



ERRORS AND CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN CHINESE EFL CLASSROOM WRITING

ZHUOQUN BI

Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
s2122340@siswa.um.edu.my

SU KIA LAU

Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
lausk@um.edu.my

LENG LEE YAP 

Universiti Malaya, Malaysia
lenglee@um.edu.my

ABSTRACT. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners are often confronted with grammatical errors in writing. This study aimed thence to identify types of errors made by Chinese EFL learners in their writing and to explore the reasons behind these committed errors as well as the corrective feedback given by EFL instructors in responding to students' errors. A mixed-methods case study research design was employed. Data were collected from the essays produced by 62 third-year senior high school students (equivalent to 12th grade) at Jining No.1 Middle School in Shandong, China and semi-structured interviews with five EFL instructors from China. Data were analyzed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics. This study found that omission was the most common error made by Chinese EFL learners. Inappropriate learning strategies, negative transfer, overgeneralization, lack of motivation and positive attitude were the reasons of this phenomenon. It was found that both implicit and explicit corrective feedback were used by the EFL instructors in responding to their students' errors. The findings provide valuable pedagogical evidence for EFL instructors to scaffold EFL learners' writing skills.

Keywords: English as a foreign language (EFL), Error analysis, Corrective feedback, China, Writing skills.

ERRORES Y RETROALIMENTACIÓN CORRECTIVA EN LA PRODUCCIÓN ESCRITA DE ESTUDIANTES CHINOS DE INGLÉS COMO LENGUA EXTRANJERA

RESUMEN. Los estudiantes de inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE, por sus siglas en inglés) suelen enfrentarse a errores gramaticales al escribir. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo identificar los tipos de errores cometidos por estudiantes chinos de ILE en la destreza de producción escrita y explorar las razones detrás de estos errores cometidos, así como la retroalimentación correctiva proporcionada por los docentes de ILE en respuesta a los errores de los estudiantes. Se empleó un diseño de investigación de estudio de caso de métodos mixtos. Se recopilaron datos de las composiciones producidas por 62 estudiantes de tercer año de educación secundaria (2° Bachillerato) en el centro educativo No.1 de Jining en Shandong, China, y de entrevistas semiestructuradas con cinco docentes de ILE de China. Los datos fueron analizados utilizando análisis temático y estadística descriptiva. Este estudio encontró que la omisión fue el error más común cometido por los estudiantes chinos de ILE. Estrategias de aprendizaje inapropiadas, transferencia negativa, excesiva generalización, falta de motivación y actitud positiva fueron las razones de este fenómeno. Se encontró que tanto la retroalimentación correctiva implícita como explícita fueron utilizadas por los instructores de ILE en respuesta a los errores de sus estudiantes. Los resultados proporcionan una evidencia pedagógica útil para los instructores de ILE en su tarea de apoyar las habilidades de producción escrita de los aprendices de ILE.

Palabras clave: inglés como lengua extranjera (ILE), Análisis de errores, Retroalimentación correctiva, China, Habilidades de producción escrita.

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1. INTRODUCTION

English is a lingua franca, and it is also the most extensively learned second language around the world. In China, English is a foreign language (EFL), which, according to English Curriculum Standards for Senior High School (2018), is one of the compulsory subjects in the Chinese college entrance examination. Nowadays, more and more Chinese students are making the effort to learn English, including listening, reading, speaking, writing and other skills. Writing is not only one of the crucial ways for senior high school students to improve their language abilities, cultural awareness, quality of thought, and capacity for learning, but it is also the most difficult skill for EFL Chinese students to acquire (Sang 1). Consequently, students are challenged to produce a correct English text. According to research in the disciplines of error analysis (EA) and second language acquisition (SLA), the written work of EFL students contains a variety of errors (Sermsook, et al. 43; Zafar 698).

Consequently, a key focus of teaching ESL writing is to detect the different sorts of errors that students make in their writing and come up with strategies for doing so while also helping students improve their writing skills. Since the Process Writing

Approach (Kroll 231) was brought into language teaching in the early 1970s, feedback, a continuation of the writing process, has been viewed as a fundamental procedure of the process-oriented approach to writing. Corrective feedback (CF) is also known as error feedback and grammar correction. Written corrective feedback (WCF) is a major form of CF and refers to the written information provided by teachers to inform learners of their incorrect use of target language, help them to address errors and improve language accuracy accordingly (Bitchener and Knoch 409). With the development of the Process Writing Approach (Kroll 231) in SLA, the question of whether foreign/second language teachers should supply WCF for learners' grammatical errors in writing, and if so, how, has long been an issue of considerable debate to researchers and teachers (Khaki and Tabrizi 38).

Faulty English sentences are often written by EFL learners in Chinese high schools. In recent decades, many researchers have drawn attention to this phenomenon, which has become a major issue for SLA abroad. Chinese researchers have also noted or discussed the error-making of Chinese learners. Some studies have focused on analyzing the types of writing errors and their frequency in SLA among students. For example, Maolida and Hidayat conducted a study with 22 EFL students' writing of personal letters and found that the most frequent error type is the addition among the four types from surface structure taxonomy (336). Moreover, Maniam and Rajagopal identified omission, addition, and misordering as the three primary categories of errors in the simple past tense (547). The findings also suggest that the reasons for simple past tense errors are translation, mother tongue influence, rule application ignorance, and overgeneralization of grammatical rules. Saputra analyzed 25 students' academic writing and concluded that the most frequent error committed by students is omission, but the most frequent sources of errors are developmental or intralingua (226).

