

การศึกษาการตรวจแก้งานเขียนของอาจารย์ต่องานเขียนของนักศึกษา

The Study of Teachers' Indirect Corrective Feedback on Students' Composition:

How Explicit Should It Be?

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Abstract

This study investigated the two types of the indirect corrective feedback on students' written compositions, to find out whether the students in the controlled group, who received code error feedback, and the students in the experimental group, who received underlined, not coded error feedback, were different in terms of their ability to correct their own errors. The further step was to look at differences across error types in students' ability to self-correct. The subjects consisted of 16 second-year students who were studying in *Paragraph and Composition Writing* at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus. The data were derived from six pieces of the subjects' written papers. The findings of the study can be summarized as follows:

It was found out that the performance of students, both in controlled group and experimental group was not significantly different. This was because although the students received different kind of feedback, their ability to self-correct the focused errors turned out to be similar. The results seemed evident in that the means of the number of the errors made as well as the means of the amount of errors corrected in both groups were not different, according to the t-test result. The highest number of errors committed by students in code and no-code groups fell into the errors in subject-verb agreement. The type of errors that ranked fifth, the lowest number of errors made by both groups, belonged to word order. In addition, the errors that the students in both groups could correct the most were the errors in subject-verb agreement, and as for the least, they were the errors in word order. In addition, most of the students expressed their favorable views on the teacher's indirect feedback to teacher's correction. They pointed

out that through the indirect feedback, they were encouraged to exercise their thinking skills and apply their prior knowledge. They further revealed that they wanted to exploit their ability to handle their own errors rather than having the teacher take major part in the correction process.

Keywords: Writing, Corrective Feedback, Indirect Feedback, Code and No-code Feedback

บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาการตรวจแก้งานเขียนของอาจารย์ผู้สอนต่องานเขียนของนักศึกษา เพื่อเปรียบเทียบความสามารถของนักศึกษาในการแก้ไขข้อผิดพลาดทางไวยากรณ์ในการเขียนของตนเอง หลังจากได้รับผลย้อนกลับแบบมีรหัส (code feedback) และแบบไม่มีรหัส (no code feedback) จากผู้สอน และเพื่อศึกษาความแตกต่างในความสามารถในการแก้ไขข้อผิดพลาดด้วยตนเองหลังจากได้รับผลย้อนกลับที่ต่างกัน โดยมีกลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักศึกษามหาวิทยาลัยสงขลานครินทร์ วิทยาเขตปัตตานี ชั้นปีที่ 2 ซึ่งลงทะเบียนเรียนในรายวิชา *Paragraph and Composition Writing*

การศึกษาพบว่าความสามารถของนักศึกษาทั้งในกลุ่มที่ได้รับผลย้อนกลับงานเขียนแบบมีรหัสและไม่มีรหัส ไม่แตกต่างกันอย่างมีนัยสำคัญ โดยพบว่าค่าเฉลี่ยของจำนวนข้อผิดพลาดที่เกิดขึ้นและค่าเฉลี่ยของจำนวนข้อผิดพลาดที่นักศึกษาสามารถแก้ไขได้ไม่มีความแตกต่างกัน จำนวนข้อผิดพลาดที่พบมากที่สุดคือ subject-verb agreement ส่วนข้อผิดพลาดที่พบน้อยที่สุดคือ word order ทั้งนี้ประเภทของข้อผิดพลาดที่นักศึกษาแก้ไขได้มากที่สุดคือสองประเภทนี้ตามลำดับ นักศึกษาส่วนมากแสดงความพอใจต่อวิธีการให้ผลย้อนกลับของผู้สอน โดยให้เหตุผลว่าการได้รับผลย้อนกลับทั้งสองแบบช่วยให้ได้ฝึกทักษะการคิด และประยุกต์ให้ความรู้ที่เรียนมา นอกจากนี้ นักศึกษายังต้องการมีบทบาทในการแก้ไขข้อผิดพลาดของตนเองที่เกิดขึ้นก่อนให้ผู้สอนแก้ไข

คำสำคัญ: การเขียน การตรวจแก้งานเขียน การให้ผลย้อนกลับทางอ้อม

การให้ผลย้อนกลับแบบมีรหัสและแบบไม่มีรหัส

I. Introduction

The issue of teacher's corrective feedback on FL writing causes controversy among teacher themselves and researchers. The controversy continues as whether teachers' grammatical corrective feedback is still necessary and useful for students' writing (Truscott, 1996 ; Ferris, 1999, Truscott, 1999). At the same time, most studies on error correction in FL and L2 classes have shown that students who received error corrective feedback from teachers improve both in accuracy and overall quality of their writing over time (Lalande ; 1982 ; Bitchener et al.; 2005 ; Ferris, 2001). Research has suggested that L2 learners believe that teacher feedback is useful and can help them improve their writing (Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 1998), in addition, students attach much greater importance to teacher feedback than other types of feedback, such as peer correction or self-evaluation (Saito, 1994 ; Yang, Badger & Yu, 2006 ; Zhang, 1995).

One area which is still not sufficiently examined is the level of explicitness that is proper for error feedback. Especially, when teachers mark students' errors, there rise such questions as 'Do they need to indicate the types of errors made by the students (e.g. wrong verb tense, subject-verb agreement, run on, etc.)?' or 'Is it already enough for the teachers to simply circle or underline the locations of errors leaving those errors for the students to diagnose and correct them on their

own?'. This seems to be an important and intriguing question since labeling an error by type means more time-consuming job for teachers than just locating the area of errors to let students know that an error has been made. When the students are required to find out the types of errors of their own, they have to utilize their prior grammatical knowledge. Their critical thinking is, then, promoted.

Thus, in order to find out the level of explicitness required for giving error feedback on students' writing, this research study was conducted. The issue of coded versus uncoded feedback in a controlled experimental study was the main concern of this research study.

Research Questions

This research attempts to answer the following two questions:

1. Are there differences in students' ability to self-correct errors across two feedback types (codes and no codes)?
2. Are there differences across error types in students' ability to self-correct?

Participants

The subjects of the study comprised 16 second-year students who enrolled in section 05 of *417-233 Paragraph and Composition Writing* in the first semester of the academic year 2007 at Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus.

