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Effectiveness of error correction techniques in writing classes: Perspectives of EFL undergraduate students and teachers

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Abstract

This study examines the effectiveness of various error correction techniques employed in EFL writing classes, focusing on the perspectives of undergraduate students and teachers at Mizan Tepi University. The research involved 86 first- and second-year undergraduate EFL students, selected using availability sampling to ensure inclusivity, alongside seven experienced EFL teachers chosen purposively based on their teaching expertise. The study assessed five widely used error correction techniques: direct feedback, indirect feedback, metalinguistic feedback, peer feedback, and self-correction. Data were collected using questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and classroom observations to explore perceptions, preferences, and the effectiveness of each technique. The findings revealed that both students and teachers viewed direct feedback as the most effective for immediate error correction and clarity, particularly for grammar and syntax errors. Indirect and metalinguistic feedback was favored for fostering critical thinking and self-editing skills, while peer feedback and self-correction were less effective due to insufficient student confidence and expertise. The study underlines the importance of tailoring feedback strategies to student proficiency levels and writing objectives. It also highlights the need for training students in peer review and self-correction to enhance their autonomy. The findings contribute to the ongoing discourse on optimizing writing instruction in EFL contexts, providing practical implications for educators seeking to balance error correction with skill development.

Keywords: Error Correction; EFL Writing; Direct Feedback; Peer Feedback; Self-Correction

1. Introduction

Writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) represents a significant challenge for undergraduate students, especially those from non-native English-speaking countries. The complexity of learning to write in a second language involves not only mastering the mechanics of grammar and syntax but also developing the cognitive skills required for organizing thoughts, structuring arguments, and presenting them clearly (Mohammed, 2018). For EFL students, writing skills are essential for academic success, but the process of learning to write in English involves grappling with frequent errors that undermine their ability to communicate effectively (Cheng & Zhang, 2021). Error correction, therefore, plays a pivotal role in the development of writing skills by providing students with feedback to improve their linguistic competence (Van Beuningen et al., 2012).

However, despite its importance, the effectiveness of error correction remains a subject of debate among teachers and researchers. Different error correction techniques, such as direct feedback, indirect feedback, metalinguistic feedback, peer feedback, and self-correction, are commonly used in EFL writing instruction, each with its strengths and challenges (Aghajani & Zoghipour, 2018). While some techniques, like direct feedback, are seen as effective for immediate accuracy, others, such as metalinguistic and peer feedback, encourage students to engage in deeper cognitive processing (Wondim

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et al., 2024). Despite these various approaches, there is limited research on how these techniques function in specific EFL contexts, particularly in non-native English-speaking environments like Ethiopia. Whereas error correction has been a well-explored topic in developed educational settings, the unique challenges faced by students in countries like Ethiopia have not received enough attention in the literature (Wondim et al., 2024). This gap is significant because understanding the specific needs and perceptions of students and teachers in such contexts can lead to more effective teaching strategies and improved student outcomes.

Moreover, error correction not only impacts students' immediate writing accuracy but also influences their long-term development of language skills, motivation, and self-efficacy. If students perceive error correction as useful and relevant to their learning, it can positively affect their attitudes toward writing and foster a sense of ownership over their learning (Tsao et al., 2017). In contrast, ineffective or poorly implemented error correction can lead to frustration, disengagement, and a lack of progress. Given the importance of error correction in shaping students' writing proficiency, it is essential to examine how different techniques are perceived and applied in the EFL context (Cui et al., 2021). The institution's diverse student body, composed of individuals from various linguistic backgrounds, necessitates the use of tailored instructional strategies to meet the needs of all learners. This study, therefore, aims to fill the gap in the literature by providing empirical data from Ethiopia, offering insights into the effectiveness of various error correction techniques in this particular educational context. Error correction has been widely studied in the field of second language acquisition, with research highlighting the different techniques available to teachers and their respective advantages and challenges (Loewen et al., 2009). Direct feedback, for example, is often seen as an effective way to address surface-level errors such as grammar and syntax, providing immediate clarity and correction (Alisoy, 2024).

However, this approach may not foster long-term language acquisition, as it does not encourage students to reflect on their errors and internalize language rules. Indirect feedback, in which teachers highlight errors without providing direct corrections, has been shown to encourage students to engage in self-correction, which can lead to more durable learning outcomes (Shahab & Saeed, 2024). In addition, metalinguistic feedback, which provides students with explanations about why their errors are incorrect, allows them to deepen their understanding of grammar rules and apply them more effectively in their writing (Simard et al., 2015). Peer feedback, which involves students reviewing and providing feedback on each other's work, has also been studied as a way to encourage collaboration and improve writing skills (Nelson & Schunn, 2009). While peer feedback can promote student engagement and critical thinking, its success depends on students' proficiency levels and their ability to provide constructive criticism (DeWaelche, 2015). Finally, self-correction, when guided by teachers, encourages students to take responsibility for their learning and actively monitor their progress. However, this technique requires a certain level of linguistic competence and motivation, which may be difficult for lower-proficiency students to achieve without adequate support (Cahyono & Rosyida, 2016).