In addition, many studies have focused on the effects of CF on students' learning. Most studies concerning this issue compared effectiveness between the direct and indirect WCF on learners' accuracy improvement. Some studies found an advantage for the indirect WCF (Ferris 99; Hassan Banaruee et al. 8). On the contrary, while not denying the value of indirect WCF, some studies prefer direct WCF (Bitchener and Knoch 409; Chandler 267; Van Beuningen et al. 1). Other studies (Vyatkina 671; Robb et al. 83) found that there was no discernible difference between the effects of the direct vs indirect nature of WCF on the increased accuracy of the students' new written work. Therefore, there is still a controversy on whether certain types of WCF can be more beneficial to enhance writing accuracy than others. However, few studies have analyzed students' errors in their writing and teachers' CF in combination. In view of the existing research gaps, the current study was proposed to investigate error types and frequencies using error analysis theory. It addressed the questions of why EFL Chinese learners made errors in writing and what CF teachers provided in response to writing errors.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

CF includes everything from suggestions on word usage to fixing of grammatical and technical problems. Nunan categorized CF into positive and negative feedback and added that CF can successfully encourage verbal engagement between teachers and students in the classroom (195). According to Lee, explicit correction refers to grammatical explanation of the error or the marker's overt correction, whereas implicit correction entails reformulating the learners' statements through recasting or clarification queries (154-155).

Dulay et al. divided students' errors based on surface strategy taxonomy into four categories (150):

- a. Omission (for example, omission of copula *be*);
- b. Addition. This is sub-categorized:
 - I. Regularization (for example, *eated* for *ate*);
 - II. Double-marking (for example, He didn't *came*);
 - III. Simple Addition (not regularization or double-marking);
- c. Misinformation (i.e. the use of the wrong from the morpheme or structure):
 - I. Regularization (for example, do they be happy?);
 - II. Archi-forms (for example, me speak to me);
 - III. Alternating form;
- d. Misordering (for example, she fights all the time with her brother).

CF can be offered in either written or oral form. The former entails written comments provided directly on the learner's written script, while the latter involves verbal feedback on the learner's written product, either during individual conferencing (Erlam, Ellis, and Batstone 257) or within class sessions (Bitchener and Knoch 193). Ellis presents a combination of two taxonomies of CF strategies (8), as depicted in Table 1.

Table 1: A taxonomy of CF strategies (Ellis 8)

	Implicit	Explicit
Input-providing	Recast	Explicit correction
Output-promoting	Repetition Clarification requests	Metalinguistic explanation Paralinguistic signal Elicitation

Explicit feedback, also known as direct feedback, refers to evaluative information by which a teacher points out an error that has been made and gives the student the appropriate form or structure next to the incorrect element. Such feedback can be conveyed in a range of formats, involving crossing out a redundant word/phrase/sentence, inserting the missing content and writing the correct usage somewhere close to the linguistic errors. Chandler reported that direct CF outperforms indirect CF in a study of 31 EFL students (267). The results of this study also showed that students' updated sketches and subsequent writing were improved in terms of accuracy. The students participating in the study preferred immediate CF because it is the easiest and fastest way for them to make changes to their papers. In a study by Ferris and Roberts, it was found that direct feedback is more beneficial than indirect feedback, especially for English language learners who are less proficient (161). Giving weak students immediate feedback may enable them to revise their work properly.

In contrast, implicit feedback or indirect feedback is a form of error correction where an error has been made in writing, but no clear corrections have been given. In this case, students are responsible for diagnosing and self-correcting their errors. Indirect feedback can take three forms that vary in how explicit it is in the manner of: a) recording in the margin the number of errors of each line; b) underlying or circling an error; c) using a code to indicate what category of the error marked (e.g., VT = verb tense; WF = word form; S = spelling errors; SA = subject-verb agreement). As a result, instead of offering corrections in this sort of feedback, students must resolve and remedy the issue that has been pointed out or detected. Indirect feedback, according to Ferris and Roberts, is beneficial and helpful because it engages students in problem-solving and guided learning tasks (161). Ferris added that learners benefit from indirect feedback since they can autonomously change their work, which allows them to process the language (16). According to Lyster, indirect feedback encourages students to autonomously fix their errors, which helps them learn (399). However, when students self-correct their mistakes, they still run into a variety of issues. First, students feel more at ease when teachers correct their mistakes. Second, and most significantly, a lack of linguistic expertise prevents learners from being able to self-correct their mistakes. To enable children to recognize or detect linguistic forms that are not a part of their interlanguage, more correction will be required.

More research has been conducted to ascertain if implicit or explicit feedback techniques are more likely to aid students in improving the precision of their writing (Long 413). According to research, neither of these two types of feedback has a statistically significant effect on writing accuracy. (Robb, Ross and Shortreed 83; Semke 195). However, according to Chandler, implicit feedback improves students' attention to forms and problems and fosters their engagement over time, thus leading to either higher or equivalent levels of correctness (290-293). Moreover, Ellis claimed that explicit feedback is more effective in eliciting the learner's immediate appropriate use of the structure and in prompting later correct usage (16), building on the theories of Lyster (399) as well as Carroll and Swain (357).

