Error Correction in Second Language Writing: Teachers’ Beliefs, Practices, and Students’ Preferences

Victor Albert Francis S. Corpuz

Supervisors:
Lynette May
Annette Patterson

Queensland University of Technology
Faculty of Education
Master of Education (Research)
September 2011
Abstract

Error correction is perhaps the most widely used method for responding to student writing. While various studies have investigated the effectiveness of providing error correction, there has been relatively little research incorporating teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences in written error correction. The current study adopted features of an ethnographic research design in order to explore the beliefs and practices of ESL teachers, and investigate the preferences of L2 students regarding written error correction in the context of a language institute situated in the Brisbane metropolitan district.

In this study, two ESL teachers and two groups of adult intermediate L2 students were interviewed and observed. The beliefs and practices of the teachers were elicited through interviews and classroom observations. The preferences of L2 students were elicited through focus group interviews. Responses of the participants were encoded and analysed.

Results of the teacher interviews showed that teachers believe that providing written error correction has advantages and disadvantages. Teachers believe that providing written error correction helps students improve their proof-reading skills in order to revise their writing more efficiently. However, results also indicate that providing written error correction is very time consuming. Furthermore, teachers prefer to provide explicit written feedback strategies during the early stages of the language course, and move to a more implicit strategy of providing written error correction in order to facilitate language learning.

On the other hand, results of the focus group interviews suggest that students regard their teachers’ practice of written error correction as important in helping them locate their errors and revise their writing. However, students also feel that the process of providing written error correction is time consuming. Nevertheless, students want and expect their teachers to provide written feedback because they believe that the benefits they gain from receiving feedback on their writing outweigh the apparent disadvantages of their teachers’ written error correction strategies.
Table of Contents

Abstract p. ii
Table of Contents p. iii
List of Tables and figures p. viii
Statement of Original Authorship p. xi
Acknowledgement p. xii

Chapter 1: The Problem and Its Background

1.1 Introduction p. 1
1.2 Background of the Problem p. 2
1.3 Purpose of the Study p. 4
1.4 Importance of the Study p. 5
1.5 Scope of the Study p. 6
1.6 Summary p. 6

Chapter 2: Review of Literature

2.1 Introduction p. 7
2.2 Second Language Acquisition (SLA) Theories p. 7
  2.2.1 Behaviourist Theory of Language Learning p. 8
  2.2.2 Krashen’s Monitor Model of SLA p. 9
  2.2.3 Two Types of Language Skills p. 11
  2.2.4 Interlanguage Theory and Processes p. 12
  2.2.5 Pienemann’s Teachability Hypothesis p. 14
  2.2.6 Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis p. 16
2.3 Background of Language Teaching Methods p. 18
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2.4 The Error Correction Debate</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.1 Negative Perspectives of Error Correction</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.4.2 Positive Perspectives of Error Correction</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5 The Roles of Written Error Correction</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.1 Error Correction as Focus-on-Form Intervention</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.5.2 Error Correction to Facilitate Noticing</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6 Approaches and Methods of Written Error Correction</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.1 General Approaches</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.2 Explicit Written Error Correction</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.3 Implicit Written Error Correction</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.6.4 Error Correction Codes</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.7 Types of Errors</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.8 Teacher Beliefs and Practices</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.9 Student Preferences</td>
<td>38</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.10 The Need for Further Research</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chapter 3: Methodology</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.1 Introduction</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.2 Research Questions</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3 Research Design</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.1 The Gap in Methodology of Previous Studies</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.3.2 Research Design Rationale</td>
<td>46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4 Participants</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.1 Introduction</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.4.2 Selection of Participants</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.5 Data Collection Methods

3.5.1 Data Collection Outline p. 52
3.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews (Initial) p. 55
3.5.3 Weekly Classroom Observations p. 58
3.5.4 Collection of Written Artefacts p. 61
3.5.5 Semi-Structured Interviews (Post-Observation) p. 62
3.5.6 Focus Group Interviews p. 64

3.6 Data Analysis

3.6.1 Method of Analysis p. 67
3.6.2 Semi-Structured Interviews p. 68
3.6.3 Focus Group Interviews p. 72
3.6.4 Classroom Observations p. 75

3.7 Research Ethics p. 80

3.8 Research Limitations

3.8.1 Methodology p. 81
3.8.2 Time Constraints p. 82
3.8.3 Scope p. 82

3.9 Summary p. 83

Chapter 4: Results and Discussion

4.1 Teachers’ Beliefs

4.1.1 Advantages of Written Error Correction p. 86
4.1.2 Disadvantages of Written Error Correction p. 87
4.1.3 Importance of Written Error Correction p. 88
4.1.4 Practice of Written Error Correction p. 89
4.2 Teachers’ Practices

4.2.1 Purposes of Written Error Correction p. 93

4.2.2 Concerns in Providing Written Error Correction p. 94

4.2.3 Importance of Written Error Correction p. 96

4.2.4 Observed Practice of Written Error Correction p. 98

4.3 Students’ Preferences

4.3.1 Advantages of Written Error Correction p. 102

4.3.2 Disadvantages of Written Error Correction p. 103

4.3.3 Importance of Written Error Correction p. 104

4.3.4 Practice of Written Error Correction p. 105

4.4 Teachers’ Practices and Students’ Preferences p. 107

4.5 Summary p. 108

Chapter 5: Implications and Recommendations

5.1 Introduction p. 109

5.2 Summary of Results p. 109

5.3 Implications of Results p. 111

5.3.1 Implications for Teaching p. 111

5.3.2 Implications for Teacher Education p. 113

5.4 Recommendations for Further Research p. 114

References p. 117

Appendices p. 125

Appendix 1: Error Correction Codes

Appendix 2: COLT Scheme Part A

Appendix 3: COLT Scheme Part B
Appendix 4: Student’s Text Corrected by Teacher A

Appendix 5: Student’s Text Corrected by Teacher B
List of Tables and Figures

Tables:

Chapter 3
3.1 Methodology of Previous Studies in Error Correction p. 43
3.2 Profile of Participants p. 48
3.3 Data Collection Timeline p. 53
3.4 Structure of Participation p. 53
3.5 Research Questions and Data Sources p. 55

Chapter 4
4.1 Teachers’ Error Correction Time p. 94

Chapter 5
5.1 Limitations and Recommendations p. 114

Figures:

Chapter 2
2.1 Approaches and Methods of Written Error Correction p. 30
2.2 Example of Explicit Written Error Correction p. 32
2.3 Example of Implicit Written Error Correction p. 33

Chapter 3
3.1 Miles & Huberman’s Bounded Case Study Model p. 49
3.2 Process Model p. 54
3.3 Flowchart of Data Collection Procedures p. 54
3.4 COLT Scheme Part A p. 59
3.5 COLT Scheme Part B  
3.6 Teachers' Interview Transcript Passage  
3.7 Teachers' Interview Data Encoded in NVivo  
3.8 Conceptual Mapping of Data from Interviews with Teachers  
3.9 Students' Focus Group Interview Transcript Passage  
3.10 Students' Focus Group Interview Data Encoded in NVivo  
3.11 Conceptual Mapping of Data from Interviews with Students  
3.12 Encoded COLT Observation Sheet Part A  
3.13 Encoded COLT Observation Sheet Part B  
3.14 Classroom Observation Excerpt  
3.15 Classroom Observation Data Encoded in NVivo  
3.16 Conceptual Mapping of Classroom Observation Data  