This course is one of the compulsory courses, which are required for students majoring in English. There were five sections for this course and the number of students in each section ranges from 14 to 25. All subject students studied *417-231: Grammar I* in the second semester of the academic year 2006.

In addition, the students participating in this study were systematically selected by using their grade in *417-231 Grammar I* of the academic year 2006. The grades used as the criteria of the selection are C, C+, B, B+ and A. This is because the students obtaining these mentioned grades are considered competent enough to be able to self-correct their own errors. In the actual instructional context, section 05 is the experimental group and was taught by one of the researchers and the rest were taught by other instructors who were not involved in this study.

Research Instruments

The data of this study were obtained from the subjects' written compositions. This was done by assigning the subjects to write in-class compositions. The length of each composition was 150-170 words and allotted time was 50 minutes. Each of the subjects had to write six compositions. They were given some useful vocabulary with Thai equivalents and the beginning of the story, which were used as a writing prompt, and told to write a

composition within the time allotted to them. There were five focused errors in this study: parts of speech, word orders, subject-verb agreement, verb forms, and sentence structures. Any other types of errors will not be taken into account. As for the subjects who could not correct their errors when they were asked to correct those errors in class, a second chance was given to them by carrying out a follow-up interview outside class in order to assess whether or not those subjects had ability in self-correction. During the interview, the researchers asked students to re-examine and recorrect the errors that they were incapable of correcting in class. In addition, in case the students still failed to correct those errors, they were required to explain the reason(s) why they could not correct them.

II. Methodology

The 16 subjects were evenly divided into two treatment groups: code and no code. During the first two weeks, there was the orientation of the courses. The teacher informed subjects in both groups about the research, its objectives as well as the treatment which was given to them, and made some grammatical revision, especially the five focused errors (parts of speech, word orders, subject-verb agreement, verb forms, and sentence structures) and the ways to correct them. The subjects were assigned to write an in-class paper, 50 minute composition related to the topic

informed in the course syllabus. Some helpful vocabulary with Thai equivalent and the beginning of story were provided for them as a writing prompt. While writing, students were not allowed to use dictionaries, grammar books, or speak with one another. All hand written papers of the subjects were photocopied so that it would be easier to work with during both interview and analysis. After that, The researchers gave feedback towards the subjects' papers in accordance with their groups. The code group had all errors in five categories underlined and coded by the researcher while the no code group had all errors in the same categories underlined but not coded. Approximately one week after the compositions had been written, all the subjects received their written papers back, and were asked to spend 30 minutes to self-correct their errors in class. The corrected papers were collected and taken to examine and compare with the first drafts. For those who fail to self-correct their errors, a chance was given to them in order to let them try correcting the errors again during the follow-up interview after class. In addition, those who still failed to correct the errors during the interview had to give reasons why they cannot correct their own errors. The subjects repeatedly followed the same pattern until they had completed six papers.

III. Findings and Discussions

Subjects in the code and no-code groups showed a slight difference in their ability in self-editing their own errors. Table 1 reveals the total number of the five target errors made by the code and no-code groups, the total number of errors they were able to correct, and the percentage of errors successfully corrected.

Table 1 : Numbers of Error Made and Corrected by Code and No-Code Groups

Code			No-Code		
Total N. of Focused Errors	Total N. of Errors Corrected	%	Total N. of Focused Errors	Total N. of Errors Corrected	%
350	209	59.71	277	163	58.84

Subjects in the code group committed 350 errors and they were capable of correcting 209 errors. The percentage of the corrected errors out of the total errors made is 59.71. As for the subjects in the no-code group, they made 277 errors and could correct 163 errors. The percentage of no-code subjects' corrected errors equals 58.84. It can be noticed that there is a little difference in the percentages of correcting success of the code and no-code groups. That is to say, the percentage of error corrected by the code group (59.71%) is slightly higher than that of the no-code group (58.84%) In spite of the fact that the percentage of errors successfully resolved by subjects of the no-code group is lower, the subjects make fewer errors than those of the code group. This is probably due to the no-code subjects' increasing awareness and carefulness when writing, which gained through the learning process and the no-code type of feedback given to them.

However, the lower number of errors found in written papers of subjects in the no-code group did not reflect the improvement in their writing ability since there was unstable development

in their writing performance in subsequent compositions. Several errors which were committed, identified, and successfully edited by subjects still recurred in the same subjects' later pieces of writing and sometimes were left unresolved. This indicated that the subjects did not fully master and apply their linguistic knowledge, as well as develop their writing skill. This sort of situation also happened to the subjects in the code group who also showed unsteady progress in their performance, both in reducing their errors when writing and in their self editing the focused errors after receiving the teacher's feedback. There are two possible factors responsible for subjects' unpredictable performance. The first one is that the level of difficulty of each composition, in terms of contents, vocabulary, types of writings, etc. was uncontrollable. This is because the research was conducted in an actual class and the course had to be run in accordance with the syllabus, which sequenced the content of the course from general topics to more complicated ones. All compositions; therefore, couldn't be claimed to be equal in terms of their level of difficulty, which

would, to some extent, have impact on the subjects themselves when they were to accomplish the writing task. The other factor includes the topics of the composition. When subjects were assigned to write the topics they were interested in or had knowledge about, they didn't have to worry about the content of the writing. Therefore, there was a tendency for them to spend more time paying attention to the grammar rules which might result in careful grammar usage and less errors. On the contrary, when writing about unfamiliar, difficult or out-of-interest topics, subjects had to make much more effort to think about what to write, apart from

focusing on the grammar rules. Most of their time seemed to be spent on brainstorming and organizing their ideas. The allotted time didn't allow the subjects to proofread their writing before handing it in to the teacher. Consequently, subjects' various types of errors found in their papers and their unpredictable improvement in their subsequent works were probably due to unfamiliar topics and the need of haste to finish the assigned tasks within the limited time.

In order to find out whether there are any differences in the subjects' ability to self-correct errors across feedback types, a comparison between the mean scores of the code group and the

no-code group was carried out using a statistical procedure as showed in Table 2 and 3 below.