A study conducted by Mohamed Mubarak aimed to explore the feedback mechanisms and instructional strategies employed in L2 writing instruction at the University of Bahrain. Employing a 12-week quasi-experimental design, the study involved 46 Bahraini media students distributed across three groups: Experimental Group A, which received direct CF; Experimental Group B, which received error underlining; and Control Group C, which received no corrections but instead received simple, summative comments on their performance (ii). The efficacy of these interventions was assessed through pre-, post-, and delayed post-tests. Furthermore, Mubarak's investigation encompassed an exploration of instructors' and students' attitudes toward feedback through interviews and questionnaires. The findings revealed several shortcomings in both the teaching of L2 writing and the feedback methodologies employed at the University of Bahrain. Despite observable improvements among students over the course of the experiment, neither form of CF-direct nor indirect-yielded significant enhancements in accuracy, grammatical complexity, or lexical sophistication in writing. Moreover, there was no discernible difference in effectiveness between the two feedback modalities. Additionally, the results from interviews and questionnaires indicated a preference among students for direct CF, wherein errors were directly addressed in their scripts rather than merely underlined. Both instructors and students underscored the importance of feedback and its perceived benefits. However, the study also revealed a notable deficiency in follow-up procedures by instructors, particularly in failing to provide subsequent guidance after the initial draft submission.

According to Ferris, it may also be appropriate for lower achievers to self-correct their errors, especially those errors such as syntactical and lexical problems which tend to be too complex for students (6). However, according to Truscott, direct correction does not help students improve their accuracy because it demotivates them due to mistakes and leads to low linguistic accuracy in the long-term (327). It has a strong instructor focus and does not give students the opportunity to self-correct and find solutions to their learning issues. Additionally, it makes students anxious because they fear creating lots of mistakes and getting lots of red marks (Bartram and Walton 78), which prevents them from wanting to improve their writing correctness. On the other hand, implicit feedback engages students cognitively and encourages their thinking of how to use the right form to convey their meaning. In the long-term, it helps students become independent learners who are more able to recognize their errors, read their own work critically, and reflect on it. This improves writing accuracy by helping students become more self-aware of their errors and rereading their own work. Based on the literature review, it is conceivable that both explicit and implicit feedback sound useful on certain occasions depending on the situation and the learners' developmental stages. Therefore, both sorts of CF were applied in the current study.

3. METHOD

This study engaged both quantitative and qualitative research method designs. The quantitative method was used to determine the types and frequency of grammatical errors made by the students, and the qualitative approach was utilized to (1) study the rationale behind students' grammatical errors by conducting interviews with five teachers and (2) explore the CF used by teachers in response to the errors in students' essays. The study was conducted from September to November 2022. The first author of this study selected two 3rd grade classes from the senior high school (equivalent to 12th grade) through convenience sampling to ensure that no significant distinction occurred between the two classes. A total of 62 students were asked to write a 120-word argumentative essay titled "Suggestions for Freshman" within 30 minutes. A week later, the 62 students were given 30 minutes to complete another 120-word narrative short essay in the form of a continuation of the story. The two different genres were chosen to examine the use of English in their essay writing. A total of 124 short essays were collected. From these essays, the researcher excluded 40 essays that were not completed as the number of words of some essays did not meet the requirements and some essays that did not contain any grammatical errors. Fifty essays that met the criteria were chosen from the remaining 80 essays through random sampling. These essays were analyzed according to the error analysis procedure by Ellis: (1) gathering a sample of errors, (2) identifying errors, (3) describing errors, (4) explaining the reasons for errors, and lastly (5) explaining the methods to reduce errors (431). Grammatical errors in the data of this study were categorized based on the surface strategy taxonomy presented by Dulay et al. (150-162).

Five teachers were selected through purposive sampling for the interviews, which aimed to explore the reasons causing students' grammatical errors. Both internal and external reasons were examined in this study. This is because not only do internal reasons, which exhibit a stronger relationship to language, cause students to make errors, but external factors unrelated to language, such as the student's attitude and learning environment, also exert influence. The CF methods provided by these EFL teachers to help their students reduce those errors were also elicited through an interview instrument. Among five teachers, there are four female teachers and only one male teacher. All the teachers had master's degrees. Three teachers were English education majors, while one was majoring in a comparative and world literature, and the last teacher was of an English translation major. All the teachers had at least two years of teaching experience. The five teachers were interviewed through open-ended questions. Each interview was about half an hour long. The interview sessions were recorded, transcribed, verified, and analyzed. After transcribing the interviews, they were checked and verified by the interviewers to ensure accuracy and prevent misinterpretation by the researchers. The data were analyzed using thematic analysis and descriptive statistics.

4. RESULTS

Based on the number of 50 essays analyzed in this study, the students made a total of 108 grammatical errors. The errors were first extracted, then classified and counted. The frequency of each type of error was calculated for each class and both classes were combined to analyze the most frequent types of errors.

Table 2 shows the common errors made and three error types were focused using the Surface Strategy Taxonomy, which was proposed by Dulay et al. (150-162). 108 grammatical error items were found, with the proportion of omission (55.55%), addition (27.78%) and misordering (16.67%).

Table 2. Types of grammatical errors made by students and the frequencies.