Chapter 4

Teachers' Interviews

4.1 Conceptual Mapping of Data from Interviews  
4.2 Responses on Advantages of Written Error Correction  
4.3 Responses on Disadvantages of Written Error Correction  
4.4 Responses on Importance of Written Error Correction  
4.5 Responses on Practice of Written Error Correction  

Classroom Observation

4.6 Conceptual Mapping of Data from Classroom Observation  
4.7 Observed Responses on Purposes of Written Error Correction  
4.8 Sample of Corrected Student Writing  
4.9 Observed Responses on Importance of Written Error Correction
4.10 Teacher A’s Observed Practices p. 98
4.11 Teacher A’s Sample Corrected Writing p. 99
4.12 Teacher B’s Observed Practices p. 99
4.13 Teacher B’s Sample Corrected Writing p. 100

Students’ Interviews

4.14 Conceptual Mapping of Data from Focus Group Interviews p. 102
4.15 Responses on Advantages of Written Error Correction p. 103
4.16 Responses on Disadvantages of Written Error Correction p. 104
4.17 Responses on Importance of Written Error Correction p. 105
4.18 Responses on Practice of Written Error Correction p. 106
4.19 Alignment of Student’s Preferences and Teachers’ Practices p. 107
Statement of Original Authorship

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet requirements for an award at this or any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Name: Victor Albert Francis S. Corpuz
Student No.: N6257852
Signature:
Date: 30 September 2011
Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisors, Annette Patterson and Lynette May, for their invaluable guidance and encouragement in completing this thesis. I would like to thank the Director of Studies, the teachers and students who participated in this study. My grateful thanks are also due to Jennifer Yared and Mary Clowes, for their support and assistance in providing me with all the resources I needed to complete this thesis.

Many thanks to my mum, Maria, who always encouraged me simply by being the role model of excellence; who I aspire to become one day. I’d like to thank my stepdad, Andy, for his invaluable help and patience in conceptualising the ideas I had for this thesis. Also, I would like to thank my brother, Carlo, for his exemplary support by always staying up late at night just so I have someone to study with; and my sister, Jen, for constantly challenging me to improve myself.

Lastly, I’d like to thank Jenna, the love of my life, for believing in me even when I lost faith in myself; for giving me strength when I needed it most; for helping me become a better version of myself; and for giving me a reason to wake up with a big smile every morning.
CHAPTER 1
The Problem and Its Background

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The main role of English as a Second Language (ESL) writing teachers is to help their students improve their writing proficiency in accordance with student needs and course objectives. How to best achieve this is the concern of many ESL writing teachers and researchers (Polio, 2003). Providing feedback is viewed—both by teachers and students—as an important part of ESL writing instruction. One type of feedback that ESL writing teachers provide is error correction. It is perhaps the most widely used method for responding to student writing. For teachers, it represents the largest allocation of time they spend as writing instructors; and for students, error correction may be the most important component that will contribute to their success as writers (Ferris, 2003). However, the effectiveness of error correction and its contribution to the development and improvement of writing accuracy continues to be debated (Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999; Chandler, 2003; Truscott & Hsu; 2008). Nevertheless, L2 researchers (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ferris, 2010; Sheen, 2010) have investigated the question of whether error correction helps student writers improve the linguistic accuracy of their written texts.

While the debate on the effectiveness of error correction may never be fully resolved, providing written feedback is indispensible because it plays an important role in guiding, motivating, and encouraging students to improve their accuracy in second language (L2) writing. From this point of view, it is clear that teachers’ beliefs, which influence their L2 writing instruction, and students’ attitudes and preferences regarding error correction, are important. However, very few studies
have explored the extent to which teacher beliefs influence L2 writing instruction and examined a possible connection between teaching practice in error correction and students’ preferences.

The present study used qualitative tools adapted from an ethnographic research design in order to investigate ESL teacher beliefs, practices and ESL student preferences regarding the provision of written corrective feedback and its contribution to the improvement of accuracy in L2 writing. This chapter presents the background of the problem to identify the importance, effects, and unresolved pedagogical issues in the employment of written corrective feedback. The focus, purpose, and importance of the study are also discussed. This chapter concludes by presenting a brief outline of the scope, the participants (teachers and students) and the research site that will be used in the study.

1.2 BACKGROUND OF THE PROBLEM

The role of written corrective feedback has been viewed as an important part of second language (L2) writing teachers’ instruction because it allows for an individualised teacher-to-student communication that is rarely possible in the day-to-day operations of an L2 writing class (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997). Although the effectiveness of providing written error correction has been questioned (Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999; Bitchener, 2008; Truscott & Hsu, 2008), many L2 writing teachers feel that responding through written corrective feedback will help in the improvement of their students’ L2 writing accuracy (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Brown, 2007). In addition, L2 writing students want, expect, and value teacher feedback on their written errors (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 2004); and prefer to receive written corrective feedback over alternative forms such as peer and oral feedback (Leki,
1991; Saito, 1994; Ferris 1995). Without corrective feedback, it is difficult for students to ascertain that a learning task has been completed correctly (Chastain, 1988). Despite the differing perspectives on the impact of providing of written corrective feedback on the development and improvement of L2 writing accuracy, it is clear that both teachers and students feel the need for its employment.

Aside from the issue of whether or not L2 writing teachers ought to give corrective feedback, the effects of different types of providing written error correction have also been investigated. For example, previous studies (Lalande, 1982; Lee, 1997) have shown that providing implicit written error correction—the type of feedback where the L2 teacher simply shows that an error has been made—has positive effects on the improvement of students’ writing accuracy. Consequently, previous studies (Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Varnosfadrani & Basturkmen (2009) on explicit written error correction—the type of feedback where the L2 teacher directly provides the correct forms—have shown that the explicitness of providing feedback may also contribute to the improvement of students' writing accuracy. In addition, teachers' beliefs, practices, and students' preferences regarding written error correction have been studied producing varying results (Ferris, 2004). While it is possible that the difference in the results of previous studies can be attributed to the variety of research designs and methodology employed (Guénette, 2007), it is clear that many studies have been conducted to examine the effectiveness of written error correction in improving L2 writing accuracy.

However, it is apparent that very few studies have attempted to explore teacher’s beliefs toward written error correction and the extent to which these beliefs translate into their practice of written error correction. It is also clear that very few
studies have sought to investigate students’ preferences regarding written error correction.

1.3 PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate ESL writing teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding the provision of written error correction. This study also aimed to explore adult intermediate ESL students’ preferences as to the type of written error correction that they perceive as most helpful in improving their writing accuracy.

Specifically, this study sought answers to the following questions:

1. What are the beliefs of L2 writing teachers regarding written error correction?
2. What are the teachers’ written error correction practices (explicit, implicit, or a combination of both)?
3. What are the preferences of L2 writing students regarding written error correction?

The beliefs of two L2 writing teachers were elicited through two semi-structured face-to-face interviews; an initial interview with each teacher took place before the weekly observation of the writing class was conducted; and a follow-up post-observation interview was carried out with each teacher to further explore teacher beliefs regarding written error correction. Student preferences were elicited through a questionnaire with a follow-up focus group interview; and sample written texts corrected by the teachers were collected and analysed to explore the translation of teachers’ beliefs into practice regarding written error correction. Classes were observed using the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) Observation Scheme in order to record interactions between teachers’
practices and students’ reactions in the L2 classroom. Data collection procedures will be further discussed in the Methodology section (Chapter 3).