While these techniques have been extensively studied, much of the existing research has focused on educational settings in developed countries, and there is a lack of studies addressing error correction in EFL contexts such as Ethiopia. This study addresses this gap by examining the perceptions and effectiveness of various error correction methods among students and teachers at Mizan Tepi University, a setting characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity. By doing so, this research seeks to contribute to a more nuanced understanding of how error correction techniques can be effectively applied in diverse EFL contexts. This study hypothesizes that the effectiveness of error correction techniques is influenced by students' proficiency levels, motivation, and the learning context. It suggests that direct feedback will be most effective for low-proficiency students in correcting surface-level errors such as grammar and syntax.

Error correction is a fundamental aspect of teaching writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts. It serves to enhance students' writing skills by providing feedback on their linguistic errors (Van Beuningen et al., 2012). The effectiveness of various error correction techniques such as direct and indirect feedback, peer correction, and self-correction has been the subject of extensive research. This literature review aims to synthesize findings from recent studies, highlight the advantages and disadvantages of different approaches, and identify gaps in the current understanding of error correction effectiveness. Error correction techniques can be broadly categorized into direct and indirect methods. Direct error correction involves explicitly indicating the error and providing the correct form, while indirect methods signal that an error has occurred without providing the correct answer, prompting students to self-correct (Cui et al., 2021). A study by Nelson and Schunn (2009) found that both techniques significantly improved students' essay-writing skills, although students expressed a preference for direct metalinguistic feedback due to its clarity. Conversely, indirect methods have been shown to foster greater learner autonomy and critical thinking (Simard et al., 2015).

Research comparing the effectiveness of different feedback types suggests that both direct and indirect feedback have unique benefits. For instance, Aghajani and Zoghipour (2018) reported that direct feedback resulted in a higher rate of successful amendments in student writing compared to indirect feedback. However, studies also indicate that students

receiving indirect feedback demonstrated a more significant reduction in error frequency over time (Cahyono & Rosyida, 2016). This suggests that while direct corrections may yield immediate improvements, indirect methods may contribute to long-term learning outcomes by encouraging students to engage more deeply with their writing. In addition to teacher-led correction methods, peer and self-correction techniques have gained traction in EFL classrooms. Peer correction allows students to engage with each other's work, promoting collaborative learning and critical evaluation skills (Cahyono & Rosyida, 2016). A study conducted by Simard et al. (2015) highlighted that incorporating peer feedback not only improved writing skills but also enhanced students' confidence in their abilities. Self-correction encourages learners to take responsibility for their writing, fostering independence and a deeper understanding of language rules (Shahab & Saeed, 2024). However, the effectiveness of these methods can vary based on students' proficiency levels and familiarity with the correction process. Teachers play a crucial role in implementing effective error correction strategies. Research indicates that many educators struggle with balancing comprehensive versus selective feedback due to time constraints and diverse student needs (Shahab & Saeed, 2024).

While comprehensive correction addresses all errors, it may overwhelm students; selective feedback focuses on key areas but may neglect other important aspects of writing (Simard et al., 2015). Teachers' preferences often align with their pedagogical philosophies, leading to varied practices in error correction across different classrooms. The effectiveness of error correction techniques in EFL writing classes is multifaceted and context-dependent. Direct feedback tends to provide immediate clarity and improvement, while indirect methods encourage deeper engagement with language learning. Peer and self-correction techniques offer valuable opportunities for collaborative learning and autonomy but require careful implementation to be effective. Despite substantial research on these topics, gaps remain regarding best practices for integrating various techniques into cohesive instructional strategies. Future research should focus on longitudinal studies to assess the long-term impacts of different error correction methods on student writing proficiency across diverse educational contexts. For intermediate and advanced students, metalinguistic and indirect feedback is expected to be more effective, as these techniques foster self-correction and a deeper understanding of language rules. Peer feedback and self-correction, on the other hand, will require structured guidance to be effective, particularly for students with limited confidence or linguistic competence. This mixed-methods approach provides a comprehensive understanding of both statistical trends and qualitative insights, helping answer the central research question.

