beneficial tool to promote the writing skill, research is inconclusive and teachers still do not know the kind of feedback which is beneficial to learners.

2 The experiment

Even if re-writing is considered a good writing strategy, there seems to be a lack of consensus between the kind of feedback teachers should give to written compositions. In order to contribute with some evidence to this issue, I conducted a case study which deals with this problem from the point of view of the learner rather than the teacher. That is, how students actually respond to each of these methods, what their reactions to the feedback are when they receive it. This study prompted a survey to obtain more data from 52 students at the same level as the two girls involved in the study.

The research questions posed in this study are the following:

1. While teachers may spend hours marking students' essays, do learners really benefit from them and do such corrections make a difference?
2. Does re-writing promote more accurate and fluent essays?

In the light of the literature, this paper aims to find evidence for the following claims:

- Written comments have a positive effect in motivating students to re-write.
- Error correction produces a higher level of accuracy in re-writing and in post compositions.
- Students express a preference for a mixed type of feedback: error correction and comments.

2.1 METHOD

2.1.1 *Subjects*

Two 17-year-old girls –Marta and Dolors– were selected from 46 students in 2nd *Batxillerat* (lower intermediate) in Joan Oró Secondary School in Lleida. They had roughly the same proficiency and were similarly considered by the teacher. Both of them had received a grade of *bé* (six points out of ten) the previous year and had been exposed to English instruction for the same number of years. They were both bilingual in Spanish and Catalan. When the research was carried out during the January – March term of 2001, I acted both as their teacher and as the researcher.

2.1.2 *Data collection*

All the students in the class were asked to do the same kind of writing and re-writing so data collection was not something out of the ordinary and the experimental treatments supplemented the regular homework evaluation system. The criteria used to evaluate the essays were the same as the ones used in the University Entrance Exam and the marking scale was as follows:

1. Coherence: clear and correct use of linking devices, referents, determiners, etc., clear organization of ideas. 20%
2. Usage: appropriate register and style, appropriate vocabulary. 20%
3. Vocabulary: correct spelling, range of vocabulary. 20%
4. Presentation: correct layout, skilful handling of topic, well reasoned ideas, creativity. 20%
5. Grammar: correct and appropriate use of morphological and syntactic structures, variety and complexity of structures used. 20%

Students handed in a first draft, which I revised, and the final version of their compositions. A different feedback treatment was used for each informant who did eight essay assignments over a three-month period. The feedback variation was as follows:

- a. Informant 1: I underlined Marta's mistakes on her written assignments of the first informant. For example: "I like to learn english, the coustum of english people" (grammar or lexical mistakes) or Write to me (formality).
- b. Informant 2: I made comments at the bottom of Dolors's assignments. Informant 2 received praise on correct and appropriate sentences as well as criticisms on errors. For example: "Your letter is excellent: good layout, good structure, appropriate and very convincing (I'll think about giving the job to you!) But you still have to improve your spelling. Try to correct those mistakes."

As I wanted to know students' in the class attitudes and feelings towards the feedback, I needed an introspective method of research. As all of the students in the class were writing a diary, I asked them to pay special attention to their feelings about written assignments and feedback in their diaries. An informal interview with the two informants was also carried out in order to make sure my inferences were correct.

The pretest data were obtained from the first essay which the students had written for the course. At the beginning of the course students were given a letter from the teacher and asked to write an answer to it. The aim of their letters was to get to know the group and so the language was informal and quite simple. There was no possibility of re-writing. Both of the informants got similar results (Marta got 65% and Dolors 60%). This was predictable since they had achieved the same scores in the previous course. At the end of February a written test was carried out. The test included a formal letter asking for a job advertised "the perfect student". So performance data were collected before and after the treatment, as well as from homework during treatment.

Informants were not informed of their participation in the experiment. All the students were asked to write a diary and they all received one kind of feedback on their essays. Informants probably attributed differences in feedback to differences in individual learning style.

In order to have more data and be able to find a contrast between the two different writing approaches (writing as a process and writing as a product),

a survey was conducted on two different groups. The group Marta and Dolors belonged to was following a writing as a process approach. There were 27 students in that group. The other group of 25 students considered writing as a product and therefore re-writing was not considered.

To sum up, the data for my research came from a variety of sources: the informants' diaries, their written assignments, their tests, an informal interview with them and a questionnaire which was also distributed among a total of 52 students.

2.2 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

2.2.1 *Hypothesis 1. Written comments have a positive effect in motivating students to rewrite.*

One of the goals of this study was to look into the relationship between written comments and motivation. I used the diaries and the informal interviews with the two informants and looked for recurrent patterns and variations across the two students that suggested to me whether their motivation was increased, decreased or invariable.