1.4 IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

Corrective error feedback is a vital component of L2 writing instruction and teachers must prepare to execute it competently, carefully, and consistently in order to fully utilise its potential for improving students’ writing accuracy (Ferris, 2004). The results of this study might entail a new perspective in the teaching of L2 writing, focusing more on teachers’ self-reflection and self-evaluation of their strategies in providing written error correction. Since previous studies have provided conflicting evidence regarding the effectiveness of written error correction in improving the writing accuracy of L2 students, this study may be utilised to add to the results of past studies as well as provide justifications for methods and approaches employed in future studies.

Furthermore, very few studies have been conducted to explore the connection between teacher beliefs and practices in written error correction and the extent to which teacher practices and student preferences match. The results of this study will add to the growing body of studies that have examined the extent to which teachers’ beliefs translate into written error correction practice. Since the provision of error corrective feedback is such an important aspect of the teaching of L2 writing, this study may uncover the underlying beliefs that affect teachers’ practices which may help in identifying factors that may contribute to providing written error correction more effectively. Results of the present study may be valuable to L2 writing teachers in adapting their written error correction techniques to the needs of their students.
1.5 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The present study focused on the two types of written error correction on students’ written drafts: explicit (also referred to as “direct” or “overt” error correction); and implicit (also referred to as “indirect” or “suggestive” error correction). Alternative types such as oral corrective feedback by the teachers and peer-to-peer corrective feedback from the students are beyond the scope of this study. Further explanations of the two types of error correction will be discussed in the Review of Literature (Chapter 2). In addition, the setting of the present study will concentrate on English as a Second Language (ESL) writing students only. First language (L1) speakers and English as Foreign Language (EFL) students are beyond the scope of this study.

The present study was conducted at an intensive English language centre, with two ESL writing teachers and two classes of adult intermediate ESL students enrolled in English for Academic Purposes (EAP) course. Teachers and students in classes that are focusing on other English macro skills such as reading, listening, and speaking; as well as language classes for specific purposes is beyond the scope of this study. Further details of the participants will be discussed in the Participants section (Chapter 3).

1.6 SUMMARY

This chapter has highlighted key current unresolved issues in written error correction; and discussed the purpose, importance, and scope of the present study. The next chapter will review the body of literature to provide an overview and synthesis of related studies. The Review of Literature will be followed by chapters presenting the study with implications and recommendations respectively.
CHAPTER 2
Review of Literature

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will begin by discussing the theoretical perspectives of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) related to error correction with the intention of contextualising the role of written error correction in language learning. It will then document the ongoing debate by reviewing previous studies on the effectiveness of providing written error correction. This will be followed by a summary of literature on teachers’ beliefs and practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. The pertinent literature will be reviewed and analysed in order to provide a theoretical foundation for the present study and to provide an overview of the focus and findings of previous research in order to establish areas for further study.

2.2 SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION (SLA) THEORIES

The value of language and language acquisition cannot be stressed enough for language permeates every part of human experience by creating and reflecting images of that experience, and without it, human life is virtually impossible to imagine (Kumaravadivelu, 2006). In order to contextualise the role of written error correction in L2 learning, it is essential to discuss the different theoretical perspectives of Second Language Acquisition (SLA). Over the years, theorists and researchers have investigated one fundamental question: how does a person learn another language after learning the first? Because of this, various models of SLA have been developed in order to explain how people are able to learn an L2. This
section of the chapter will discuss the various SLA theories that are relevant to understanding the role of error correction in language teaching methodology.

2.2.1 Behaviourist Theory of Language Learning

One of the fundamental theories that brought about the emergence of providing written error correction in the L2 writing classroom was the Behaviourist theory. During the 1950s, the Behaviourist theory dominated mainstream psychology. According to this theory, language learning involves the formation of habits: this perspective stems from work in psychology that viewed the learning of any kind of behaviour as being based on the notions of stimulus and response (Ellis, 1994; Mitchell & Myles, 2004). In other words, the Behaviourist theory asserts that humans are exposed to numerous language stimuli in their environment and their repeated responses to these stimuli will lead to the formation of habits. When applied to language learning, the behaviourist view implies that language learning is promoted when the learner makes active and repeated responses to the stimuli (Skinner, 1957). These responses are then reinforced when repeated over and over to form habits that consist of automated responses elicited by a given stimulus. Hence, the implications for language teaching are that language learning would take place through imitation and repetition of the same structures time after time. Furthermore, the theory suggests that teachers need to focus their teaching on structures which were believed to be difficult. By considering this implication, it can be inferred that written error correction provided by teachers could serve as the stimuli to which language learners would actively respond in order to promote effective language acquisition.
However, the Behaviourist theory was criticised by Chomsky (1959). According to Chomsky, learners create new sentences that they have never learned before, rather than simply reproducing utterances to suit particular situations. Learners are able to create new sentences by internalising rules, rather than a string of words. In addition, Chomsky states that the process of language learning is complex and abstract. Some of the structural aspects of language could not possibly be learned by students on the sole basis of language stimuli to which learners are exposed. This criticism led to the demise of the Behaviourist theory, and linguists started viewing the nature of language learning within a naturalistic/communicative perspective. Furthermore, it can be inferred from Chomsky’s criticism that providing written error correction may have a minimal effect on students’ language development since structural aspects of a target language are learned through internalising language rules, rather than repeated responses to stimuli.

2.2.2 Krashen’s Monitor Model of SLA

Perhaps the most debated and most fully-elaborated model of SLA is Krashen’s Monitor Model (1982). The model consists of five hypotheses, but for the purposes of this study, only the hypotheses relevant to error correction will be discussed. The first hypothesis, known as the acquisition-learning hypothesis, states the difference between language acquisition and language learning. According to the hypothesis, language “acquisition” takes place when children unconsciously absorb their L1. This happens during earlier stages of their language development when language is utilised for real communication. Language “learning,” on the other hand, happens during the process when students study the rules of the target language.
In other words, language acquisition connotes a naturalistic perspective that happens when language is absorbed within the language environment for daily communicative purposes; while language learning pertains to a behavioural perspective that involves studying the various rules and structures of the target language (Diaz-Rico, 2004). This distinction between language acquisition and language learning provides an insightful corollary regarding error correction. Krashen argues that since language acquisition occurs naturally, error correction may have little or no effect on the acquisition process. The distinction between “acquiring” and “learning” a language suggests that the student’s ability to write fluently and accurately is “acquired” through exposure to texts in a natural process of communication, rather than through studying grammatical and syntactic rules of the language (Krashen, 1984, Leki, 1992).

The third hypothesis of the Monitor Model is also relevant to error correction. The hypothesis, also known as the Monitor hypothesis, asserts that the rules a student learns contribute very little to the learner’s language ability because language rules are primarily used to facilitate the student’s language output and comprehensible input is a sufficient condition for L2 acquisition. In other words, language rules act as an editor, or “monitor” that is utilised by an L2 student to make changes to the output of the L2 before or after the utterance is actually spoken or written. Because of this, the language rules that students learn through error correction may only have a minimal effect on language production since the output produced by the student is monitored by the acquired language system. Therefore, it can be argued that although providing written error correction facilitates the writing output of students, it is still uncertain as to whether or not language learning has occurred. Furthermore, the hypothesis asserts that the rules students learn have
limited application in communicative situations. Because of this, even if the students learn every rule of the target language, the usefulness of those rules are very limited, and to some extent, useless. Hence, it can be inferred that the monitor hypothesis asserts that error correction, regardless of its application, simply has no effect on the language “acquisition” process.