How do different error correction techniques impact EFL undergraduate students' writing development, and how are these techniques perceived by students and teachers?

2. Material and Methods

The methodology section provides a comprehensive overview of how the study was conducted, ensuring transparency regarding the methods used and the reliability of the results. This section is organized into subsections to enhance clarity, covering participants, sampling methods, study settings, sample size, data collection methods, and research design.

2.1. Participants of the study

The study involved 93 participants, including 86 EFL students and 7 EFL instructors from Mizan-Tepi University in Ethiopia. The student group comprised 41 second-year and 45 third-year students, selected through availability sampling, all enrolled in the 2023/2024 academic year. The instructors were purposively chosen for their expertise and experience in EFL instruction, offering valuable insights into teaching practices. This diverse participant pool allowed for a comprehensive exploration of perspectives on English language learning and teaching.

2.2. Instruments for data collection

The study utilized three primary instruments for data collection: questionnaires, classroom observations, and semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires were distributed to student participants to gather quantitative and qualitative data on their experiences, attitudes, and challenges in language learning. Classroom observations were conducted during EFL lessons to document teaching practices and student-teacher interactions. Semi-structured interviews were held with the 7 instructors to explore their teaching strategies, perceptions, and challenges. These instruments were pilot-tested and reviewed to ensure validity and reliability, providing a robust foundation for the research.

2.3. Procedure

Data collection was conducted in three stages. First, questionnaires were administered to the 86 students to collect data on their language learning experiences. Next, classroom observations were carried out in real-time instructional settings to capture authentic teaching and learning dynamics. Finally, semi-structured interviews with the 7 instructors provided deeper contextual insights into their professional practices and challenges. With participants' consent, all interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and analyzed thematically. This systematic approach ensured precise data collection and in-depth analysis.

2.4. Research Setting

The research was conducted at Mizan-Tepi University, a prominent institution in Southwest Ethiopia, with campuses in Mizan-Aman, Tepi, and Aman. The study focused on second and third-year undergraduate EFL students from the English Language and Literature program. The university's vibrant academic environment provided an ideal setting for examining language learning and teaching practices.

2.5. Method of Data Analysis

The data analysis combined both quantitative and qualitative methods. Descriptive statistics were applied to summarize student questionnaire responses, while thematic analysis was used to interpret qualitative data from classroom observations and interviews. Patterns and themes were identified to highlight key findings related to the experiences and challenges of EFL students and instructors. This dual approach ensured a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives.

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1 Students' perception and preference on the effectiveness of error correction techniques in writing classes

Question	Strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree
I find error correction techniques helpful for improving my writing skills	2 (2.3%)	4 (4.7%)	8 (9.3%)	30 (34.9%)	42(48.8%)
I prefer receiving direct feedback over indirect feedback	1 (1.2%)	3 (3.5%)	5 (5.8%)	25 (29.1%)	52 (60.5%)
Peer feedback is valuable for my writing development	4 (4.7%)	6(7.0%)	10 (11.6%)	20 (23.3%)	46 (53.5%)
I feel more confident in my writing after receiving feedback from my teacher	3 (3.5%)	5(5.8%)	7 (8.1%)	25 (29.1%)	46 (53.5%)
I understand the corrections made by my teacher and can apply them to future tasks	2 (2.3%)	4(4.7%)	6(7%)	28 (32.6%)	46 (53.5%)
Immediate feedback helps me learn better than delayed feedback	1 (1.2%)	2(2.3%)	10(11.6%)	30 (34.9%)	43 (50.0%)
I prefer receiving feedback in written form rather than verbal discussions	5(5.8%)	10(11.6%)	15 (17.4%)	25 (29.1%)	31(36%)

A survey by the researchers

As shown in Table 1 above, the analysis of students' perceptions and preferences regarding error correction techniques in writing classes highlights several important trends. For the first question, a significant majority of students, 42 (48.8%), agreed that error correction techniques help improve their writing skills, while 30 (34.9%) somewhat agreed. This indicates that most students value these techniques as essential for their academic development. Only a small percentage, 2(2.3%) and 4(4.7%) disagreed, suggesting that the effectiveness of error correction is widely recognized among learners. This finding aligns with Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012), who emphasize that corrective feedback, particularly when focused on specific errors, can significantly improve grammatical accuracy and overall writing proficiency. Teachers should therefore consider incorporating structured error correction methods into their teaching practices to enhance students' writing abilities while fostering a foundation for lifelong learning.