Table 2: Self-Correction Mean Scores of the Code vs. No-Code Groups

Treatment Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Code	8	60.44	14.215	5.02592
No Code	8	57.72	14.222	5.02857

Table 3: The Comparison of Mean Scores of the Code and No-Code Groups**(Significant at 0.5)**

Treatment Groups	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Code Vs. No Code	2.724	7.109	.383	14	.707

Through the t-test, the data in the Table 2 and 3 demonstrates that there was no significant difference between the mean score of the code group and that of the no-code group at the confidence level of .05 ($t = .383, P > .05$). This means that the subjects' performance in both groups was similar, which suggests that the two types of indirect correction with different levels of explicitness (codes and no code) resulted in no statistically significant difference in self correcting success ratios between the code and the no-code groups.

Table 4 presents the frequency of the five focused errors the subjects in both code and no-code groups produced and managed to self-correct in their written works.

Table 4: A Summary of Frequencies of Focused Errors and Percentages of Errors Corrected by Subjects in the Code and No-Code Groups

Types of Errors	Errors Made		Errors Corrected	
	N	%	N	%
Part of Speech	110	17.54	65	59.09
Subject-Verb Agreement	71	11.32	67	94.37
Verb Form	155	24.72	107	69.03
Word Order	31	4.94	11	5.48
Sentence Structure	260	41.47	122	46.92
Total	627	100.00	372	59.33

The number of errors presented in Table 4 shows that errors in sentence structure occurred at a markedly higher rate than the other four focused errors: verb form, part of speech, subject-verb agreement, and word order, respectively. Regarding the subjects' self correcting success, it is noted that successfully fixed errors accounted for 59.33% of

the total number of the focused errors found in written papers of students in both groups.

As shown Table 4 subject-verb agreement, verb form, and part of speech were the three most successfully self-edited error categories, whereas sentence structure and word order were types of errors with lower percentages for correction. The relatively high percentages of editing success in the former group of error types may be explained by the distinctive characteristics of committed errors.

Ferris (1999, 6) classified errors found in L2 learners' writing into "treatable" and "untreatable" ones. Errors such as subject-verb agreement, noun endings, verb forms, article usage, fragments, run-on and comma-splices are regarded treatable whereas ones including "non-idiomatic, idiosyncratic errors" in word choice and sentence construction are untreatable. The treatable errors which are "rule-governed" are more likely to be recognized and successfully resolved than the non-patterned, untreatable ones which demand students to figure out by themselves what is wrong in their sentences, and to take much effort in fixing errors of this type since there is no clear-cut, convenient rule to which students can consult with to resolve such errors when they are pointed out by the teacher.

The two studies which examined and compared the effect of different kinds of corrective feedback on the way different groups of ESL

students edited their errors by Ferris et al. (2000, quoted in Bitchener et al., 2005 : 194) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) revealed similar findings in that students receiving error feedback tended to be capable of reducing more "treatable" errors (verbs, noun endings, and articles) than "untreatable" ones.

Despite some differences in the focused error types, this finding is very similar to that reported in the previous two studies. Notably, subject-verb agreement, verb form, and part of speech which can be regarded "treatable" are the top three error categories that show high correction success ratios in both groups.

The relatively high percentages of editing success in subject-verb agreement, verb form, and part of speech may be explained by the distinctive features of the errors themselves. With a definite set of rules governed and limited scopes of errors requiring restrict correction, these three types of errors can be identified, by students, and resolved without much difficulty. Despite the fact that the five focused error categories are all treatable, sentence structure and word order, unlike subject-verb agreement, verb form, and part of speech which are single-word, include a wider variety of

Table 5: Frequency and Percentages of Errors Made and Successfully Corrected by Subjects of Code and No-Code Groups

Types of Errors	CODE GROUP				No-CODE GROUP			
	Errors Made		Errors Corrected		Errors Made		Errors Corrected	
	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%	N.	%
Part of Speech	58	16.57	32	55.17	52	18.77	33	63.46
Subject-Verb Agreement	41	11.71	38	92.68	30	10.83	29	96.66
Verb Form	88	25.14	59	67.05	67	24.19	48	71.64
Word Order	20	5.71	8	40	11	3.97	3	27.27
Sentence Structure	143	40.86	72	50.35	117	42.24	50	42.73
Total	350	100.00	209	59.71	277	100.00	163	58.84

lexical errors and more complicated syntactic problems. This often causes students comprehensibility problems which may result in their failure in recognizing, understanding, and fixing errors of these types.

Successfully Corrected Focused Errors: Comparing the Code and the No-Code Groups

In Table 5 the frequency and percentages of errors found and successfully resolved in students' assigned papers are demonstrated and compared between the two groups of students receiving different types of indirect correction

feedback to observe the differences or similarities in their performance.

In general, students of both groups showed the observable similarities in their language proficiency levels. It can be noted that in each focused category the errors occurring in the code group students' written works were comparable to that of the no-code group in frequency and percentages.

Regarding the errors made, the five error categories found in both groups were in the same order of frequency. Errors in sentence structure were found far more frequently than the others

(code = 40.86%; no-code = 42.24%). Another interesting point to be noted from a careful reading of Table 5 is that the code group students made higher percentages of total errors in three out of five focused areas – verb form, subject-verb agreement, and word order – than the no-code ones. With the slight differences in the frequency of these three errors, it is insufficient to conclude that the no-code students improved their accuracy when writing in L2, but this seems to suggest that they were more careful about the grammar rules, especially less complicated ones.

Unsurprisingly, of all the five focused error categories, the sentence structure in which code and no-code students' committed errors fall into ranks first in the order of frequency. This suggests either their limited knowledge of grammar or their failure to apply the prior knowledge they possess. In order to produce grammatical sentences, students are required to have both sufficient vocabulary and knowledge of the language rules. As a result, the sentence structure undoubtedly comes first in the hierarchy of difficulty, and thus seems unavoidable and problematic for L2 learners who possess an incomplete knowledge of the target language rules, do not remember the rules of grammar well, and have difficulty in applying them when constructing their own sentences in the written tasks.