However, Major (1988) states that those who neglect the importance of grammatical competence tend to ignore errors completely as long as students’ writing output are comprehensible. Because of this, students often produce appropriate but grammatically incorrect sentences. This is illustrated in a study by Lightbown and Spada (1990) that examined the effect of written error correction in communication-focused classrooms on 100 adult intermediate L2 students. Results of their study indicate that the students who seldom received corrective feedback produced less accurate writing than those who frequently received corrective feedback. This work has led some researchers to claim that providing corrective feedback by teaching grammatically accurate forms is helpful in becoming a good communicator. Therefore, it can be argued that providing written error correction to students’ writings should not be dismissed until conclusive evidence of its ineffectiveness is found.

2.2.3 Two Types of Language Skills

In learning L2, the student must be exposed to the target language through formal or informal input (Leki, 1992). This input may be oral or written and the nature of the input will have an impact on how the student internalises the target language. Cummins (1979) distinguishes between two types of language acquisition: Basic Interpersonal Communicative Skills (BICS) and Cognitive Academic Language
Proficiency (CALP). BICS are skills primarily used in listening and speaking that students acquire easily, particularly through immersion within an environment where they can interact with native speakers on a daily basis.

In contrast, CALP is the basis for a student's ability to handle various academic demands regarding the L2. For example, a student may have acquired well-developed BICS by spending a considerable amount of time in an environment where he could interact with L1 speakers on a regular basis, but still have difficulty in an academic environment that demands proficiency in CALP. The reverse may be true as well. A student with a high proficiency in CALP may find it difficult to interact and communicate in an environment that demands BICS, such as carrying on a conversation, or speaking and understanding informal English. This distinction between BICS and CALP reflects Krashen’s (1982) hypothesis regarding the difference between “acquisition” and “learning.” In this case, BICS are skills that are acquired through immersion within the L2 environment. On the other hand, CALP is developed by studying grammar rules through formal language instruction.

Therefore, it can be inferred that L2 speakers who have attained a high degree of fluency and accuracy in everyday spoken English may not have the corresponding language proficiency and skills acceptable in an academic environment. Hence, it can be argued that the provision of written error correction in L2 instruction may have a helpful effect in developing and improving language skills, particularly in a formal L2 classroom setting.

2.2.4 Interlanguage Theory and Processes

Another theory that has been dominant in SLA is Selinker’s (1972) Interlanguage theory. Interlanguage refers to the language system that each student constructs at any given point in their second language development. In other words,
Interlanguage is the language output that students produce while in the process of learning either an L2 or a foreign language. The theory asserts that language produced by a student is a system in its own right and follows its own rules; and that it is also a dynamic system that evolves overtime (Mitchell & Myles, 2004). Because of this, the theory focuses very much on the student’s innate mental ability for acquiring a target language (Corder, 1967). Considering this, it can be assumed that an L2 student, at any particular stage in his learning sequence, is using a language system that is different from the target input in his environment and also different from the grammar representations of his L1 (Ortega, 2009). This assumption begs the question: how does a student create his Interlanguage? Ortega (2009) highlights four processes that students use in order to acquire Interlanguage.

Simplification reflects a process that is both syntactic and semantic, in which the student uses very little speech in order to convey a message, much similar to the language that early L1 learners use. Overgeneralisation is a process in which the student uses an L2 rule in situations where an L1 speaker would not. This process can occur randomly or systematically at phonetic, grammatical, lexical, and discourse levels. Restructuring is a process in which the student uses his own L1 as a resource in order to reorganise grammar knowledge representations. Part of the restructuring process is the U-shaped behaviour, in which the L2 students manifest a target-language form in their output at an early stage of development and then manifest an Interlanguage form at a later stage. In other words, the final product of the L2 student cannot be distinguished from the initial product. These processes shape the stages in which students are thought to learn an L2; however, there is no guarantee that all L2 students will achieve proficiency in the target grammar system.
(Ortega, 2009) and many L2 students may stop along the way, perhaps permanently. This is fossilisation, as Selinker (1972) calls it.

Fossilisation is the permanent lack of mastery of a target language despite continuous exposure, instruction, and sufficient opportunity for practicing the target language (Han, 2004). Many case studies (Schumann, 1972; Lardiere, 2007; Han, 2000; Han, 2006) have been conducted to investigate the phenomenon of fossilisation. However, Ortega (2009) points out the limitations that make the existence of fossilisation very problematic to demonstrate. Firstly, the cessation of language learning cannot simply be investigated unless the students are studied over a very long period of time, maybe even the entirety of their lives. Secondly, it is very difficult to document and ensure that the participants in any study of fossilisation have experienced truly optimal conditions for language learning. These conditions include sufficient opportunities for exposure and practice of the target language; positive attitudes and motivation of the students towards the target language; and, the aid of effective language instruction. Therefore, it can be inferred that fossilisation, albeit highly intuitive, still warrants further exploration. By further considering the nature of fossilisation, it can be argued that providing effective written error correction may have an important role in language instruction in order to preclude its occurrence. For example, the provision of error correction may attract the attention of the L2 student and aid him to discover not only the errors in his output, but also new features of the target language.

2.2.5 Pienemann’s Teachability Hypothesis

From the theory of Interlanguage, it can be inferred that in order for L2 students to effectively learn a target language, effective language instruction is necessary. In addition, it can be inferred that there is a need to explore student-
centred factors such as age, motivation, cultural background, language aptitude, memory, and learner beliefs; that might affect a learner's language development (Ellis, 2010). To further investigate this, Pienemann (1984) conducted a study on a group of Italian children learning German as a second language. Ten participants were given classroom instruction for two weeks on the structure of inversion. When the participants were tested for the development of the newly instructed language structure, some of the participants have progressed in the language structure while others did not. Based on these results, Pienemann inferred that language teachers can only hope to teach what L2 students are developmentally ready to learn. From this, he formalised the idea of the Teachability Hypothesis.

This hypothesis predicts that language instruction can only promote acquisition if the L2 student’s Interlanguage is close to the point when the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting. In other words, L2 students can benefit from language instruction only when their current level of language development is ready for it. From this assumption, it can be argued that the influence of teaching is restricted to the learning items which the L2 student is ready to process. Furthermore, Pienemann argues that when the student is at the appropriate language acquisition stage, language instruction can improve L2 acquisition with respect to the speed of acquisition; the frequency of rule application; and the different linguistic contexts in which the rule has to be applied. Therefore, it can be inferred that the feedback provided by L2 teachers is optimal during the stage when students are ready to internalise the feedback. In addition, the implication of this hypothesis regarding error correction in second language instruction is that L2 teachers need to focus their feedback and error correction strategies to suit the language learning readiness of the students.
The study was widely criticised because of the small sample size. Its validity and applicability have been questioned because of the difficulty in identifying the students’ current state of language development. Furthermore, research by others (e.g. Lightbown, 1985) demonstrated that L2 students are able to develop language structures that have no bearing on the language structures introduced by the teachers. Nevertheless, a teaching implication may be drawn from the Teachability Hypothesis—that is, language teachers should carefully consider what their L2 students are ready to learn. With regard to providing error correction in students’ writing, teachers should adapt their error correction strategies to their students’ current level of language development.

2.2.6 Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis

Another theory that has implications on the practice of written error correction is the Noticing hypothesis. Second language researchers have developed the idea that the amount of attention that an L2 student is paying to matters of form may influence to some degree the production of L2 which has been processed for it to become embedded into the student’s developing second language system. In other words, the extent of what an L2 student consciously pays attention to may have an effect on his developing L2 system. From this, it can be argued that written error correction may provide helpful stimuli to draw the attention of L2 students towards matters of form that can assist in embedding the correct structure of the target language into students’ developing language system. One of the researchers who have been most influential in promoting this particular view is Richard Schmidt (1994, 2001) by proposing the Noticing Hypothesis in the early 1990s.