Types of grammatical errors	Frequency of errors			Percentages (%)
	Class A	Class B	Total	
Omission	27	33	60	55.55
Addition	15	15	30	27.78
Misordering	8	10	18	16.67
		Total:	108	100.00

4.1. Types of omission, addition and misordering errors

In line with the Surface Strategy Taxonomy by Dulay et al., the data were detected and categorized based on the kinds of errors. The researcher divided the grammatical errors into three categories: omission, addition, and misordering, which are discussed as follows.

4.1.1. Omission

A total of 27 errors were extracted from class A, and 33 errors from class B. This is the most common error. The students made this error by omitting several necessary clauses from their statements, which made their remarks disqualified from being grammatically correct. In these two English sentences, the articles *a* and *an* should be placed before the noun phrases “more and more intense learning atmosphere” and “unforgettable experience”, but the Chinese students omitted both articles. It showed that these Chinese students were not able to apply these two articles in English sentences.

4.1.1.1. Omission of Articles

Wrong sentence 1: You should know how to learn efficiently in more and more intense learning atmosphere.

Correct sentence 1: You should know how to learn efficiently in a more and more intense learning atmosphere.

Wrong sentence 2: This sports meet is unforgettable experience for me.

Correct sentence 2: This sports meet is **an** unforgettable experience for me.

4.1.1.2. Omission of the Plural Form of Nouns

The following sentence shows students' omission of the plural forms of nouns. For the first sentence, the usage of plural forms of nouns was not applied. If it is a plural noun, it should be followed by *-s/-es*. The phrase "one of..." must be followed by a plural noun and student is a countable noun. And for the second sentence, the noun question should be in plural form after the pronoun any.

Wrong sentence: Jane, you are one of the most talented *student* I've met.

Correct sentence: Jane, you are one of the most talented *students* I've met.

4.1.1.3. Omission of the Suffix of Verb

This grammatical error is caused by the omission of a linguistic component (the suffix *-d/-ed*). It appears in English verbs while attempting to construct a sentence in the present perfect tense. The verb increase should be in the past participle form in this sentence.

Wrong sentence 1: This match has *increase* my interest in the running.

Correct sentence 1: This match has *increased* my interest in running.

In addition, as displayed in the following sentence, the students were unaware of a specific linguistic item (suffix *-ing*) as the subject rule. The verb take should be changed into the gerund form here.

Wrong sentence 2: *Take* notes is helpful for your study.

Correct sentence 2: *Taking* notes is helpful for your study.

4.1.1.4. Omission of Prepositions

This problem was caused by a direct translation of Chinese into English, and the students were unfamiliar with the term "a better grasp of..." as in the sentences below. The main reason why these essays contain so many similar errors is that they don't understand the fixed collocations and instead directly translate the phrases from Chinese into English.

Wrong sentence: I believe this game will provide me with a better grasp running.

Correct sentence: I believe this game will provide me with a better grasp **of** running.

4.1.1.5. Omission of Conjunction

In this sentence, the students made the same kind of grammatical errors, which is the lack of conjunction *and*. The conjunction plays a crucial role in a sentence, which is used to connect words or sentences in a sentence.

Wrong sentence: My sweat streamed down my face, my arms, my legs.

Correct sentence: My sweat streamed down my face, my arms, *and* my legs.

4.1.1.6. Omission of the Relative Pronoun

The relative pronoun *which* is omitted in the attributive clauses. In this sentence, the relative pronoun which modifies the sentence “It’s wise of you to use time efficiently” and connected the two sentences.

Wrong sentence: It’s wise of you to use time efficiently, can give you good grades.

Correct sentence: It’s wise of you to use time efficiently, *which* can give you good grades.

4.1.2. Addition

Addition is the second kind of grammatical error committed by the students. This kind of error occupies middle proportion as it accounted for 27.78% out of the overall number of errors. 15 errors were spotted from each class, which was the second most common error in the students’ writings. Students added items to a sentence that are not part of and this made the sentence wrong.

4.1.2.1. Addition of Articles

As illustrated by the following pairs of sentences, the article *the* is redundant in both sentences. “In relief” and “in addition” are both fixed collocations, and learners are vague about them.

Wrong sentence 1: In *the* relief, I was too tired to run.

Correct sentence 1: In relief, I was too tired to run.

Wrong sentence 2: In *the* addition, exercising will give us a chance to know more about ourselves.

Correct sentence 2: In addition, exercising will give us a chance to know more about ourselves.

4.1.2.2. Addition of Auxiliary verbs

This error occurred when the learners did not follow the rules of auxiliary verbs. An auxiliary verb aims to change or help another verb. However, in these two sentences, the auxiliary verbs *is* and *be* are both redundant because here the verbs benefit and have can assume the tense of the sentences.

Wrong sentence 1: Regular exercise is benefits us a lot.

Correct sentence 1: Regular exercise benefits us a lot.

Wrong sentence 2: This must be have a profound and lasting influence on your whole life.

Correct sentence 2: This must have a profound and lasting influence on your whole life.

4.1.2.3. Additional of Suffixes

Additional suffixes *-ed* and *-es* in verbs in English sentences were wrongly produced. The modal verbs “should and will” should be followed by the original form of the verbs study and witness. Therefore, in the verbs study and witness, the suffixes do not need to be added to the verbs.

Wrong sentence 1: You should also studied to achieve your academic goals.

Correct sentence 1: You should also study to achieve your academic goals.

Wrong sentence 2: The upcoming 3 years will witnesses considerable challenges as well as joys.