The second question highlights that 52(60.5%) of students prefer receiving direct feedback over indirect feedback, with an additional 25(29.1%) moderately supporting this preference. This strong inclination toward direct feedback suggests that students appreciate explicit guidance that identifies errors and provides solutions. In contrast, only a small minority, 1(1.2%) and 3 (3.5%), expressed disagreement with this approach. Hosseiny (2014) supports this view by arguing that direct feedback is more effective because it eliminates ambiguity, allowing students to focus on correcting their mistakes without confusion. This preference underscores the importance of clarity in communication between teachers and students, as direct feedback not only aids in immediate error correction but also fosters a supportive learning environment where students feel guided and empowered. Regarding the third question, 46(53.5%) of students agreed that peer feedback is valuable for their writing development, while 20(23.3%) moderately agreed. This indicates that more than half of the respondents recognize the benefits of collaborative learning through peer interaction. Only a small fraction, 4(4.7%) and 6(7%) disagreed with this notion, suggesting that peer feedback is generally well-received in writing classes. Wei and Liu (2024) assert that peer assessment fosters critical thinking and enhances writing quality through mutual learning and shared perspectives. Integrating peer feedback into writing instruction not only encourages active participation but also cultivates essential skills such as collaboration and constructive criticism, which are vital in both academic and professional settings.

For the fourth question, over half of the respondents, 46(53.5%), reported feeling more confident in their writing after receiving feedback from their teacher, with an additional 25(29.1%) somewhat agreeing. This demonstrates the pivotal role teachers play in boosting students' confidence through constructive feedback. Only a small percentage, 3(3.5%) and 5(5.8%) disagreed, indicating that teacher feedback is widely perceived as beneficial for building self-assurance in writing tasks. Javaid et al. (2024) highlight similar findings, noting that effective teacher feedback not only improves performance but also enhances motivation among learners. These results illustrate how teacher-student interactions can significantly impact student outcomes; when learners feel supported by their teachers, they are more likely to embrace challenges and take risks in their writing. The fifth question reveals that 46(53.5%) of students believe they understand the corrections made by their teacher and can apply them to future tasks, while 28 (32.6%) expressed moderate agreement with this statement. This suggests that most students find teacher corrections clear and actionable, which is crucial for long-term learning success. Only a small minority, 2(2.3%) and 4 (4.7%) disagreed, indicating that clarity in teacher feedback is generally not an issue for most learners. Nowbakht and Shahnazari (2015) emphasize the importance of comprehensible feedback, arguing that it enables students to internalize lessons and improve their future performance. When corrections are clear and tied to practical applications, learners are better equipped to develop resilience and adopt a proactive approach to improving their skills.

Table 2 students' perception and preference for the effectiveness of error correction techniques in writing classes

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	neutral	agree	Strongly agree
The types of errors addressed in class are relevant to my writing needs	2 (2.3%)	3(3.5%)	9 (10.5%)	30(34.9%)	42(48.8%)
I feel that my teacher's experience positively affects the quality of feedback	1 (1.2%)	2(2.3%)	10 (11.6%)	28(32.6%)	45(52.3%)
I believe that error correction techniques contribute significantly to my learning process in writing classes.	10(11%)	3 (4%)	7 (8)%	26 (30)%	49(57)%
Feedback provided motivates me to improve my writing skills further	0(0)%	4 (4)%	10 (11)%	25(29)%	47 (54)%
The instructions given for correcting errors are clear and easy to understand	0(0)%	6 (7)%	12 (14)%	25 (29)%	43(50)%
I feel comfortable asking questions about the feedback I receive from my teacher	0 (0)%	5 (6)%	15(17)%	20(23)%	46(54)%
The frequency of feedback I receive is adequate for my learning needs	0(0)%	6 (7)%	12 (14)%	25(29)%	43(50)%
I am satisfied with the overall quality of feedback provided in this writing course	0(0)%	4 (4)%	12 (14)%	25(29)%	45(52)%

A survey by the researchers

The sixth question shows a preference for immediate feedback over delayed feedback, with half of the respondents 43(50%) strongly agreeing and 30(34.9%) somewhat agreeing with this preference. This indicates that timely responses to student work are highly valued as they allow learners to make adjustments while the material is still fresh in their minds. Only a small percentage, 1(1.2%) and 2(2.3%) disagreed with this approach, highlighting its effectiveness in fostering learning retention and application. Hosseiny (2014) emphasizes that immediate feedback enhances learning outcomes by providing real-time opportunities for improvement, making it an essential component of effective teaching strategies. Finally, for the seventh question, 31(36%) of students preferred receiving written feedback rather than verbal discussions, while 25(29.1%) moderately agreed with this preference. This suggests that written feedback is perceived as more accessible and easier to review compared to verbal discussions during class time or one-on-one sessions with teachers. A smaller proportion of respondents 5(5.8%) and 10(11.6%) disagreed with this preference, indicating some variability in how students perceive different feedback formats based on their learning styles or needs. Al-Sawalha (2016) observes that written comments allow students to reflect on their mistakes at their own pace, making them a valuable tool for self-directed learning.