Only Marta, whose essays were commented upon, suggests positive comments as being motivating for her in her diary¹: "Comments about the things I did not correctly help me to improve them and comments about the things I did well are a kind of prize that encourages me and then I feel like going on writing and learning English". So we can assume that, in her case, comments act as motivators.

Comments may not be the only source of motivation. Both girls mention that re-writing seems to help them learn more: "The fact that I could give you the compositions two or three times with some of the errors corrected has helped me a lot. Because if you corrected the mistakes we would not pay attention and this is the only way that we pay attention and we remember them". (Dolors) "The comments increase my interest for the composition and even for English. If the mistakes are not corrected, very often I have to look up grammar books and dictionaries to be able to correct them, which makes me remember them better when I write a composition" (Marta). This is also present in Cotteral & Cohen 2003:165 research where one of the subjects reported "it is very important to get feedback... Because they can give you good suggestion and correct your mistakes."

¹When diaries are quoted the wording is the one used by the learners.

In conclusion, written comments seem to have a positive relationship to motivation according to Marta's wording. However, Dolors, who was not given comments, mentioned that having to correct errors makes her re-write compositions and that re-writing is what helps her to learn. So, even though our hypothesis is confirmed, it may be the process approach to writing as a whole, and a supportive feedback in particular, what, in fact, motivate students most. This might be an issue for further research.

2.2.2 Hypothesis 2. Error correction produces a higher level of accuracy in re-writing and in post-compositions.

The second claim I made was that error correction would produce a higher level of accuracy. As we have seen, in their diaries both girls mentioned that re-writing was helping them a lot to improve their English. In the conversation I had with Dolors, whose written assignments were corrected by underlining the mistakes, she said: "When I see what you have underlined, I think where the mistake is and I very often remember it when I am writing a new composition but there are many times that I do not know why a word or sentence is underlined. It may be one of those mistakes you... I mean, mistakes related to style, structure, ... You understand. This type of mistake is impossible to recognise." This kind of comment was never made by Marta probably because my comments gave her the clue to improve her papers.

In order to see if my hypothesis was true or not, I compared the results Marta and Dolors got in the last assignment: a letter applying for a job. The criterion used to evaluate the letter was the same as the one used to mark homework assignments. Both students presented the first draft and the final version. They got the mark only after the final version:

1. Presentation: (correct layout for a formal letter: addresses, date, appropriate opening and ending). There was no improvement between the first draft and the final version because this was correct from the very beginning. Both Marta and Dolors got 20%.
2. Usage: (correct formal style, appropriate vocabulary) Marta's letter was longer and more daring and appropriate. She improved a couple of sentences which had seemed somewhat aggressive. She got 20%. Dolors's was a bit too short, not giving enough information for the referee to write a reference about her qualities for the job. She did not improve this aspect of her composition in her final version. She got 15%.

3. Coherence: (correct use of linking devices, referents, determiners, etc)
Both of them improved this aspect of the letter but Dolores did not improve a couple of referents which did not have antecedent nouns. Marta got 20% whereas Dolores got 15%
4. Vocabulary: Dolores corrected all her spelling mistakes and she got 20%. Marta only corrected three mistakes probably because of my sole comment "...but you still have to improve spelling". She got 15%.
5. Grammar: Dolores corrected all her grammar mistakes so she got 20%. Marta did not correct all of them but they did not interfere with meaning so she got 18%.

What seems to happen here is what was already pointed out by Dolores. She could correct all her spelling and grammar mistakes because they were underlined. So all she had to do was to look the word up in a dictionary or the structure in a grammar book and correct them. Dolores did not know what to do with the other types of mistakes, so she left them. Marta could improve style and appropriacy if needed since she was told to do so. Therefore when students were not suggested what to revise, revisions were not even attempted.

Their marks for this letter were not significantly different: Marta got 93% and Dolores 90%. If we compare these results to the ones they got in the letter they wrote at the beginning of the course, we notice an improvement which may be due to the instruction received since then. In fact the improvement is similar in both of them because Marta already had higher marks the first time.

In short, students should be told what to improve. So it does not matter whether we use a code, we underline mistakes or write comments. In fact Marta and Dolores's results are not significantly different. In the light of these results we cannot claim that these two types of feedback make a real difference. However, what we can state is that re-writing works in the short term since both students improved their writing papers one way or another.

In the long run, there was also an improvement; both Marta and Dolores performed better in the last essay. However, there could be improvement because of the instruction received during that period or because, as Marta said, a discovery approach would help students make inferences and formulate concepts about the target language, and would help them to fix this information in their long-term memories.