Correct sentence 2: The upcoming 3 years will witness considerable challenges as well as joy.

4.1.2.4. Additional of Plural Form of Noun

These two sentences both contain an additional error. The singular quantifier “every” and the article “a” should be followed by the singular form of nouns classmate and habit.

Wrong sentence 1: Second, don't make friends with every classmateg.

Correct sentence 1: Second, don't make friends with every classmate.

Wrong sentence 2: It is critical to establish a good habits.

Correct sentence 2: It is crucial to establish good habits.

4.1.2.5. Additional of Conjunction

This kind of grammatical error occurred when the students did not familiarize themselves with the rules of conjunction. Conjunctions are used in a sentence to connect words or sentences, but some conjunctions are not usually used in one sentence, such as “because” and “so”, “although” and “but”, which is totally the opposite in Chinese sentences.

Wrong sentence 1: Because our school is a boarding one, so we should follow the rules of the dorms.

Correct sentence 1: Because our school is a boarding one, we should follow the rules of the dorms.

Wrong sentence 2: Although I didn't win in the end, **but** this match made me feel surprised and moved.

Correct sentence 2: Although I didn't win in the end, this match made me feel surprised and moved.

4.1.2.6. Additional of Adverbs

The adverb “more” does not need to be placed before adjectives with the suffix -er. The addition of the modifiers shows that these Chinese students have not yet mastered how to use adverbs involving the word “more” in English sentences.

Wrong sentence: Other runners passed by one by one, but my legs were getting **more** heavier and heavier.

Correct sentence: Other runners passed by one by one, but my legs were getting heavier and heavier.

4.1.2.7. Additional of Preposition

The preposition “to” should be omitted when it is followed by the adverb home. The learners were unfamiliar with this grammar rule.

Wrong sentence: On the way **to** home, I was told to participate in the running competition to represent our class.

Correct sentence: On the way home, I was told to participate in the running competition to represent our class.

4.1.3. Misordering

Misordering is the third kind of grammatical error engaged in by the students. 18 (16.67%) cases in total were detected; class A had eight items, and class B had 10 items. This was the third most frequent error made by learners in their writing when they utilized the erroneous morpheme or morpheme group in a sentence, resulting in an inaccurate phrase.

4.1.3.1. Misordering of Verb and Noun Phrase

It was found that the Chinese students wrongly placed the auxiliary verb after the noun phrase “some suggestions”. Although the meaning of this sentence is still understood, it is not accurate in terms of proper English grammar.

Wrong sentence 1: Here some suggestions **are** for you.

Correct sentence 1: Here **are** some suggestions for you.

4.1.3.2. Misordering of Adverb

These errors were related to the placement of the adverbs. In the first sentence, enough modified the adverb “well”, and it should be put after the word. Similarly, for the second sentence, the adverb “hard” describes the verb study and it should be placed after the word.

Wrong sentence 1: Everything goes enough well.

Correct sentence 1: Everything goes well enough.

Wrong sentence 2: As the students of the new generation, we should hard study.

Correct sentence 2: As the students of the new generation, we should study hard.

4.1.3.3. Misordering of Pronoun and Auxiliary Verb

These kinds of grammatical errors were associated with the placement of the pronouns (we and you) and auxiliary verbs (can and will) in an interrogative sentence and a declarative sentence. In the interrogative sentence, the pronoun should be before the auxiliary verb, while in the declarative sentence, it is the opposite.

Wrong sentence 1: How we can deal with the trouble?

Correct sentence 1: How can we deal with the trouble?

Wrong sentence 2: Hopefully with your great efforts, will you enjoy a fruitful life here.

Correct sentence 2: Hopefully with your great efforts, you will enjoy a fruitful life here.

4.1.3.4. Misordering of Auxiliary Verbs and Adverbs

Moreover, the students misplaced the auxiliary verbs (had and could) and adverbs (never and hardly). In this case, both two adverbs should be placed after the auxiliary verbs.

Wrong sentence 1: I never had felt such warmth before.

Correct sentence 1: I had never felt such warmth before.

Wrong sentence 2: For the last 500 meters, my leg hardly could leave the ground.

Correct sentence 2: For the last 500 meters, my leg could hardly leave the ground.

4.2. Reasons of errors making

The researcher conducted interviews to obtain the reasons for making grammatical errors and the teacher CF for the students' errors. The interview was divided into three parts. The first part comprised the interviewee's personal information, including name and education; the second part explored the questions related to the reasons for the three types of errors made by the students, namely

omission, addition, and misordering errors; and the third part referred to the English teachers' CF. The researcher categorized the reasons for students' errors into two main themes, namely (i) internal reasons and (ii) external reasons. Internal reasons include overgeneralization as some grammatical items only exist in English, negative transfer, and lack of sufficient input. In contrast, external reasons include a lack of English native speakers in the environment, inappropriate learning strategies, lack of motivation and positive attitudes, different thinking patterns between Chinese and Westerners, as well as insufficient English instruction contact hours at schools.