The Noticing Hypothesis, according to Schmidt (1994) asserts that selective attention or “noticing” may be influencing the processing of utterances during second
language learning and that in order for students to learn any aspect of the L2, they need to “notice” the relevant material in the linguistic data provided within the environment. In other words, the attention of L2 students needs to be directed to specific forms in order for them to recognise new linguistic features of the L2.

Researchers such as Philp (2003) have recently undertaken empirical studies to clarify how “noticing” may be a factor that influences the processing of utterances during second language learning. In his study, Philp provided English L2 students with a story completion and a picture learning task. In order to complete the tasks, the students had to ask questions and their interlocutors provided active recasts when the students made errors. However, the L2 students were prompted by a signal periodically to repeat what the interlocutor had said, and their ability to do this was interpreted as evidence that they had been “noticing” the recasts, at least paying enough attention to be holding them in working memory. This demonstrated that the L2 students in the study could reproduce a high proportion of the recasts because they were paying attention to it. The implications of Philp’s study on error correction are that feedback from teachers is able to draw students into noticing not only the errors in their utterances, but also new features of the L2. Furthermore, it can be argued that error correction promotes awareness on the part of L2 students, which according to the hypothesis, promotes effective L2 learning.

Considering the various SLA theories that have been discussed, various implications on written error correction can be drawn. Firstly, Behaviourist theory asserts that language acquisition involves the formation of habits through repeated and active responses to stimuli. From this, there is an implication that written error correction may serve as a stimuli to which students may actively respond in order to promote effective language acquisition. Secondly, even though Krashen’s Monitor
model asserts that error correction has no effect on the language acquisition process, it can be argued that the provision of written error correction should not be dismissed unless conclusive evidence of its ineffectiveness is found. This may be because L2 students who have attained a high degree of fluency with the target language within a communicative environment may not necessarily have the corresponding language proficiency that is acceptable in an academic environment. Thirdly, it can be argued that providing written error correction may have an important role in language instruction in precluding the occurrence of fossilisation. Fourthly, Pienemann’s Teachability hypothesis asserts that students can benefit from language instruction only when they are developmentally ready for it. The theory presents an implication that the provision of written error correction is optimal during the stage when students are ready to internalise the feedback. Lastly, Schmidt’s Noticing hypothesis presents an implication that written error correction may serve as a noticing facilitator that may promote awareness on the part of L2 students which may entail effective L2 learning. Because of these implications, there has been constant growth in the improvement and integration of language teaching. The next section will discuss the background of language teaching methods developed from the 1960s in order to contextualise the role of error correction in second language instruction.

2.3 BACKGROUND OF LANGUAGE TEACHING METHODS

One of the earliest documented language teaching methods is the Grammar-Translation Method, where students study grammar and the vocabulary from a reading. The objective of this method is for students to acquire and develop the ability to translate between the L1 and the target language (Stern, 1983). This method focuses entirely on the written language, and emphasized on accuracy.
Students are expected to attain high standards in translation between their first language and the target language, and very little, or no consideration is given to oral language development for communicative purposes. However, it is criticised as a method for which there is no theory or literature that relates it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Furthermore, SLA theories such as Krashen’s Monitor Model and Chomsky’s Universal Grammar theory have influenced views regarding second language acquisition. Because of this, opposition to the Grammar-Translation Method gradually developed in the mid-nineteenth century. Due to the limited effectiveness of the Grammar-Translation Method for communicative purposes, and the growing realisation that L2 is acquired communicatively, new perspectives on innovative language teaching methods emerged.

With the development of the Audio-Lingual Method in the United States during World War II, a stimulus-response method to language teaching emerged throughout the 1950s and 1960s (Larsen-Freeman, 1986). Based on the Behaviourist view of language learning, the underlying theory behind this method is that L2 learners form habits brought about by exposure to language stimuli and their corresponding responses to these stimuli. From this method, learners were expected to repeat and memorise correct syntax and forms of the target language (Hendrickson, 1980). This is to enable students to use the target language fluently and accurately in communicative situations. Because of this, language teachers opted to correct every single error immediately after it occurred in order to avoid fossilisation. Since the pedagogical focus back then was on grammatical accuracy, oral error correction was one of the main roles of language teachers.
However, the emergence of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) changed attitudes towards the provision of corrective feedback. According to Larsen-Freeman and Long (1991), rather than making students memorise the rules of language, the communicative approach aims to have students perform various functions of the target language. Hence, the communicative approach focuses more on the students utilising the target language fluently in various communicative situations instead of simply having them memorise correct grammatical patterns and sentence forms. In other words, language instruction concentrated on communication, regardless of errors in utterances since SLA has recognised that making errors is an inevitable and natural part of the second language learning process (Nunan & Lamb, 1996).

Several researchers have challenged the CLT position and produced a body of research that supports the potential benefits of providing corrective feedback (Lalande, 1982; Ferris, 1995; Ferris, 1997). In addition, Zamel (1985) and Hyland & Hyland (2006) have argued that corrective feedback is still frequently provided by teachers in many language classrooms.

In her study, Zamel (ibid.) investigated the comments, reactions, and markings that appeared on compositions assigned and evaluated by 15 ESL teachers to see how teachers respond to their students’ writings. Over 105 intermediate ESL students’ texts were analysed in the study. Results showed that the teachers provide overwhelmingly large amounts of corrective feedback on a regular basis. Moreover, results of her study indicate that the ESL writing teachers often respond to student texts as fixed and final products, and rarely make content-specific comments to recommend revision. Implications of her study suggest that teachers, through self-reflection, should change their methods of providing feedback.
so that students can better understand how to revise their writing based on the feedback they received. However, it should be noted that the data analysed in her study comprised only of student texts corrected by teachers. The study did not include student texts that have already been revised by the students after receiving feedback. It would have been illuminating to conduct a follow-up investigation regarding whether the students utilised the written corrective feedback they received in order to revise their writing effectively.

Another example of evidence in the literature showing the high rate of corrective feedback provided by ESL teachers is Hyland & Hyland’s (2006) article regarding feedback on intermediate L2 students’ writing. The article examined recent research related to feedback on L2 students’ writing, focusing on the role of feedback in writing instruction and discussing current issues relating to teacher written and oral feedback, collaborative peer feedback and computer-mediated feedback. According to the article, results of recent research suggest that teachers feel they must write substantial comments on papers to provide a reader reaction towards students’ written texts. Moreover, teachers do not simply respond to grammar or content, but have other purposes. Teachers adopt different commenting techniques which vary according to the type of essay assigned, the point of the semester in which feedback is provided, and the proficiency of the students. From this, it can be inferred that teachers spend a considerable amount of time and put additional effort into commenting on their students’ writing because they feel that providing feedback is essential for the development of their students’ L2 writing skills. However, Hyland & Hyland (2006) point out that even though providing feedback occurs frequently in L2 writing classrooms, evidence of its effectiveness remains unclear.
These contrasting views on error correction have sparked a debate on whether or not teachers ought to provide written error correction. Based on the literature, it is apparent that conclusive evidence regarding the effectiveness of corrective feedback has not yet been established, and researchers have approached the issue in a variety of ways. Recent literature regarding the positive and negative perspectives on error correction will be discussed in the next section.