2.2.3 Hypothesis 3. Students express a preference for mixed feedback (that is, error correction of some kind and comments).

My final claim was that students express a preference for a type of feedback which combines comments and error correction. A survey questionnaire was given to students a couple of days after they had been given their papers back so as not to influence them. The aim was to find out how many students do not look at the comments or do so only sparingly and which kind of feedback students thought helped them most.

The questionnaire given to the two groups raises some interesting issues. In the writing-as-a-process group, all the students reported reading over all or most of the composition and a significant 68% say they read all of it. In the writing-as-a-product group 87% of the students read over all or most of the composition but, in this case, the majority read only some of it. What is also important is that 13% of the students of this last group did not read the corrections at all.

	Writing as a process	Writing as a product
a. I always read them	68%	21%
b. I read what I am interested in.	32%	66%
c. I never read them	0%	13%

Table 1: Percentage of the compositions read

A similar distribution of responses was found for the item regarding attention to the teacher's feedback. Again, 95% of the students in the writing-as-a-process group reported reading most of the corrections and the majority read all of them (53%). In the other group 50% of the learners reported reading most of them and 25% read all the correction. But a more significant fact is that 4.2% of the students in this group did not pay attention to the teacher's corrections at all and that 8.3% do not answer the question. If we add to this 12.5% of students who do not care about corrections the 12.5% that only attend to a few corrections, we can conclude that a quarter of the papers corrected by the teacher are largely ignored.

It is worth pointing out here that students were asked to explain their answers and that 30.7% of the students in the writing-as-a-product group either did not answer this question, were not interested or the reason they give is the mark awarded. In fact this is a criticism which has been made to this approach: there is no room for improvement and therefore the student

	Writing as a process	Writing as a product
a. To all corrections	53%	25%
b. To most of them	42%	50%
c. To few corrections	5%	12.5%
d. To none of them	0%	4.2%
e. Question not answered	0%	8.3%

Table 2: Percentage of the attention paid to corrections and/or comments

is not motivated enough to correct his mistakes. Most of the students who reported paying attention to all or nearly all the corrections in both groups thought that that was a way of improving (61.8% and 60%). One of the students from the writing-as-a-product group added a comment in Catalan which is interesting because it relates to the answers given by the students who did not pay any attention to corrections from this very same group: “I pay attention to do it better but I can’t see any improvement since I always make the same mistakes”. It is this sense of defeat, of trying to do it better than the previous time but getting a paper back full of red marks that overburdens students, some of whom give up and answer “I don’t look at them because I don’t understand them”. And, furthermore, another student from that same class says “I’m not interested and if I do it is to pass English, not because I like it”.

	Writing as a process	Writing as a product
To know where I made a mistake	26.3%	23%
To correct mistakes and not to make them again	47.3%	27%
To understand mistakes	13.2%	0%
To know my English level	5.25%	0%
I’m curious	2.65%	7.7%
I don’t read what is correct because I already know it	5.25%	11.5%
Because of the mark	0%	7.7%
That is why the teacher corrected them	0%	3.8%
I am not interested	0%	7.7%
No answer	0%	11.5%

Table 3: Why do you read your compositions?

With regard to how students reported processing the feedback, results are

	Writing as a process	Writing as a product
To learn and improve	61.8%	60%
To know which kind of mistakes I make	20.5%	16%
I like it because it is interesting	5.9%	0%
To know what the teacher thinks about what I've written	2.95%	0%

Table 4: Why do you pay attention to all or most of the corrections?

	Writing as a process	Writing as a product
I don't have time	2.95%	0%
I'm curious	5.9%	0%
I'm not interested	0%	12%
I don't understand corrections	0%	4%
I can only remember a few corrections	0%	4%
No answer	0%	4%

Table 5: Why do you pay attention to none or nearly none of the corrections?

similar in both groups. But in the writing-as-a-process group most students reported either making a mental note or trying to correct the errors whereas students in the other group did both things. It is also worth pointing out that 15% of the students reported re-writing the compositions in the writing-as-a-process group whereas none did so in the writing-as-a-product group.