The total correction success rates of subjects in the two groups receiving different types of teacher

indirect feedback were slightly different, with 59.71% for the code group and 58.84% for the other. Subjects in the former group showed the highest success rate when editing errors in subject-verb agreement. This was followed by verb forms, parts of speech, sentence structures, and word order, respectively. Regarding the no code subjects, despite lower percentages of their successfully fixed errors in certain categories (sentence structure and word order), the order of their correction success was parallel with that of the code group.

Interestingly, as revealed through their higher proportions of editing success, the no-code group outperformed the code one when resolving errors in subject-verb agreement, verb forms, and parts of speech. Yet, in sentence structures and word order areas which came bottom in the table, the no-code students were unlikely to self-repair at least half the errors they made.

Types of Errors

Subject-verb agreement, verb forms, parts of speech, sentence structures, and word orders are five among commonly mistakes made by L2 learners. Linguistic mistakes are unavoidable among those who have not fully mastered the target language. The interlanguage theory suggests that mistakes are a necessary objective phenomenon in the process of language learning, and are symbols of a learner acquiring a second

language. Thus, deeper analysis of the reasons behind the subjects' making these types of errors and the explanations to their success in self-editing would be beneficial to language learning and teaching.

1. Errors in Subject-Verb Agreement

As reported earlier, among the five focused error categories, subject-verb agreement, which ranked fourth in the frequency of occurrence, came first in the order of self-repairing success with the largest percentages of correction for both groups (code = 92.68%; no code = 96.66%). The causes of the errors in this type seem very limited due to the restricted rule concerning agreement of a subject and a verb in a sentence – a singular subject must match with a singular verb and a plural subject with a plural verb.

Subject-verb agreement errors occur when students violate the rule about agreement of the two key elements (a subject and a verb) in a sentence. The errors of this type appear to be the least problematic of all the five others to both students receiving coded feedback and those getting uncoded one because of the easily understandable basic agreement rule. Yet, failure to self-correct the subject-verb agreement errors is still observed in both groups. Examples of unsuccessfully mended errors are as follows:

L1 interference may be responsible for this kind of errors since in Thai there is neither

Errors Found in Sentences

(a) Everyone in the office **like** her.

(b) She **is** very kind and always **donate** her money to charity.

(c) To spend time alone not only **make** me feel free, but also **make** me happy.

(d) Characteristics that we should have in order to be successful in our life **is** diligence and patience.

Grammatical

Forms

(likes)

(donates)

(makes)

(are)

plural forms of nouns and verbs nor agreement between subjects and verbs as in English. As shown in sentence (a), a subject mistook a singular indefinite pronoun 'everyone' which is used by the native speakers in a sense of 'every single one' for a plural pronoun referring to more than one person, and thus took a plural verb 'like' after the pronoun. Therefore, it is not uncommon for Thai students to be hardly conscious of the rule about agreement and incorrectly apply it when writing their papers in English.

Moreover, in certain sentences, especially compound, complex or compound-complex ones which contain more than one clause, subjects exhibited both their success and failure to apply their perceived subject-verb agreement rule as in sentence (b). In the first clause, a singular verb form 'is' matches a third-person singular subject 'she', but the another verb 'donate' does not agree

with the subject in which this latter clause shares with the former one. One likely explanation for this is carelessness. Besides, as illustrated in sentences (c) and (d), some errors seem more complicated. A subject failed to identify the subject which is not in simple forms of a noun, a noun phrase, or a pronoun but an infinitive phrase *'To spend time alone'* in sentence (c) whereas one mistook the other word *'life'* nearest to the verb for the far-away subject *'Characteristics'* in sentence (d).

In spite of certain different characteristics between Thai and English, subject-verb agreement is not the chief difficulty among Thai students. Errors of this category which possibly result from L1 interference, carelessness, and students' interlanguage system which needs to be developed may reduce if students pay close attention to dissimilarities in linguistic features between the native language and the target one, and have enough time to proofread their papers.

2. Errors in Verb Forms

Based on Table 4.5, errors in verb forms accounting for the second largest proportions of the five focused error types for both groups ranked second in the order of correction success (code = 67.05% and no code = 71.64%). Unlike subject-verb agreement errors which are very limited and easily recognizable, errors in verb form category

are not as straightforward and easily repairable as ones in subject-verb agreement.

Verb Form Errors are observed when students use wrong selections of the verb forms. Examples are as follows:

Errors Found in Sentences	Grammatical Forms
(a) Amphetamines may leads to slow educational development.	(lead)
(b) I like to spend most of my time with friends because this makes me to feel warm.	(feel)
(c) I enjoy to work with them.	(working)
(d) I walked for pleasure until reached the forest.	(reaching)
(e) I saw the birds slowly flap wings in the sky.	(flapping)
(f) She always smiles when she met her friends.	(meets)
(g) She is very rich today but she never forgot her past.	(forgets)
(h) Suddenly, I found I am far away from the motel, so I ask for help.	(was / asked)
(i) It was the fact that we must accept.	(had to)
(j) My mother waked me up and then I was very confused.	(woke)
(k) Students must try study hard to pass their exams.	(to study)

(l) Sometimes we can go wherever (to go)
we want **go**.

(m) Problems are always **solve** (solved)
with the support of friends.

(n) It was impressing because I (seen)
have never **sawed** it before.

In sentences (a) and (b) the present tense forms 'leads' and 'to feel' are used instead of the base form. It can be noticed that the error in (a) is less problematic to subjects than the error in (b) since only the base form is required after the modal auxiliary verbs whereas other main verbs have different patterns of usage – to make someone do something, for instance.

Sentences (c) to (e) are examples of subjects' incorrect use of the infinitive form 'to work', the past form 'reached', and the base form 'flap' for the -ing forms 'working', 'reaching', and 'flapping'. Similar to error in (b), the one in (c) is clearly due to the subject's failure to recognize the different structures of English verbs. Also, subjects' inability to utilize the participial phrase revealed in sentences (d) and (e), respectively.

As shown in sentences (f) to (h), the errors in the past tense and the present tense forms, which result from students' apparently unreasonable shift from one verb form to another and vice versa, are recurrent in both groups.