2.4 THE ERROR CORRECTION DEBATE

Although writing teachers and students have traditionally viewed written error correction as playing an integral role in improving L2 writing accuracy (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 2004; Brown, 2007), debate regarding its effectiveness has emerged in the past decade (Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999; Chandler, 2003). Results of some studies (Kepner, 1991; Truscott & Hsu, 2008) indicate that error correction is not only ineffective, but also potentially detrimental to L2 writing development. However, findings from other studies (Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Bitchener, 2008) reveal that error correction is effective and helpful in the development and improvement of students’ L2 writing accuracy. This section will discuss the negative and positive perspectives of written error correction.

2.4.1 Negative Perspectives of Error Correction

There are many viewpoints regarding the effects of error correction: it has been positioned as effective or ineffective; valid, or invalid; beneficial or harmful. However, despite the lack of a definitive answer, many L2 teachers feel the need to provide written corrective feedback in order to assist students’ language learning (Brown, 2007; Casanave, 2007; Goldstein, 2008).
Truscott (1996) argued that grammar correction in L2 writing classes should be abandoned. He supported this view with an extensive review of past studies that demonstrated grammar correction to be ineffective and unhelpful. In addition, he maintained that grammar correction has detrimental effects on the development of L2 student writing accuracy. He supports this claim by stating Krashen’s Monitor hypothesis of SLA—that comprehensible input is a sufficient condition for L2 acquisition. Therefore, he concludes that grammar correction should be discontinued in writing instruction and suggests that the improvement in students’ accuracy will more effectively be achieved through extensive experience with the target language by a variety of reading and writing exercises. Truscott’s review of the literature on error correction suggests that there is a great deal of evidence against the effectiveness of error correction and no evidence to support it.

Truscott (1996) explains three problems of error correction related to SLA theory in order to justify that error correction is not only ineffective, but also harmful. First of all, the processes underlying language development have not yet been well understood. He claims that many teachers’ standard views of error correction are stereotypical in that if a student’s grammatical errors are corrected and correct forms are provided through feedback, the student will be able to use the structure properly in the future. Therefore, it can be argued that simple transfer of information from teacher to student through corrective feedback does not necessarily work because the complexities of language development system make providing error correction extremely difficult to practice effectively.

Secondly, Truscott (1996) argues that language students acquire grammatical rules and features in a specific order and problems may arise when the sequences of language instruction are inconsistent with the learning sequences. This claim is
also supported by Pienemann’s (1984) “teachability hypothesis” which asserts that instruction can only promote language learning if the structure to be taught is acquired in the natural setting. In other words, if teachers correct the errors that students are not yet ready to learn, then the error correction has little value.

Similarly, results of Kepner’s (1991) study revealed that students who received error correction in their journal entries did not perform significantly better than those that did not receive any written corrective feedback. This implies that no matter how many times a grammatical structure is corrected, students will not be able to utilise the correct structure properly on a regular basis until they are ready to learn and internalise the structure of the target language. Therefore, it can be inferred that providing written corrective feedback can only be effective when it is employed consistently with the learning sequences of the students. However, correcting errors effectively is very difficult given the diverse nature students’ learning styles.

The final problem, according to Truscott (ibid.), is that some types of teaching and/or learning strategies may be inconsistent with regard to the complexity of Interlanguage development processes. As previously discussed, Interlanguage is the language produced by a student while in the process of learning either a second or foreign language (Selinker, 1972). Truscott argues that there is still a considerable amount of uncertainty and complexity underlying the process of Interlanguage development. Thus, it is possible that some types of teaching and/or learning strategies may not have any effect to the actual developing system; hence, students will only acquire useless knowledge of the language.

The findings of Truscott and Hsu’s (2008) study on forty-seven English as Foreign Language (EFL) graduate students that investigated whether error reduction
during revision is a measure of learning has reinforced negative perspectives on error correction. They suggest that error reduction during revision is not evidence of learning, as the two groups that participated in the study were dramatically different on the first narrative exercise, but indistinguishable on the second narrative. This is a direct rebuttal of previous research (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 2004; Lee, 2004; Bitchener, 2008) that viewed the reduction of students’ errors in writing as evidence of learning, and questions the effectiveness of error correction. By demonstrating that the reduction of errors in students’ writing does not mean that language learning has occurred, Truscott and Hsu argue that previous studies—which viewed the reduced number of errors as evidence of the effectiveness of error correction, are invalid and support Truscott’s view that error correction should be abandoned.

2.4.2 Positive Perspectives of Error Correction

Contrary to what some critics (Kepner, 1991; Truscott, 1996) have stated, advocates of corrective feedback have produced research evidence that supports the potential benefits of providing written error correction. For example, Ferris (1999) contested Truscott’s claims against the effectiveness of grammar correction. She evaluated Truscott’s arguments and examined the studies he used to support his claims. She outlined two weaknesses in Truscott’s argument: (1) that there are more and less effective ways to approach error correction in L2 writing; and (2) that Truscott has under- or over-stated the results and claims of previous studies to support his own research agenda. Ferris’ challenge led to further debate in the field over the effectiveness of error correction and studies were then conducted to explore the issue further and provide evidence that either supported or opposed the use of error correction in L2 writing pedagogy (Truscott, 1999; Fazio, 2001; Chandler, 2003; Ferris 2004; Lee, 2004; Bitchener, 2008). An example is Chandler’s (2003) study on
the efficacy of various kinds of error correction for improvement in the accuracy of L2 student writing. Results from the study showed greater improvement in the accuracy of students who received error correction than of those who did not. The results of Chandler's study also showed that students who received error correction improved in L2 writing accuracy over time. The findings of her study refute Truscott's assertion that error correction is ineffective and detrimental to the development of students' L2 writing accuracy.

Another example of research that yielded findings that support the effectiveness of error correction is Bitchener's (2008) two-month study on the efficacy of written error correction to seventy-five low intermediate international ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand. The aim of the study was to investigate whether corrective feedback on ESL student writing resulted in improved accuracy in L2 essay writing over a two-month period; and to investigate whether there is an effect on accuracy for different corrective feedback methods. The students were assigned to four groups, three of which received written corrective feedback, and the other one, a control group; received no corrective feedback. The results of the study show that with respect to accuracy, students who received written corrective feedback outperformed those in the control group. In addition, results of the study show that the students' level of performance was retained two months later when further examination was conducted. Furthermore, implications of Bitchener's (2008) study oppose Truscott's (1996) finding that provision of error correction does not promote second language learning. Although, it can be argued that the varying results from previous studies have yielded could be attributed to differences in research design such as variations in participants, sample size and methodology. Therefore, it can be
inferred that further understanding on the effects of error correction can be explored by conducting investigations with similar research designs.

In an attempt to collate and analyse the various studies that shaped the growing debate on error correction, Guénette (2007) examined existing research and argued that findings of past research regarding error correction can be attributed to the variations in research design and methodology. She discussed three parameters in which the design features of previous research (Lalande, 1982; Fathman & Walley, 1990; Ashwell, 2000; Chandler, 2003) on the effectiveness of error correction vary. These parameters include: population, comparison between groups, and longitudinal and cross-sectional designs. By examining variations in research design, she suggests that it is only when research designs are similar in scope and methodology that comparison between groups can provide relevant information to help further understanding of the effectiveness of error correction. Guénette concluded that further research should include different types of research design to address different issues and control as many variables as possible. It should also be noted that the studies (Lalande, 1982; Ashwell, 2000; Ferris and Roberts, 2001; Chandler, 2003) focused on the analysis of error correction on students’ written texts which reflected teachers’ practices, and little or no connection was made between the preference of the students in error correction to the beliefs and practices of the teachers.