	Writing as a process	Writing as a product
a. Nothing	0%	3.8%
b. Make a mental note	28.33%	30.7%
c. Try to correct errors	26.66%	30.7%
d. Write down the errors & comments	8.33%	7.7%
e. Rewrite the composition	15%	0%
f. Take a look at the errors	21.66%	27%
g. Others (please specify)	0%	0%

Table 6: Percentage of what students do with the feedback they receive

The final item in the questionnaire was included to learn about the students' preference for the type of feedback. There are significant differences

in the way this question is answered by the two groups. By far the largest number of students in the writing-as-a-product group (40.7%) reported that the teacher commenting the positive and negative aspects of the composition and underlining the mistakes was the type of feedback which helped them most. This is odd since their teacher never used that type of feedback. 18 per cent and 15 per cent of the students in both groups reported that the teacher should correct all their mistakes. This might be due to the type of written instruction they were given in previous years where there was an emphasis on grammar and the teacher corrected all their mistakes. Nevertheless, the large number of students preferring the teacher to correct the mistakes in the writing-as-a-process group is striking since they could hand in their drafts for revision and once that was good, their compositions were edited. The mark they obtained was the one for the final paper they hand in. This was negotiated at the beginning of the course.

Another interesting result was the fact that students in the writing-as-a-process group had a wide range of preferences. Nevertheless, comments, with or without underlining mistakes, was the most popular (32.8%).

	Writing as a process	Writing as a product
a. Conferencing	7.9%	11.1%
b. The teacher corrects all the errors	18.4%	14.8%
c. The teacher corrects the most important errors	9.2%	7.4%
d. The teacher underlines all the errors	14.5%	3.7%
e. The teacher underlines the most important errors	7.9%	0%
f. The teacher comments the positive and the negative points of the paper	13.1%	3.7%
g. The teacher comments the positive and negative points of the paper and underlines the mistakes	19.7%	40.7%
h. The teacher uses an Error Coding System and underlines them	9.2%	14.8%
i. Nothing helps the student	0%	3.7%

Table 7: Percentage of the type of feedback which helps students to learn to write in English, according to the students.

However, most of the time feedback is not understood as the following comment made by a student who never receives correction of his/her mistakes but who is given a clue for him/her to correct them (either a code, comments or underlining mistakes) suggests:

“If I make a mistake it is because I did not know it was a mistake. If

I did, I would not have made it. That is why I prefer you to correct my compositions”

In conclusion, the results of the survey suggest that although it has been claimed that feedback is only valuable if the composition was revised, it would appear that such revision is infrequent when the class followed the product approach to writing. The survey also suggests that students preferred the teacher to comment on the positive and negative aspects of the compositions and to underline the mistakes probably because they feel lost.

2.2.4 Other comments

My findings prove Sommer’s 1984 findings that some students do not even understand comments and that most corrections encourage students to think of their drafts as finished drafts (Dolors only corrected spelling and grammar).

Even though it is true that students who followed a writing as a process approach preferred comments to other types of feedback, they did not show a significant improvement. So, in a way, my findings go against Cardelle & Corno 1981 who found constructive feedback did help performance. Marta and Dolors did, in fact, improve their written proficiency and accuracy but that could be because of the whole instruction or because both of them use a sort of problem solving activity to improve their assignments. This last factor would agree with Lalande 1982.

After a detailed analysis of the data collected, it seems that not all the hypotheses established have been confirmed. It cannot be forgotten that a general conclusion would be premature as this study was carried out in a restricted setting. Nevertheless, it provides a database of material which may be reinterpreted in future research.

3 Conclusion

The study seems to suggest that learners do not really profit from the many hours teachers spend marking papers. This kind of feedback has a limited impact on students and corrections do not make a difference in the short run. On the other hand, re-writing, understood as revising and improving drafts, does work, at least for the two girls involved in this case study.

It is important to note that the notion of re-writing is successful but certainly many issues on feedback for written assignments still remain for future research: the long-term effects of re-writing, the type of feedback on

writing acquisition, the most effective correction techniques for particular cognitive styles and personality types.

What seems an important conclusion to me is that new, more efficient and humane ways of correcting students' errors should be developed. Traditionally, feedback tends to concern itself more with accuracy in form than with meaning. If we only correct surface level features of writing -what is called editing-, we are misleading students into thinking that writing is primarily about surface accuracy. Moreover, their motivation decreases as they see teachers focusing their attention on the things they are interested in and not on the students, as they cannot understand either the mistake underlined or a vague comment at the bottom of the composition. In conclusion, in the end, students do not know why they have to revise their composition or what for. Errors have to be regarded as information feedback to motivate the learner. Only then would students' interest be in the feedback they get when they receive their papers back rather than in their grade.

As Murray 1991 says, "writing and re-writing is a process of discovery". Teachers should learn to view their students' papers as efforts in a developmental process. The papers they hand in are not final products, one-shot attempts. Rather, they show how much the student has been able to accomplish at that time.

With regard to this study and the literature analysed in this paper, feedback is not in itself what facilitates learning. How we, as teachers, present this activity to our students and the position we give to it within the process approach to writing will be the clues that make it valuable as a facilitator in acquiring writing skills.

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