As presented in Table 2 above, the analysis of students' perceptions and preferences regarding the effectiveness of error correction techniques in writing classes uncovers several key insights. For the first question, 42 (48.8%) of students agreed that the types of errors addressed in class are relevant to their writing needs, while 30 (34.9%) somewhat agreed. This indicates that a majority of students find the focus on specific errors to apply to their writing development. Only a small percentage, 2 (2.3%) and 3 (3.5%) disagreed, suggesting that most learners feel that the error correction process is tailored to their individual needs. This finding is consistent with the views of Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012), who argue that targeted error correction can significantly enhance students' writing skills by addressing relevant issues. The second question highlights that 45 (52.3%) of students feel that their teacher's experience positively affects the quality of feedback they receive, with an additional 28 (32.6%) somewhat agreeing. This strong endorsement suggests that students value the expertise of their instructors in providing constructive and insightful feedback. Only a small number, 1(1.2%) and 2 (2.3%) disagreed with this sentiment. Hosseiny (2014) supports this view by stating that experienced teachers are more adept at identifying key areas for improvement, which can lead to more effective learning outcomes. The data indicate that teacher experience plays a crucial role in shaping students' perceptions of feedback quality.

In response to the third question, 49 (57%) of students believe that error correction techniques contribute significantly to their learning process in writing classes, while 26 (30%) somewhat agree with this statement. This overwhelming majority demonstrates a strong belief in the value of error correction as an integral part of their educational experience. Only a small percentage, 10 (11%) and 3 (4%) disagreed, indicating that most students recognize the importance of these techniques in fostering their writing skills. The fourth question reveals that 47 (54%) of students feel motivated to improve their writing skills further due to the feedback provided, with an additional 25 (29%) somewhat agreeing. This indicates that feedback not only serves as a corrective measure but also acts as a source of encouragement for students to enhance their abilities. No respondents indicated strong disagreement, reinforcing the notion that effective feedback can inspire growth and improvement in writing skills.

Martin (2008) emphasizes this motivational aspect, highlighting how constructive feedback can lead to increased student engagement and effort. Regarding the fifth question, 43(50%) of students stated that the instructions given for correcting errors are clear and easy to understand, while 25(29%) somewhat agreed with this assessment. This suggests that clarity in error correction instructions is generally well-received among students, with only a small percentage of 0% for strong disagreement indicating confusion or lack of understanding. Hosseiny (2014) emphasizes the importance of comprehensible feedback in facilitating student learning; thus, clear instructions are essential for effective error correction processes. The sixth question shows that 46(54%) of students feel comfortable asking questions about the feedback they receive from their teacher, while 20 (23%) somewhat agree with this sentiment. This indicates a supportive classroom environment where students feel empowered to seek clarification and engage in dialogue about their learning process.

In response to the seventh question, half of the respondents 43(50%) believe that the frequency of feedback they receive is adequate for their learning needs, while 25(29%) somewhat agree with this assessment. The absence of strong disagreement suggests general satisfaction with feedback frequency among students. Javaid et al. (2024) observe that regular feedback is crucial for maintaining student engagement and facilitating continuous improvement; thus, adequate frequency is vital for effective learning. Finally, for the eighth question, 45(52%) of students expressed satisfaction with the overall quality of feedback provided in this writing course, while 25(29%) somewhat agreed with this statement. This indicates a positive perception regarding the quality of feedback received throughout the course, with only a small percentage of 0% for strong disagreement expressing dissatisfaction. This aligns with Duijnhouwer et al. (2012) findings on how high-quality feedback can significantly enhance student performance and motivation. In

conclusion, Table 2 illustrates clear patterns in students' perceptions regarding various aspects of error correction techniques in writing classes. The findings emphasize the importance of relevant error identification, teacher experience, clarity in instructions, motivational feedback, and adequate frequency all crucial elements for fostering effective writing development among learners.

