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The Effect of Direct Written Corrective Feedback on Learning English as a Second Language

A Case Study on Improving Grammatical Accuracy in Second
Language Writing of Learners of Lower Proficiency Levels, Faculty
of Arts, University of Colombo

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ABSTRACT

This study was designed to investigate the effect of two types of direct written corrective feedback strategies; namely the direct written corrective feedback and direct written metalinguistic corrective feedback on second language writing of the adult ESL learners of lower proficiency levels, in order to identify the most effective type of CF that would facilitate their acquisition of grammar and help them become successful second language writers. The study incorporated the use of both quantitative and qualitative methods to collect data on the topic. The effect of direct written corrective feedback was investigated over three testing periods during the study; a pretest, an immediate test and a delayed test. It focused on the accuracy gains of fifty lower proficiency learners in two experimental groups and one control group from the Faculty of Arts of the University of Colombo, using English article as the target structure. The effectiveness of the two feedback strategies were assessed both in terms of enhancing the adult learners' explicit as well as implicit knowledge of the article system in the short term as well as in the long term. The findings of the study suggested that both direct written and direct written metalinguistic corrective feedback as effective in promoting learning of grammar when contrasted with no correction. Findings further suggested that direct written metalinguistic corrective feedback was more effective than the direct written corrective feedback in increasing the grammatical accuracy in second language writing of the adult learners. In addition to the quantitative data that supported the provision of direct written metalinguistic feedback, qualitative data gathered from questionnaires administered to students under study and the

writing teachers teaching in lower proficiency courses at tertiary level suggested the need to incorporate metalinguistic corrective feedback as a part of second language writing instruction to enhance the teaching and learning process of English as a second language.

Key Words: Strategies of written corrective feedback, direct written correction, direct written metalinguistic correction, learner language, second language acquisition