Some errors, especially ones in the past tense and the past participle forms, occur when students use the wrong forms of the verbs based on their overgeneralization of the learned past tense and past participle patterns of the regular verbs. As demonstrated through errors in past tense and past participle verb forms in sentences (j) and (n), students wrongly added the grammatical morpheme -ed to the base and past forms of the irregular verbs 'waked up', and 'sawed' instead of changing the verbs to 'woke up' and 'seen'. On the other hand, some errors may result from learners' ignorance of some rules, especially the exceptional ones, as in sentence (i) when the present tense form 'must' was used instead of 'had to'.

In the passive sentence (m), the base form 'solve' is used instead of the past participle form 'solved'. This indicates subjects' incomplete application of the rule which is one of the likely explanation for errors in the verb form category.

Among the sub-categories, errors in wrong selections of other verb forms for the base form, other verb forms for the -ing form (gerund and present participle), and other verb forms for the present tense form were the top three error types committed by subjects in the two groups respectively. Concerning successfully mended errors in these three sub-categories, it is noticeable that both code and no-code subjects made the highest percentage of self-edited errors in wrong selections of other verb

forms for the present tense form (code = 71.43%; no code = 93.33%). This was followed by wrong selections of other verb forms for the –ing form (68.18%) and other verb forms for the base form (59.37%) for the code group; wrong selections of other verb forms for the base form (73.33%) and other verb forms for the –ing form (53.33%) for the no code group. It should also be pointed out that subjects receiving uncoded feedback exhibited significantly higher correction success rates in two out of the three most frequently committed errors than those with coded feedback. However, despite the no code group's higher editing success in certain sub-categories, in general students in both groups showed no significant differences in their ability to self-repair produced errors in the verb form category

In fact, English verbs which have six basic verb forms – the base, the present form, the past form, the infinitive, the –ing form (gerund and present participle), and the past participle (Lester, 2008 : 121) are complicated and confusing for Thai learners. In Thai, unlike English, each verb has only one form and thus verb tenses and voices are indicated not by the verb itself, but rather by other particles in the sentences. Therefore, confusions over verb forms and patterns seem inevitable, and L2 students themselves who have incomplete linguistic system, to some extent, seem unable to avoid making errors in this category.

3. Errors in Parts of Speech

Among the five focused error categories, parts of speech was the error type raking in the third place after the subject-verb agreement and verb forms in the order of correction success observed in both groups (code = 55.17%; no code = 63.46%). Parts of speech refer to different word classes which are used to form sentences. The contexts, sentence structures, and positions of words are key to determining which parts of speech are needed in sentences. Errors in parts of speech occur when learners use wrong classes of words in their sentences. The followings are examples of the incorrect usage of parts of speech.

Errors Found in Sentences	Grammatical Forms
(a) When I had problems, friends gave me good advise .	(<i>advice</i>)
(b) Because of their diligent , they get good jobs.	(<i>diligence</i>)
(c) With hungrily , I ate all of it [the food] within 10 minutes.	(<i>hunger</i>)
(d) I'm worry about him.	(<i>worried</i>)
(e) When I spend time with my friends, I felt enjoyed and relaxed.	(<i>happy/ delighted</i>)
(f) I strongly breath .	(<i>breathe</i>)
(g) I was glad and hurried to back my home.	(<i>*add a verb</i>)

(h) **Actuality**, amphetamines have *(Actually)* effects for people.

(i) It [The sun] shone **bright** in *(brightly)* the sky.

Sentences (a) to (c) illustrate errors due to the students' wrong selection of the verb 'advise', the adjective 'diligent', and the adverb 'hungrily' for the nouns 'advice', 'diligence' and 'hunger'. In sentences (d) and (e), the noun 'worry' and the verb 'enjoyed' were mistakenly used as adjectival compliment after verbs 'be' and 'feel'. Some errors occurred when words in other parts of speech were placed in the positions of the verbs as reflected in sentences (f) and (g) when the noun 'breath' and the adverb 'back' was used as verbs. Besides, students' wrong selection of other groups of words for adverbs was also found as seen in students' incorrect choices of the noun 'actuality' and the adjective 'bright' instead of the adverbs 'actually' and 'brightly' in sentences (h) and (i).

In both groups, errors in parts of speech were classified into four sub-categories – the wrong selections of other parts of speech for nouns, adjectives, verbs, and adverbs. The Code and no-code subjects made the highest proportions of errors in the wrong usage of other classes of words for nouns sub-category. This was followed by the wrong selections of other parts of speech for adjectives, other parts of speech for verbs and

other parts of speech for adverbs sub-categories. However, although the same order of frequency of committed errors in each sub-category was noticed in both groups, the orders of correction success rates were different. The largest percentage of successfully fixed errors belonged to the wrong selections of other parts of speech for verbs sub-category for the code subjects, whereas the wrong selections of other parts of speech for adjectives sub-category for the no code ones. This was followed by wrong selections of other parts of speech for adjectives and other parts of speech for nouns for the code group; wrong selections of other parts of speech for adverbs, other parts of speech for nouns, and other parts of speech for verbs for the no code group.

Subjects in both groups seem to commit and correct their own errors in parts of speech in unpredictable ways. The reasons why they made or successfully edited more errors in certain sub-categories than others are difficult to find. However, the findings do display Thai students' difficulties with the selection of correct parts of speech when constructing their own sentences in English.

It is indeed the positions, functions and contexts of words used in the sentences that govern the selection of parts of speech. From the above examples, two possible explanations for the presence of errors in parts of speech are suggested.

First, students are confused by word pairs which are similar-looking or have similar meanings but used in different ways – e.g. *advise* and *advice*, *diligent* and *diligence*, *enjoyed* and *happy*, and *breath* and *breathe* as in sentences (a), (b), (e), and (g). Second, certain errors are the result of L1 interference. Unlike English, Thai does not rely on word forms both to determine parts of speech and to clarify the functions of the words. Consequently, due to the direct translation from Thai to English, students seem less conscious of lexical and grammatical peculiarity of English as revealed in sentences (c), (d), (f), (h) and (j).