3.1. Results from teachers' interview

The findings from the seven teachers (identified as T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T6, and T7) showed consistent perspectives on feedback methods in EFL contexts. The teachers viewed direct feedback as the most effective for immediate error correction and clarity, particularly for grammar and syntax errors. Indirect feedback and metalinguistic feedback were favored for fostering critical thinking and self-editing skills, while peer feedback and self-correction were seen as less effective due to insufficient student confidence and expertise. When discussing the effectiveness of error correction strategies, all seven teachers agreed that direct feedback is the most effective approach for addressing immediate errors in students' speaking and writing. T1 emphasized that direct correction provides clarity and ensures students recognize their mistakes right away, particularly for grammar and vocabulary errors. Similarly, T2 noted that direct feedback is especially useful for beginner-level learners who may struggle to identify their errors. T3 added that direct feedback is essential for time-sensitive corrections during speaking activities. However, T4 and T5 advocated for combining direct feedback with indirect feedback, such as providing clues or prompts to encourage students to think critically about their errors. T6 highlighted the importance of metalinguistic feedback, where explanations about the rules behind errors are provided, stating that this approach fosters long-term learning.

Meanwhile, T7 pointed out that while direct feedback is effective for accuracy, it should be balanced with opportunities for self-correction to promote independence. These responses align with Duijnhouwer et al. (2012) findings that direct feedback enhances grammatical accuracy while indirect approaches build critical thinking. The teachers unanimously stressed the importance of delivering corrections in a way that motivates students rather than discouraging them when asked how they balance error correction with maintaining a positive classroom environment. T3 shared how they use positive reinforcement alongside corrections by praising what students did well before addressing errors. Similarly, T1 mentioned using humor to make corrections feel less intimidating. T4 emphasized the use of soft language when correcting errors, such as saying "Let's try this way" instead of pointing out mistakes directly. On the other hand, T5 highlighted the importance of timing, suggesting that corrections should sometimes be delayed until after the activity to avoid interrupting fluency or embarrassing students in front of their peers. Both T6 and T7 agreed that creating a supportive environment where students feel safe to make mistakes is crucial for maintaining motivation.

When asked about adapting feedback techniques to accommodate different learning styles or proficiency levels, all seven teachers highlighted the importance of tailoring their approaches based on individual student needs. T1 explained how they provide direct corrections for lower-level students who need explicit guidance but use indirect prompts for advanced learners to encourage self-discovery. Similarly, T2 shared how they use visual aids or written comments for visual learners while offering verbal explanations for auditory learners. T3 emphasized adapting the tone and depth of feedback based on students' confidence levels, noting that shy students often benefit from private written comments rather than public corrections.

Meanwhile, T4 and T5 discussed using metalinguistic explanations to help analytical learners understand the rules behind their mistakes. Both T6 and T7 highlighted the importance of observing how students respond to different types of feedback over time and adjusting their methods accordingly. These responses align with Duijnhouwer et al. (2012), who advocate for differentiated feedback strategies to meet diverse learner needs. The teachers shared various strategies to ensure that students understand and apply feedback effectively when discussing how they achieve this goal. T1 emphasized conducting follow-up activities, such as asking students to rewrite corrected sentences or paragraphs. Similarly, T5 discussed organizing one-on-one sessions where they review corrections with individual students to clarify misunderstandings. Both T2 and T3 highlighted the importance of giving specific examples alongside corrections so that students can see how to apply them in future tasks.

On the other hand, T4 shared how they encourage students to ask questions during or after receiving feedback to ensure clarity. Both T6 and T7 stressed the role of repetition in reinforcing learning, suggesting that recurring errors should be addressed multiple times until mastery is achieved. These strategies reflect Henderson et al. (2019) assertion that effective feedback must be actionable and accompanied by opportunities for practice. The responses regarding peer feedback were mixed but insightful when discussing its role in EFL classrooms. While all teachers acknowledged its potential benefits, most expressed concerns about its limitations. For example, T1 noted that peer feedback can be useful for fostering collaboration but often lacks accuracy due to limited student expertise. Similarly, T2 observed that many

students lack confidence in providing constructive criticism to their peers. Both T3 and T4 emphasized the need for training students on how to give effective peer feedback before implementing it in class activities.

On the other hand, T5 shared a positive experience where structured peer review sessions led to improved writing outcomes among advanced learners. However, both T6 and T7 argued that peer feedback works best as a supplementary tool rather than a primary method of error correction due to its variability in quality. Thus, these interviews reveal a nuanced understanding among EFL teachers regarding error correction techniques. While direct feedback was consistently favored for its clarity and immediacy, indirect approaches such as metalinguistic explanations were valued for promoting critical thinking skills. The teachers also highlighted the importance of adapting feedback methods based on individual student needs while maintaining a supportive classroom environment. Although peer feedback was recognized as a potentially valuable tool, its effectiveness was seen as limited without proper guidance or training.