Taking all the theoretical and empirical evidence highlighted above into account, it is apparent that the issue of the effectiveness of written error correction warrants further exploration. In addition, it can be inferred that previous studies on error correction have produced varying results because of differences in research design. Nevertheless, it can be argued that error correction should be continued
unless its ineffectiveness and harmfulness has been conclusively proven. The next section of this chapter will discuss the roles of written error correction in second language teaching methodology.

2.5 THE ROLES OF WRITTEN ERROR CORRECTION

Error correction, whether oral or written, is the process of providing clear, comprehensive, and consistent corrective feedback on a student's grammatical errors for the purpose of improving the student's ability to write accurately (Ferris, 2002). It can be argued that providing written error correction is indispensible because it plays an important role in guiding, motivating, and encouraging students to improve their accuracy in L2 writing (Brannon, & Knoblauch, 1982). Despite the process of providing corrective feedback being frustrating, difficult, and time-consuming, teachers still prefer to provide written error correction because it allows for individualised teacher-to-student communication that is rarely possible in the day-to-day operations of an L2 writing class (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997). This begs the question: what is the function of providing written error correction? The following section will discuss the roles of error correction in L2 instruction.

2.5.1 Error Correction as Focus-on-Form Intervention

Error correction is one of the pedagogical tools identified as a focus-on-form instrument (Ellis, 2005; Van Beuningen; 2010). According to Long (1991, p.46), the focus-on-form approach “overtly draws students’ attention to linguistic elements as they arise incidentally in lessons whose overriding focus is on meaning or communication.” In other words, the L2 student’s attention will be drawn explicitly to linguistic features as necessitated by communicative demand.
In addition, Long (1991) argues that language instruction based on focus–on-form can be achieved in two principal ways. First, language activities can be developed that require students to communicate while also focusing their attention on specific language structures. Second, language teachers can decide to provide corrective feedback on students’ errors during the course of communication activities. The latter is particularly relevant to error correction.

Considering this perspective, it can be inferred that error correction is provided to focus students’ attention on grammatically accurate forms within the context of performing a communicative task. Hence, it can be argued that one of the roles of error correction in L2 instruction is to promote students’ production of L2 structures that are grammatically accurate and are still applicable for communicative purposes.

2.5.2 Error Correction to Facilitate Noticing

As discussed previously, the Noticing hypothesis states that in order for students to learn any aspect of the L2, they need to “notice” the relevant material in the linguistic data provided within the environment. Ortega (2009) defines “noticing” as the human brain’s response to and registration of new material with a degree of awareness that there is something new, even if there is neither understanding of how the new element works nor any reportable memory of the encounter with the new material. In other words, noticing is simply the brain registering new information regardless of whether that new information is understood or recalled at a later time. In addition, Schmidt argues that the more L2 learners notice, the more they learn the L2.

Taking the hypothesis into consideration, implications regarding error correction in L2 instruction emerge. Firstly, by providing error correction, students
are able to pay attention to the existence of new features of the L2. In addition, students become aware and are able to locate the gaps between their L2 usage and that of the L1 speaker’s. Secondly, error correction might help students to discover the limitations of their L2 communication abilities with their given L2 resources. Therefore, it can be argued that error correction could function as a “noticing facilitator” that directs the attention of the L2 student not only towards error, but also towards new features of the target language.

2.6 APPROACHES AND METHODS OF WRITTEN ERROR CORRECTION

Although providing correct forms of grammatical errors is one of the most popular techniques among many language teachers (Hendrickson, 1980), the use of various types of corrective feedback has been recommended as it is considered to be more effective and successful than simply relying on a single technique. In light of this, researchers have identified two general approaches and two specific methods of written error correction, as shown in Figure 2.1.

![General Approaches and Specific Methods of Written Error Correction](image)
2.6.1 General Approaches: Comprehensive vs. Selective

According to recent literature (Ellis, 2009; Van Beuningen, 2010), there are two general approaches in providing written error correction. These two contrasting approaches refer to the comprehensiveness of written error correction provided by teachers on their students’ written texts. The comprehensive (or unfocused) approach involves the teachers correcting all errors in a student’s text, irrespective of their error category. On the other hand, the selective (or unfocused) approach targets specific linguistic features only, leaving all other errors outside of the current focus domain uncorrected.

Different predictions have been made regarding the effectiveness of both approaches. The comprehensive approach can be related to Schmidt’s (1994) Noticing hypothesis, as previously discussed, in that the correction of all the writing errors in a student’s text may promote more noticing on the student’s part by addressing a wider range of errors. In other words, a comprehensive approach in written error correction may lead the attention of the student not just towards errors in the writing, but also to new features of the target language thereby promoting more effective language learning.

However, Ellis, Loewen, & Erlam (2006) argue that a comprehensive approach in providing written error correction may not be the most effective approach because L2 students have a limited processing capacity. They claimed that asking L2 students to cope with written error correction that covers a wide range of linguistic features at the same time may lead to a cognitive overload that might prohibit the students from processing the feedback they received. The selective approach can be related to Pienemann’s (1984) Teachability hypothesis, as previously discussed, in that L2 students are able to effectively learn new features of
the target language only when they are developmentally ready for it. Furthermore, Ellis (2009) claims that a selective approach in written error correction may prove more effective as L2 students are able to examine multiple corrections of a single error. Because of this, L2 students might obtain not only a richer understanding as to why what they wrote was erroneous, but also opportunities to acquire the correct form.

Whether one approach is more effective than the other still needs further investigation because to date, there are no studies comparing the relative effects of comprehensive and selective approaches in written error correction. The next section will discuss the two specific methods in providing written error correction.

2.6.2 Explicit Written Error Correction

Explicit error correction (also referred to as “direct” or “overt” error correction) is the type of feedback where the L2 teacher directly provides the correct forms or structures to explicitly show the error in the linguistic structure of the student’s written text (Ferris, 2002; Ferris, 2003), as shown in Figure 2.2.

![Figure 2.2 Example of Explicit Written Error Correction](image)

2.6.3 Implicit Written Error Correction

Implicit error correction, on the other hand, is the type of feedback where the L2 teacher simply shows that an error has been made through various means such as simple underlining, marginal description, encircling, or correction codes (see Appendix 1) referring to specific grammatical errors, as shown in Figure 2.3.
Previous studies conducted over the effectiveness of both methods of written error correction have produced varying results regarding which type is more effective. Lalande’s (1982) study of 60 intermediate German language students reported a reduction in students’ errors in writing when implicit types of error correction were employed. Similarly, findings of Lee’s (1997) research on 149 advanced level ESL students’ performance on a writing task suggest that implicit error correction may be more desirable than explicit error correction. Lee argues that the students’ inaccuracy was mainly due to their failure in detecting errors, rather than their lack of knowledge in L2, which she asserts that the assumption of explicit error correction is based upon.

However, a study conducted by Ellis, Loewen and Erlam (2006) on lower intermediate English as a Second Language (ESL) students yielded different results indicating that explicit error correction was, overall, more effective than implicit error correction for treating errors in verb tenses. In addition, results from a study conducted by Varnosfadrani and Basturkmen (2009) on 56 upper-intermediate Iranian ESL students revealed higher scores in the forty-item Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) practice test of grammar for the explicitly corrected group than the implicitly corrected one; indicating that explicit error correction is more effective in improving writing accuracy.