4.2.1. Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization was the first reason given. Based on teacher-respondent B, some students were not accustomed to use of certain grammatical rules and word choices in different contexts, and therefore, they chose the one they were most familiar with. In the sentence "Other runners passed by one by one, but my legs were getting more heavier and heavier", the comparative level of adjectives is overgeneralized. Usually, "more" is added in front of partial disyllabic and polysyllabic adjectives to form a comparative level. However, in the above sentence, learners memorized this rule mechanically and added "more" before all adjectives, such as "more heavier and heavier", while the actual comparative form should be "heavier and heavier". In addition, teacher-respondent D mentioned that some students overgeneralized part of the phrase. For example, the phrase "on the way to home" was wrongly written. Students remembered the phrase "on the way to..." is a fixed lexical item, but they ignored home as an adverb and the preposition "to" should be omitted.

4.2.2. Some Grammatical Items Only Exist in English

Some grammatical items, such as the articles "a", "an", and "the", are only found in English and not in Chinese. This resulted in students' inability to use the articles accurately in the English sentences. As teacher-respondent E stated, there was no usage of the articles in Chinese, hence students often dropped them when they wrote English sentences. For example, in the English sentence "I made great effort to rush", this is an incorrect sentence written by the learner. In Chinese, the article "a" shouldn't occur in this sentence. However, in English, the noun phrase "great effort" seems to be missing a determiner before it. An article "a" should be added before it.

4.2.3. Negative Transfer

According to teacher-respondents A, B, and D, Chinese and English are different languages. Consequently, Chinese students are negatively influenced by the Chinese language when learning English and this led to grammatical errors. This can be illustrated by the following two sentences. In sentence (a), the students used the Chinese knowledge to deal with it, while in Chinese, the adverb "hard" should be

put after the verb “work”, while in English, the situation is exactly the opposite. Similarly, in sentence (b), the plural countable noun should follow the phrase “one of the most + adjective”. However, in Chinese, the singular form of the noun “student” is suitable in this sentence.

(a) We will hard work for our bright future.

(b) Jane, you are one of the most talented student I've met.

4.2.4. Lack of Sufficient Quality Input

Limited time was planned and allocated in the current situation and teachers had to rush in order to complete all tasks according to the lesson plans, and teachers had to converse in Chinese to explain some details in order to make students understand better. “Too much L1 in class will bring down the L2 input.” (Teacher-respondent B). Furthermore, teacher-respondent D stated that “I speak more Chinese in class because the English level of students is not very high. Too much English was not good for their understanding in class.” For this reason, English learners in China had limited exposure to English in the classroom and little input after school due to the learning environment. This was not enough to improve senior high school students’ English skills, which caused the lack of enough high-quality input.

4.2.5. Lack of English Native Speakers in the Environment

According to teacher-respondent C, “...lack of native English speakers in our environment and daily life. Chinese EFL learners start learning English in the 3rd grade (of primary education), but have very little access to native English speakers, and some English learners have never even interacted with native English speakers in their daily lives.” Usually, students are able to detect language errors consciously, when they have the opportunity to speak and to practice the language with native speakers. Shortfall of English native speakers in the community has not only impacted the students’ ability to master grammar via speaking but also caused them not be able to detect their grammatical errors through conversations. Furthermore, the education model in China is test-based, although reform has taken place gradually. Still, most students learn English only in English classes, and the teachers are mainly Chinese, who use L1 to teach English most of the time. Consequently, the thinking mode is then dominated by the Chinese way of thinking, so it will produce L1-dominated English, which contributes to errors in writing.

4.2.6. Inappropriate Learning Strategies

Conventional teaching and learning methods in the 21st century classroom negatively affect language acquisition. Teacher-respondent A mentioned that “the students were overly dependent on the teacher and did not have the ability to think

independently, which resulted in passive learning rather than effective language learning. They also do not integrate knowledge, and do not like to summarize, but rather they just memorize the English grammar mechanically, which leads to forgetting easily.” In addition, “most students rely on rote memorization to remember words, which is both time-consuming and inefficient, thus making students bored with English and creating a cycle of nausea. Some of them are unwilling to speak the words loudly, just wait for the teacher to tell them the pronunciation.” (Teacher-respondent C). Therefore, inappropriate learning strategies contributed to a large extent to errors in students’ writings.

4.2.7. Lack of Motivation and Positive Attitude

Lack of motivation and attitude represent another reason for this phenomenon. The typical traits of someone motivated to learn English are goal-directedness, persistence, attention, expectations, desires, and a strong sense of self-efficacy (Gardner 16-19). However, there was an absence of strong motivation among the Chinese students to learn English. “Most Chinese students are not interested in learning English, and they study English just for the examination. He also mentioned that there is a lot of homework for every subject, so they have no other time to study English.” (Teacher-respondent C) From this claim, we can conclude that many students were not strongly motivated. Learners’ attitudes encourage them to work hard to learn the target language in certain circumstances. To put it another way, having a favorable attitude toward the target language, the people who speak it, and the culture associated with it may help you learn it, whereas having a negative attitude will make it harder for you to learn it. As shown in the interview, teacher-respondent E stated that “most students study English for tests because of the Chinese educational system, even though our Chinese students may be friendly to the target language and its speakers. They might believe that English is merely an auxiliary ability and that they won’t have many opportunities to use it in the future because they will pursue various careers, which the majority don’t require in Mainland China.” Therefore, negative attitudes toward English were also a cause of making grammatical errors in writing.