3.2. Results from classroom observation

To gain insights into the effectiveness of error correction techniques in writing classes, I observed seven teachers using a structured checklist. The observations focused on the consistency of applying error correction methods, the clarity and constructiveness of feedback, the encouragement of self-correction, the use of peer feedback, and student engagement. The findings reveal both strengths and areas for improvement in how these techniques are implemented. The observations showed that five out of seven teachers consistently applied error correction techniques, such as direct feedback, indirect feedback, and peer review. This consistency is essential for creating a structured and predictable learning environment where students can rely on regular feedback to improve their writing. However, two teachers faced challenges due to time constraints and varying lesson objectives, which occasionally disrupted the consistent use of these techniques. This indicates a need for better time management or lesson planning to ensure that error correction remains a key focus in every writing session.

Six teachers provided clear and constructive feedback on students' writing errors, which is critical for helping students understand their mistakes and how to correct them. Clear feedback was particularly effective in addressing grammar and syntax issues, as noted during the observations. However, one teacher occasionally struggled with providing specific and actionable feedback, which limited its effectiveness. This highlights the importance of detailed and targeted feedback that not only identifies errors but also offers guidance on how to improve. Four teachers actively encouraged students to self-correct their errors or reflect on the feedback provided. This practice fosters independence and critical thinking among learners. However, three teachers observed that many students were hesitant to engage in self-correction due to a lack of confidence or fear of making further mistakes. This suggests that additional support is needed to build students' confidence in identifying and correcting their errors. Strategies such as guided self-correction exercises or modeling reflective practices could help address this issue.

Only three teachers regularly incorporated peer feedback or collaborative activities for error correction into their lessons. While peer feedback has the potential to enhance collaborative learning and provide diverse perspectives on writing, it was underutilized by most teachers due to time constraints or concerns about students' ability to give constructive critiques. Teachers who used peer feedback noted that some students lacked the confidence or expertise to provide meaningful input. To improve this practice, structured peer review sessions with clear guidelines and teacher support could be introduced. Five teachers observed high levels of student engagement when feedback was clear, constructive, and actionable. Students appeared motivated to improve their writing when they understood the corrections made by their teachers. However, two teachers noted variability in motivation levels among students, particularly those who struggled with self-correction or found it difficult to apply feedback effectively. This underscores the importance of differentiated instruction tailored to meet diverse student needs while fostering intrinsic motivation through personalized goals and progress tracking. These observations highlight a generally positive implementation of techniques such as direct and indirect feedback. However, challenges remain in encouraging self-correction, implementing peer feedback effectively, and maintaining consistent student motivation. Addressing these issues through professional development for teachers, structured peer review processes, and strategies to build student confidence will be crucial for improving outcomes in writing instruction.

This study investigates students' perceptions and preferences regarding error correction techniques in writing classes, alongside teachers' perspectives on the effectiveness of these methods. The findings reveal several important insights that align with existing literature while also highlighting areas for further exploration. The analysis indicates that a significant number of students recognize error correction techniques as beneficial for improving their writing skills. This finding supports the work of Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012), who argue that targeted corrective feedback can significantly enhance grammatical accuracy and overall writing proficiency. The recognition of the effectiveness of these

techniques suggests that students value structured feedback as a critical component of their academic development. Students expressed a strong preference for direct feedback over indirect feedback, valuing explicit guidance that identifies errors and provides actionable solutions. This preference underscores the importance of clarity in teacher-student communication, as direct feedback eliminates ambiguity and allows students to focus on correcting their mistakes effectively. Duijnhouwer et al. (2012) support this view by emphasizing that direct feedback fosters a supportive learning environment where students feel guided and empowered. However, while direct feedback is highly effective for immediate error correction, it may not fully address the need for critical thinking and self-editing skills. Teachers noted the importance of balancing direct feedback with indirect approaches, such as providing prompts or metalinguistic explanations, to encourage deeper engagement with the learning process.

Peer feedback was generally well-received by many students, indicating an appreciation for collaborative learning through peer interaction. Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012) assert that peer assessment fosters critical thinking and enhances writing quality through mutual learning and shared perspectives. However, teachers highlighted challenges in implementing peer feedback effectively due to varying levels of student confidence and expertise. This discrepancy suggests that while peer feedback has potential benefits, its success relies on appropriate training and structured guidance from teachers. The role of teacher feedback in boosting student confidence emerged as a key theme in this study. Many students reported feeling more confident in their writing after receiving constructive feedback from their teachers. This finding aligns with Henderson et al. (2019), who note that effective teacher feedback not only improves performance but also enhances motivation among learners. When learners feel supported by their teachers, they are more likely to embrace challenges and take risks in their writing tasks. The preference for immediate feedback over delayed responses was another significant finding. Students valued timely corrections that allowed them to make adjustments while the material was still fresh in their minds.