Errors in parts of speech and the ways to resolve them are not as straightforward as subject-verb agreement and verb form errors. To edit errors in subject-verb agreement, learners just simply change their verbs into either singular or plural form that match the subjects. Regarding errors in verb forms, due to the six basic verb forms in English, subjects seem to have guidelines to self-repair their errors; they know they can replace the wrong verb forms with one of the other five forms. On the other hand, when repairing parts of speech errors, subjects' vocabulary repertoire seems to contribute greatly to their correction success ratios. The coded feedback given by the teacher is apparently more beneficial to subjects than the uncoded one in that it not only helps them recognize their errors but also prevents them from

confusing errors in parts of speech with other error types. However, subjects sometimes failed to mend the committed errors in parts of speech even though they were informed by teacher corrective feedback which category their errors fell into due to their limited vocabulary. This may be the reason why the success rates in the correction of errors in parts of speech observed in both groups are lower than those in subject-verb agreement and verb forms.

4. Errors in Sentence Structures

As illustrated by Table 6, in both groups, the sentence structure category ranks first in the order of frequency but comes fourth in the order of correction success. It should be pointed out that the sentence structure is one of the two focused error types which the code group outperformed the no-code one.

It can be observed that among the seven subcategories, errors in incomplete structures occurred most frequently for the two groups. Regarding the self-editing success, the largest percentages of successfully self-repaired errors belonged to comma splices. Examples of errors in sentence structure category are as follows:

Errors Found in Sentences	Sub-categories
(a) <u>Some activities I love to do alone such as reading books, watching TV and keeping a</u>	(Incomplete Structure)

diary.		Errors in incomplete structures are shown
(b) [I do many activities with friends] For example, study, eat, exercise and sleep.	(Incomplete Structure)	in (a) to (c). While (a) and (b) are merely a noun phrase and a list of verbs that require other parts (a subject, an object, or a compliment), (c) is an dependent 'when-clause' that needs the main clause to combine with to form meaningful complete sentences. Sentence (d) is an example of a run-on sentence in which more than one independent clauses are placed after another with no punctuation or conjunction, whereas sentence (e) an example of a comma splice in which the writer used comma correctly but failed to use a coordinating conjunction 'and', or semi-colon to combine two independent clauses.
(c) When I looked around. I saw an island and the blue sea.	(Incomplete Structure)	
(d) It was amazing the water was blue and clear and I could see fish and aquatic animals were swimming.	(Run-On)	
(e) I bit my lips, they were salty and dry.	(Comma Splice)	
(f) Friends took me to many places that I never go there.	(Relative Clause Structure)	
(g) Traveling alone is not fun as well as traveling with friends.	(Comparative Structure)	Errors in these three sub-categories, especially the fragmentary sentences, seem to be the most serious errors since students fail to combine sentence constituents in a well-organized, logical and meaningful ways. Therefore, this causes difficulty in understanding the written works and thus might lead to a breakdown in communication between the writer and the reader.
(h) Why do some people can be successful in lives?	(Question Form)	One major source of such errors probably lies in the L1 interference. Fragments may be due to students' borrowing Thai sentence patterns in which subjects and objects can sometimes be omitted if they are already mentioned. Besides, since there are no marked distinctions between main clauses and subordinate clauses, and no punctuation that splits a clause or a sentence from
(i) The sweet sounds of birds made me I wasn't alone.	(Ungrammatical Patterns)	
(j) Although I like to spend my time alone, but I have many friends.	(Ungrammatical Patterns)	
(k) There have many advantages and disadvantages to be with friends.	(Ungrammatical Patterns)	

others in Thai, students sometimes fail to identify the dependent clauses from the independent ones, and thus cannot use punctuation marks properly. This would account for the fragments, run-ons, and comma splices.

Sentences (f) to (h) are examples of errors in the internal relative clause structure, comparative structure, and question construction, respectively. In sentence (f), the student incorrectly used the relative pronoun *'that'* instead of *'where'* while he still kept the object of the verb *'there'* which was substituted by the relative pronoun and moved forward from its original position. Errors in sentence (g) illustrate the wrong comparative structure *'as + adjective + as'* in that the unnecessary adverb *'well'* was added and placed in the position of the adjective *'fun'*. Similarly, the unnecessary auxiliary verb *'do'* was put in the question. These faulty sentences, to some extent, indicated that students had studied certain rules of grammar or syntactic structures but failed to apply them when constructing their own sentences.

On the other hand, sentences (i) to (k) are sorted into the ungrammatical structure sub-category due to the fact that the sentence patterns employed by students are uncommon to the native speakers and deviated from standard English grammar – the insertion of a new clause *'I wasn't alone'* after the direct object *'me'* in (i), the unnecessary adding of the word *'but'* in the sentence

beginning with the subordinating conjunction. These sentences best reflect Thai students' method of direct translation employed when writing in L2; they directly express their ideas by finding English words to substitute Thai word without being conscious of the different syntactic structures between languages.

Regarding students' error correction, both groups, as reported earlier, demonstrated the satisfactory number of repaired errors in the comma splices. A likely explanation for the highest success rates in self-editing errors of this type is that comma-splices, with the presence of the punctuation marks, are easily recognizable even to the no code students, and can simply be mended by separating incorrectly joined clauses with full stops.

Unlike comma splices, sentence structure errors in other sub-categories seemed more problematic to students, especially those receiving no code feedback. Notably, in almost all sentence structure sub-categories, the editing success rates for both groups are not high. The lowest percentage of error correction success was observed in incomplete structures for the no code group. Moreover, as seen through the code groups' higher percentages of successfully fixed errors in all sub-categories, with the exception of the comparative structures, it can be inferred that the code students outperformed the no code ones.

A likely explanation for the low success ratios in correcting sentence structure error might be the fact that the sentence structure category includes a wider variety of errors than subject-verb agreement, verb form, and parts of speech categories. Even with teacher coded feedback, students who are left to figure out what are wrong in their works might get confused about their committed errors and uncertain about how to resolve the errors.

Due to the seemingly insufficient clues, students receiving the teacher uncoded feedback are found to employ the avoidance strategy predominantly when fixing their own errors. Examples are as follows:

- (a) I prefer to spend my time with friends more than alone.

I prefer to spend my time with friends.

(Corrected Version)

- (b) There have many advantages and disadvantages to be with friends.

To be with friend has advantages and disadvantages. (Corrected Version)

In the first example, the student produced an error as he constructed the wrong comparative structure. In order to resolve this error, the student then omitted the comparison part making the sentence simpler and shorter. Also, the second sentence

showed the student's self-created sentence pattern 'There-have'. When the error was pointed out, students made use of other easier pattern that can convey the same message instead of really fixing their faulty sentence structure.