4.2.8. Different Thinking Patterns between Chinese and Westerners

Another possible reason is thinking patterns. Teacher-respondent A mentioned that Chinese and Westerners have completely different thinking patterns, and these students live in a Chinese language environment and therefore have Chinese thinking patterns. According to Yang, Chinese people emphasize the meaningfulness of sentences, and the connection between sentences does not rely on grammar alone, which emphasizes starting from the whole and moving from the whole to the part, forming a holistic Chinese thinking pattern (378-380). Westerners emphasize form, and the sentences are connected mainly by grammatical functions, which emphasize starting from the part and moving from the part to the whole,

forming a Western analytical mode of thinking. The difference in this mode of thinking is manifested in the language order: when native English speaking people express the sequence of time or place units, it is customary to arrange them from small to large, using the part in front and the whole in the back; on the contrary, Chinese people prefer to place them from large to small, using the whole in front and the part in the back. For example, the English sentence “I was born in Jining City, Shandong Province of China.” On the contrary, it should be “I was born in China, Shandong Province, Jining City.” in the Chinese language.

4.2.9. Lack of English Class Hours at Schools

According to Dulay et al., second language exposure “... consists of everything the language learners hear and see when they learn a new language. It might include a large variety of situations—exchanges in restaurants and stores, conversations with friends, watching television, reading street signs and newspapers, as well as classroom activities—or it may be of scarcity, including only language classroom activities and a few books and records” (238-241). However, for Chinese senior high school students, English class is the primary way to learn English. As teacher-respondent A stated, “Chinese high school seniors have to study almost ten subjects, and English is only one of them. With about two to three English classes per week, each class lasts 45 minutes, and high school English involves difficult grammar, so class time is often not enough. As students need to study a lot of subjects, little time for reviewing English and doing exercises after class is left, so the overall lack of study time is one of the reasons why students will make errors.” Chinese senior high school students have limited English class time, so the exposure to English was not enough, which was one of the reasons resulting in making errors in writing.

4.3. *Corrective feedback provided by EFL teachers*

Undoubtedly, instruction helps learners learn a second language, which allows them to avoid or correct past errors. First, the researcher wants to contrast “learning” and “acquisition” in this context. Krashen initially put forward this distinction in his monitor theory (12-18). “Learning” is the process of paying conscious attention to a language to understand and memorize rules, while “acquisition” is a subconscious process when learners use a language for communication (Krashen 10). Thus, based on this distinction, we can conclude that there are two types of instruction: implicit instruction (inductive through the supply of i+1 intelligible information) and explicit instruction (deductive through rule explanation and application). It is impossible to provide learner-centered instruction in China due to the large number of students enrolled in classes. This is because it is typical in Chinese education and impracticable to personalize instruction to each student’s unique needs. Various training modes should be combined, such as implicit or explicit instruction, with pedagogy since they may interact with one another and help enhance learners’ English proficiency.

4.3.1. Explicit Corrective Feedback

According to Ellis, explicit feedback is more effective in eliciting the learner's initial proper use of the structure and their subsequent accurate use (431). Ferris also stated that it might be appropriate for children to perform less well academically when problems like lexical and syntactical mistakes are too complex for students to fix on their own (78). However, from the interview, few teachers chose explicit feedback because it will take a lot of time compared to implicit feedback. Only Teacher-respondent D mentioned that she would give explicit CF on students' compositions to facilitate students' understanding of grammatical errors. She said that "I will give students explicit feedback because it is clearer for my students to understand their errors. If I mark the errors, students will get confused and not correct themselves." Therefore, language teachers should provide more detailed and accurate feedback on their students' grammatical faults in order to assist students to become more grammatically correct and aware. For example, one student makes an error in the sentence "It's vital importance to develop good habits." And the teacher will add "of" before the word "vital" directly in the student's composition and correct it as "It's of vital importance to develop good habits", which is clearer and understandable.

4.3.2. Implicit Corrective Feedback

Contrarily, implicit feedback incorporates students in the editing process, keeps them thinking, and helps them develop ideas and think about how to present their ideas using the proper form. From the interview, most of the teachers preferred implicit CF. Both Teacher-respondents A and E chose implicit CF because of the heavy teaching task and time constraints, so just marking the errors can save a lot of time. These findings can be evidenced from the interviews conducted with the teacher-participants: "Due to the heavy teaching task and time constraint, there is no way to provide feedback to every student's mistakes. I can only pick out some typical problems and talk about them in class, and most of the time, the errors are marked on the essays and scores are given." (Teacher-respondent A). "Most of the time, I will circle the students' errors and give them marks directly." (Teacher-respondent E). As a result, it can be said that implicit feedback occasionally aids learners in correcting their errors. In the long term, it also supports their growth into becoming independent learners who are better able to read their own work critically and reflectively, are more aware of their own errors, and are more able to increase writing correctness through self-awareness of errors and repairing of the errors marked implicitly. For example, in the sentence "Second, don't make friends with every classmates.", the teacher will just circle the word "classmates", reminding students the word is wrong and asking students to correct it themselves.