Martin (2008) emphasizes that immediate feedback enhances learning retention and application, making it an essential component of effective teaching strategies. However, balancing immediacy with thoughtful delivery remains a challenge for teachers, particularly in large classrooms where individualized attention may not always be feasible. Additionally, the findings revealed a preference for written feedback rather than verbal discussions. Students perceived written comments as more accessible and easier to review at their own pace, facilitating self-directed learning. Wei and Liu (2024) support this notion by highlighting that written feedback allows students to reflect on their errors independently. Interviews with teachers corroborated these findings, revealing a consensus on the effectiveness of direct feedback for addressing immediate errors. Teachers emphasized the need to combine direct methods with opportunities for self-correction and metalinguistic explanations to foster long-term learning. They also highlighted the importance of delivering corrections in a manner that motivates rather than discourages students, using strategies such as positive reinforcement, humor, and soft language to create a safe learning environment.

Despite these positive insights, several challenges were identified throughout the study. For instance, dissatisfaction with classroom writing time was prevalent among students, indicating potential inadequacies in time allocation for writing activities within the curriculum. Additionally, while most students adhered to structured writing processes such as prewriting and revising, some reported inconsistencies due to time management issues or lack of organizational skills.

The limitations of this study must be acknowledged. The reliance on self-reported data may introduce biases, such as over- or underestimation of preferences and abilities. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the research restricts its capacity to capture changes over time or evaluate the long-term effects of error correction techniques on writing proficiency. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the critical role of effective error correction techniques in improving EFL students' writing skills, while highlighting the need for tailored interventions to meet individual learner needs. The findings stress the importance of direct, immediate, comprehensible, and written feedback from both teachers and peers in fostering writing development and boosting learners' confidence. Future research should examine the long-term impact of these techniques on student outcomes and explore strategies to overcome challenges such as limited classroom time and varying student motivation levels.

4. Conclusion

The findings presented above provide a comprehensive overview of students' perceptions and preferences regarding the effectiveness of error correction techniques in writing classes, highlighting key areas that contribute to the development of writing skills. The data shows that students value error correction techniques that are relevant to their needs, with a significant majority indicating that the focus on specific errors enhances their writing abilities. Furthermore, the positive influence of teacher experience on the quality of feedback received by students reinforces the

importance of expertise in the feedback process. Students also recognize the crucial role of error correction in their learning process and express motivation to improve their writing skills as a result of the feedback provided.

The clarity of error correction instructions and the supportive classroom environment also emerged as important factors in ensuring effective feedback. A substantial portion of students reported feeling comfortable asking questions about feedback, which suggests a healthy teacher-student rapport that encourages dialogue and clarification. Additionally, the adequate frequency of feedback and students' overall satisfaction with its quality emphasize the importance of consistent and actionable feedback in fostering writing development. Teacher interviews further supported these findings, with a consensus on the effectiveness of direct feedback, while also acknowledging the value of indirect feedback and metalinguistic explanations for promoting deeper understanding and self-editing. Teachers emphasized the need for a balance between different types of feedback to accommodate varying student needs and to maintain a positive classroom environment conducive to learning. Classroom observations revealed the importance of consistent application of feedback methods and the role of clear, constructive feedback in motivating students. However, challenges such as limited use of peer feedback, student hesitation in self-correction, and variations in student engagement were identified, suggesting areas for improvement in both teaching strategies and classroom management.

Overall, this study underlines the importance of well-structured, relevant, and timely error correction techniques in enhancing students' writing skills. The findings advocate for a balanced approach that incorporates direct and indirect feedback methods, tailored to individual student needs, and supported by a motivating and positive classroom environment. Addressing the identified challenges and continuously refining feedback strategies can further improve the effectiveness of error correction techniques, ultimately fostering student growth and confidence in their writing abilities. Future research should explore the long-term impacts of these techniques and the development of effective professional training for teachers to address the evolving needs of diverse learners.

Compliance with ethical standards

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Data Availability Statement

Data is available upon request to the corresponding author.

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Statement of ethical approval

Every study involving human participants must be evaluated by the Ethical Clearance Committee Board before proceeding. The current study was reviewed and approved by the Ethical Clearance Committee Board of Mizan Tepi University (Reference No (MTU/IRB/155/2024). Participants were also told they could leave the study whenever they wanted.

Statement of informed consent

Participation was completely voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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