The aforementioned examples and remarks suggested that students seemed able to handle with errors in this sentence structure category since they could simply make the errors disappear instead of actually mending them. Yet, such an avoidance method employed in editing their errors implied that the students might not have enough competencies or might not be able to master grammar rules well enough to help them correct the errors of this type. As a result, it can be concluded that when dealing with sentence structure errors, the uncoded feedback may not be as helpful to students who have incomplete linguistic knowledge of the target language as the coded one.

5. Errors in Word Order

As illustrated in Table 5, the errors of this overall category for both groups were relatively infrequent, making the word order come last in the order of occurrence. Yet, this would be explained by the fact that students are assigned to write free compositions in which they themselves controlled both the word choices and the word order (Ubol, 1979 : 35).

Errors in word order can be classified into five sub-categories – order of prenominal modifiers, order of relative clauses / participial phrases, order of prepositional phrases, order of adverbs of frequency, and patterns of time / space / distance measurements. Here, the number of errors in the order of prenominal modifiers was observed the highest for both groups. Examples of errors in sentence structure category are as follows:

Errors Found in Sentences	Sub-categories
(a) She is a very talkative woman and friendly.	(Prenominal Modifier)
(b) He has blue small eyes.	(Prenominal Modifier)
(c) My brother is about 10 years old who has a plump figure.	(Relative Clause)
(d) I slept on my bed in a small room made of wood.	(Participial Phrase)
(e) I was so tired and thirsty from swimming.	(Prepositional Phrase)
(f) She donates some of her money for poor people always.	(Adverb of Frequency)
(g) I found the dead dog that was near me about 10 meters.	(Distance Measurement)
(h) She is an American woman of 53 years old and tall about 160 centimeters.	(Measurement)

In the above examples, the underlined parts are misplaced. Sentences (a), (f), (g), and (h) illustrate that the student, in order to express their thoughts in the new language, used a direct translation from their native language – Thai – into English without being conscious of the dissimilar grammatical structures of the two languages. Concerning the word order, one of the marked distinctions between Thai and English is that Thai allows more optional and flexible arrangement of words in a sentence with or without a slight difference while English has a highly fixed word order. Although sometimes errors in sequence of words do not interfere with the sentence meaning as in examples (b) and (f), such incorrect positions of words – '*blue small eyes*' and '*always*' – do lead to awkward sentences to native speakers.

It is undeniable that one major source of errors in the word order can be traced back to the students' native language, Thai. The Thai word ordering is in the reverse of the English. The modifiers such as adjectives, demonstratives, quantifiers, and numerals, come after the head in Thai, whereas occur prenominally in English. Moreover, word order of the multiple premodifiers in English is not random as noticed in the order of adjectives. As a result, when writing English sentences comprised of more than one premodifier, students sometimes seemed confused by the

sequence of the words; they were not sure which word should come first.

Notably, errors relating to the description of time, distance and measurements were observed in both groups as in examples (g) and (h). Such errors are not uncommon and surprising for Thai students due to the differences in the ordering of quantifiers of time, distance, and measurements and the adjective of measure between Thai and English. In addition, the complex sentences such as ones that have adjective clauses or participial phrases functioning as noun or noun phrase modifiers can also be problematic for students as in examples (c) and (d). Instead of putting the modifiers 'who has a plump figure' and 'made of wood' right after nouns needed to modify 'My brother' and 'bed', the students misplaced the adjective clauses. Because English depends on word ordering to show grammatical relationships, the sequence of words in a sentence is essential sentence element despite the fact that the wrong word order might not cause any difficulty in understanding the sentence.

Undoubtedly, negative interference is largely responsible for the committed errors. As demonstrated in Table 5, students in both groups made smallest number of errors in word order and, at the same time, they exhibited the lowest correction success rates in this error category. It should also be noted that despite the unsatisfactory error correction ratios, the overall percentage of

successfully repaired errors for the students receiving coded feedback group is significantly higher than that of the no code students.

A possible explanation for the no code students' low success ratio in self-editing errors in word order is that they seemed not to recognize what was wrong in their sentences; therefore, they sometimes mistook their located errors in word order for errors of other categories. The following examples illustrate the point:

- (a) My brother is about 10 years old **who has a plump figure.**

My brother *has a plump figure that is about 10 years old.* (Corrected Version)

- (b) She is an American woman of 53 years old and **tall about 160 centimeters.**

She is an American woman of 53 years old and **she is tall about 160 centimeters.**
(Corrected Version)

Through the two examples, the no code students' failure to make sense of the teacher indirect feedback and to mend their errors was reflected. They attempted to correct these errors based on their false assumption. Ironically, instead of fixing the errors, students committed other ones. On the contrary, the students in code group knew exactly which type their errors belonged to due to the feedback, which served as a guideline for their

self-correction. This may be plausible reason why students in the code group performed better in correcting errors in this category.

Based on the findings, three observations can be made. First, students, in both the code group and the code one, were likely to be able to correct errors with specific areas of focus (subject-verb agreement, verb forms, and parts of speech) than those in sentence/clause boundaries (word order and sentence structures). Second, teacher indirect correction, either coded or uncoded feedback, can trigger learners to think critically to diagnose their errors and then apply their knowledge of the rules to resolve the produced errors. Third, both coded and uncoded indirect feedback, however, do not seem to give much help to students when they deal with 'errors involving a wider scope of focus. Due to the fact that L2 learners possess incomplete knowledge of the target language and are struggling in the process of developing their interlanguage, indirect feedback provided by the teacher seems insufficient. Thus, traditional explicit feedback might be another constructive and valuable option for students' understanding of their errors in sentence or clause boundaries, the ways to edit them, and their improvement in their writing ability.