4.3.3. Both Explicit and Implicit Corrective Feedback

In some cases, English language teachers used explicit and implicit feedback separately in different cases. Teacher-respondent B and C chose both explicit and implicit feedback. “I will use both explicit and implicit. Sometimes, it is not necessary to give explicit feedback on students every writing because some grammatical errors are too common and most of the students will make, then I will explain these errors in class. And appropriate implicit correction promotes students’ brainstorming.” (Teacher-respondent B). “It depends. If the errors are very common in students’ writings, I will not give the correction until we have classes. If the errors are individual, I will correct them directly to prevent students misunderstanding.” (Teacher-respondent C). The teacher-respondents classified the errors into two categories, and the first is a common one that will be explained in class, which will more likely draw students’ attention to them, thus achieving the goal of correcting their errors; the second is an individual one that will be corrected directly. Therefore, both implicit and explicit feedback can be effective if used at the right time and with the proper technique given the learners’ developmental stages. For example, there is one common error in the sentence, “First, I would like to give you some advices.”, so the teacher just marks the word “advices” and will explain it in class. Another sentence, “I am really pleasing that we can be in the same school.”, and this error is not common among students, so the teacher will correct the error directly to avoid ambiguity.

5. DISCUSSION

From the interview, it can be concluded that most teachers prefer implicit feedback. The teachers gave several reasons for choosing implicit feedback. First, it saves time to use this kind of feedback. Second, they want students to think about the answer themselves. This particular finding is in agreement with some studies that learners benefit from indirect feedback since they can autonomously change their work, which allows them to process the language (Ferris 33). Moreover, indirect feedback encourages students to autonomously fix their errors, which helps them learn (Lyster 399).

Third, some grammatical errors are common, which they believe is unnecessary to correct every error. However, according to Nazari, explicit feedback is more successful than implicit feedback in increasing students’ grammatical awareness and correctness because it helps them feel more confident, at ease, and motivated during the learning process (156). According to Nazari, both implicit and explicit CF play an equally important role in expressing similar grammatical constructions, like the present perfect (160-161). It was thus demonstrated that students who received targeted CF were better able to apply the grammar to writing assignments. Although both explicit and implicit CF can help students write more accurately and their respective impacts are equivalent, overt corrective input somewhat outweighs implicit feedback. This finding supports what Ferris and Roberts reported (162). They reported that direct feedback is more beneficial than indirect feedback,

especially for English language learners who are less proficient. Giving weak students immediate feedback may enable them to revise their work properly.

Both explicit and implicit CF can be used to stimulate corrective awareness. The grammar, or the rules that are no longer attended by CF, tends to create grammatical errors if CF falls below a specific level or disappears totally. CF is thereupon essential for the interlanguage development of the learner and, subsequently, for reducing errors. As in this study, the teacher should point out students' errors to provide correct feedback. If necessary, techniques may be adjusted as a result of this procedure. First and foremost, grammatical errors must be carefully examined. If the error cannot be fixed by the students, it will remain in their interlanguage, at which point the teacher will have to rectify it. The teacher may choose not to correct a mistake if it can be fixed by the students and is caused by their lack of concentration or another factor. Secondly, the predicament should be assessed. Teachers should avoid interrupting the learners if they are trying to convey meaning rather than practicing grammar. In a nutshell, the teachers can offer an overall assessment. Thirdly, the learner's stage needs to be taken into account. For the beginner, the teachers can do their best to fix the faults; this will not discourage the learners but will boost their confidence in future communication. As argued by Ellis, explicit feedback at this early stage of learning is more effective in eliciting the learner's immediate appropriate use of the structure (431). Therefore, both explicit and implicit CF help in correcting errors in certain circumstances. CF is unquestionably helpful in the Chinese EFL learning setting, which has poor input and limited possibilities for language use. And when teachers provide CF, learners must pay attention to detect the discrepancies between the feedback and their production so they will genuinely absorb such feedback.

6. CONCLUSION

In short, the most frequent grammatical errors are omission followed by addition and misordering. Internal reasons related to language include overgeneralization, grammatical items unique to English, negative transfer, and lack of sufficient input. External reasons encompass the scarcity of native English speakers in the environment, inappropriate learning strategies, lack of motivation and positive attitudes, differing thinking patterns between Chinese and Western learners, as well as insufficient English instruction hours at schools. Lastly, explicit feedback is preferable when providing CF.

The implication of this study is encouraging the students to pay attention to the errors and to correct them. Foreign language learning is a rather complex cognitive process that involves many complex factors. There are many kinds of language errors in the target language. With the development of Error Analysis Theory, we should have a new understanding of errors and practice foreign language teaching according to the current achievements of theoretical research. In the course of learning, learners' errors should be treated differently, and different measures should be taken to deal with them. Language learners' errors should be regarded as normal

phenomena in language learning, which learners use for acquisition. Additionally, learners' psychology of writing should be emphasized to increase their interest in learning English. In daily writing training, teachers can choose articles and topics that align with learners' interests. Once learners become interested in English, they will be less reluctant to subsequent writing training. On top of that, English teachers should change the approach/ method of teaching writing. Writing training can be enhanced through group cooperation and competitive mechanisms that reward EFL learners for accurately producing English. Ultimately, although both explicit and implicit feedback can reduce learners' linguistic errors and improve their writing accuracy to some extent, the results showed that teachers would be more inclined to use implicit feedback when choosing different types of feedback. Therefore, teachers should be more flexible in using different types of CF and can combine different types of feedback to guide learners' English writing according to their real learning situations.

Furthermore, future research should address several limitations. Firstly, studies should explore the specific functions of feedback in discourse. Secondly, experimental research designs are necessary to measure the impact of feedback on EFL students, grammatical accuracy in writing. Lastly, future studies should thoroughly investigate how EFL students respond to the CF given by their instructors.

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