Subjects' Reflection on Teacher's Feedback

After getting the written paper back, with the teacher's feedback, code or no-code, students were asked to spend 20 minutes correcting the focused errors and revise their writing in class. The students' papers were taken to examine and compare with their first versions. As for the students who failed to correct the errors or left the errors uncorrected, a second chance was given to them in order that they could try correcting the errors again during the follow-up interview. In the interview, which was conducted informally, the students who could not correct their errors for the second time would have to reflect on why they were not able to correct them. The students' reasons and explanations for their failure in self-editing their own errors can be summarized as follows: (1) The students accepted that they had studied those grammatical points before, but they just had no idea how to apply the grammar rules. (2) As for the no-code group, some students reflected that they didn't know what was wrong with their sentences. They thought their sentences were already grammatically correct. (3) The students knew which category their errors belonged to, they made effort but still failed to correct them.

In addition, at the end of the course, there was a quasi-questionnaire administered to the students conducted by a senior student informally. This was to investigate the students' attitude

towards the implicit feedback they received from the teacher. There are some remarks concerning the teacher's feedback by students of both groups. Most students showed their preferable attitudes towards the teacher's indirect feedback. They thought it was beneficial for them to take an active part in correcting their errors instead of playing passive role in the correction process. Also, self-correction was viewed by most of the subjects as a challenging task which could test their ability. Being able to correct the errors seemed to be a kind of success, which gave sense of achievement and confidence, as well as positive attitude towards writing second language. To some, especially less proficient ones, the indirect feedback which provided insufficient clues about either what types of errors they committed or how to correct them sometimes caused troubles in their self-correction.

IV. Conclusion

It should be noted that indirect feedback encourages critical thinking skills, promote independent study among students. With the teacher's indirect feedback, students functioned as investigators who closely and thoroughly examined their errors and even attempt to figure out what sounds wrong in their sentences rather than observers who merely scan and, to some degree, learn how to correct their errors through the teacher's correction.

Based on the aforementioned findings in this study, it should be noted that the teacher's code and no-code feedback do not make any marked differences in the students' performance and their ability to self-correct their own focused errors. Of all the types of errors focused, the errors with respect to subject-verb agreement and word order occurred at the highest and lowest frequency, orderly. Also, there is a distinct correlation between the percentages of error type students committed the most and the least and the percentages of error type corrected. Despite the fact that errors in subject-verb agreement and word order were found in compositions of students of both groups mostly and less frequent, students were capable of correcting errors in these two categories in highest and lowest percentages, orderly.

The implications of this study are based on the findings and discussions presented in the proceeding chapter. Several major implications can be drawn as follows.

1. The findings of the this study are similar to that of Ferris and Barrie Roberts (2001) in that the performance of students in code and no-code groups on self-correction is almost identical. Although the results do not explicitly indicates the students' improvement in their subsequent written papers, no-code feedback, which is considered less explicit than code, can be claimed to be sufficient if the teacher's

- intention in giving corrective feedback is to provide the students clues to self-edit their papers.
2. Locating the students' errors without labeling them by error category benefits teachers in that the marking process is much easier and requires less amount of time. Plus, it can lessen the possibility that teachers give wrong codes for error types.
 3. Manageability is one of the key elements that needs considering when giving corrective feedback. Teachers need to ensure that (1) students are able to complete their composition within the allotted time, so a pilot study is essential (2) the length of the written paper is appropriate, not too tough for students (3) the focused errors, which are the errors that students are to correct by themselves, are not too numerous so that students will not be overwhelmed by the correction process. (4) the number of the written papers will not make students suffer, which means that students' work load is not too heavy, and at the same time teachers are able to manage their work load, if not, the quality and the quantity of feedback will surely be affected.
 4. Some types of errors can be very problematic for students in general, especially errors which are referred to by Ferris and Roberts (2001: 172) as "untreatable" errors. Those errors are not rule-governed, so they are different from other types of errors (such as part of speech, subject-verb agreement or verb form) which can be explained by grammar rules. Students may not be able to deal with this type of errors as it calls for considerable experience and exposures to the language. Thus, teachers should give more help for students by giving corrections in this case.
 5. The corrective feedback should be meaningful to all students in that they understand the purpose of corrective feedback given to them. They can interpret the codes provided by the teachers and they understand what they are expected to do with the corrective feedback. In addition, students should be consistently involved in revising their papers. They should be required to, at least, self-edit their writing after receiving feedback from the teacher or consult their classmates. This is to engage the students in cognitive problem-solving as they try to self-correct based on the feedback they receive (Ferris, 2004).

Suggestions for further study

1. Since this research, which was conducted over the course of one semester, did not demonstrate students' significant improvement in the dimensions of lexical precision and grammatical accuracy, a longitudinal student is needed. Carefully examining classroom instruction, level of difficulty of the

topics assigned to students, students' error correction techniques, together with assessing students' progress in writing accuracy over a longer period of time would help clarify the issue about the effectiveness of the teacher's indirect corrective feedback in learners' language acquisition, their reduced numbers of errors committed in subsequent compositions, and their increasing inability to repair their own errors in the long run.

2. It would be interesting and beneficial to investigate various types of errors considered problematic for L2 students (such as articles, pronouns, wrong lexical selection, tenses, etc.). An interview or questionnaire should also be incorporated in order to gain more detailed and precise information on the causes of errors students made in their papers, their strategies towards error repair, as well as their attitudes to teachers' corrective feedback. The result of such a study will lead to a growing understanding of not only students' difficulty in writing compositions, but also factors that hinder or contribute to the improvement in writing skill and the process of learning the target language. Also, this will provide teachers with indication of the level of proficiency reached by learners and suggestions for how to use formal teaching and learning opportunities to assist students to improve L2 writing accuracy throughout the process of learning.

3. More research which compares errors committed by high proficient students and low

proficient ones, their ability to self correct their errors, and their error correction techniques also needs to be conducted. This additional study will help identify exactly the problems of learners of different levels of proficiency in writing compositions and learning the target language and give some illuminating insight into the teaching methods and pedagogical practices – appropriate types of error treatment and levels of explicitness of the feedback which are particularly suitable for students of different proficiency levels in writing classes, for instance. Besides, better understanding of individual learners would answer related questions about the teachers' corrective feedback such as “Which type of the treatment is a really useful and appropriate for students?”, “Could the corrective feedback given to high proficient students be equally beneficial to those with lower proficiency levels?”, and “How could the teacher help students attain improvement and more proficiency in target language over time?”.

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