The varying results of previous studies on the effectiveness of the two methods of written error correction could be attributed to the varying samples used in
the studies as well as the diversity of methods used (Guénette, 2007). Although many extensive studies have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of the two types of error correction in L2 writing (Lalande, 1982; Lee, 1997; Chandler, 2003; Bitchener, Young & Cameron, 2005; Ellis, Loewen & Erlam, 2006; Varnosfadrani & Basturkmen, 2009), it should be noted that there has been relatively little research incorporating an examination of students’ preference, and teachers’ beliefs and practices regarding error correction.

2.6.4 Error Correction Codes

Another type of implicit written error correction is the use of error correction codes. This technique involves providing correction codes that include symbols (e.g. ‘[ ]’ for a missing word, or ‘( )’ for extra words) and abbreviations (e.g. SIV – Subject Verb Agreement, pl/sing – Plural/Singular) to inform the L2 student not only that an error has been made, but also the kind of error made (Hendrickson, 1984). (For more detailed examples of error correction codes, see Appendix 1)

According to Hyland (1990), error correction codes allow language teachers to provide implicit feedback, and reduce negative and disheartening effects of indicating writing errors without reducing the effects of error correction. This is particularly relevant to language teachers who are very meticulous with accuracy, the result of which is that students’ writings are often covered with red ink (Harmer, 1991). However, with error correction codes, language teachers can simply supply both the type and location of errors. Furthermore, using error correction codes allows teachers to indicate teaching points that have already been taught to the L2 students.

By discussing the different types of written error correction, it can be inferred that each technique of providing feedback (whether explicit or implicit) has its
advantages and disadvantages. The next section of this chapter will present and discuss relevant studies that have investigated teacher beliefs and practices in written error correction.

2.7 TYPES OF ERRORS (GLOBAL VS. LOCAL)

Aside from theorising about the most effective method in providing written error correction, researchers have also investigated the kinds of errors that should be targeted when providing written error correction. Various proposals have been put forward in relation to this issue. For example, Corder (1967) claimed that L2 students’ errors are important in three different ways. Firstly, students’ errors inform the teacher how far towards the language course objective the students have progressed, and consequently, how much is left for students to learn. Secondly, students’ errors provide researchers with information as to how the L2 is learned and what strategies students employ in order to achieve proficiency in the L2. Thirdly, Corder claims that errors are indispensible tools that students use in order to learn the L2. By considering Corder’s claims, it can be inferred that students’ errors are important, not only for the investigation of the complex nature of language learning, but also for the improvement of students’ writing accuracy.

In addition, Burt (1975) distinguished two types of errors that teachers encounter when providing written error correction. He referred to errors that interfere with the entire message of the written text as global errors. Local errors, on the other hand, are minor linguistic violations that have no effect on the intended meaning that the written text is trying to convey. In other words, the main difference between global and local errors is the gravity of interference or inhibition they create to the meaning of the written text. Hendrickson (1980) proposed that teachers should
provide written error correction solely on global errors since they inhibit communication. However, the effects of targeting specific types of errors when providing written error correction still warrants further investigation.

2.8 TEACHER BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Teacher beliefs, which have been a common focus of previous studies in second language education (Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985; Lee, 2004; Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Phipps & Borg, 2009), are important aspects that influence teacher practice. Borg (2001) defines teacher beliefs as a set of consciously or unconsciously held propositions that serves as a reflection and a guide to the teacher’s thoughts and behaviours. Very few studies have investigated teacher beliefs and perceptions about error correction; and even fewer that explore the correspondence or difference between students’ preferences and actual teaching practice in written error correction (Yates & Kenkel, 2002; Lee, 2004).

An example of such a study was conducted by Hyland & Anan (2006) to investigate the effects of first language (L1) and experience on teachers’ attitudes regarding error correction. The participants were divided into three groups of 16 members each: (1) a group of L2 English speaking teachers, (2) a group of L1 English speaking non-teachers, and (3) a group of L1 English speaking teachers. All participants were given a 150-word text and were asked to evaluate the text holistically, to identify and correct all errors, to select and rank the most serious errors, and to give reasons for their choices. After the task, the participants were asked to complete a questionnaire which gathered biographical data and their beliefs on error correction. Results of the study indicate that although all the participants viewed error correction as a positive pedagogic strategy, they performed the task in
varying ways. Teachers with different experiences contextualise error correction in
different ways and this determines their judgements about acceptability in L2 writing.
This illustrates that teachers’ perception of grammatical errors in L2 writing are highly
influenced by their beliefs about language learning, and might have an effect on the
type of written error correction they provide to improve their students’ L2 writing
accuracy.

A study by Montgomery and Baker (2007) investigated the beliefs and
practices of 15 ESL writing teachers and how their written error correction practices
relate to the preferences of students regarding written error correction. Surveys were
administered to 98 advanced ESL writing students and findings were compared with
teachers’ actual written error correction on student compositions. Results from the
study reveal that students and teachers agreed on the type of written error correction
given 87% of the time. Further results from the study indicate that teachers’ beliefs
regarding written error correction differ from the actual written error correction that
they provided to respond to the students’ texts. This suggests a mismatch between
the teachers’ beliefs and their actual written error correction practice and provides
implications for further research focusing on examining whether aiding L2 writing
teachers to become more aware of their written error correction practices causes
teachers to change how they provide feedback.

Perhaps one of the most noteworthy studies in teacher beliefs and practice
was conducted by Lee (2009) outlining ten mismatches between teachers’ beliefs
and written error correction practice. Lee reports on the findings from a study that
investigated the teachers’ beliefs and practice in written feedback from two sources:
(1) feedback analysis based on written texts collected from teachers with follow-up
interviews and (2) a survey comprising a questionnaire administered to teachers with
follow-up interviews. Since feedback is an important task for teachers, she elicited the beliefs that underlie teachers’ practices in order to help identify the factors that contribute to effective feedback. The key finding of her study is that while teachers tend to correct and locate errors for students, they actually believe that through teacher feedback students should learn to correct and locate their own errors. This demonstrates a mismatch between the teachers’ beliefs and practices suggesting that teachers’ written error correction practice may not allow students to learn how to locate and correct their own errors, even though they believe that it does.

2.9 STUDENT PREFERENCES

Students’ attitudes and preferences have also been explored in recent literature on written error correction. Previous studies have consistently shown that L2 writing students want, expect, and value teacher feedback for the improvement of their writing accuracy (Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Komura, 1999; Leki, 1991). Research also indicates that students rely on teachers for error correction in improving their L2 writing accuracy (Lee, 2004). Further research could explore in greater depth how these error correction preferences affect the ability of students to develop their writing.

Results from two separate studies by Ferris (1997, 2001) indicated that all students who participated in the study preferred their teachers to provide corrective feedback to improve their L2 writing accuracy; the most preferred type was implicit written error correction through the use of codes that label errors in their writing. This suggests that students pay a great deal of attention to teacher feedback and they appreciate having their errors implicitly corrected as a means of improving their writing accuracy. Ferris’ findings also indicate that students perceive implicit written
error correction to be more effective in improving their writing accuracy than explicit written error correction.

Findings from a study by Perpignan (2003) to explore the preferences of Israeli post-graduate students taking up a course in EFL Academic Writing indicate that students’ preferences regarding corrective feedback vary between explicit and implicit written error correction. Findings from the study indicated that there was rarely any agreement in the preferences of the students; which may have stemmed from their varying beliefs in error correction. This suggests that even though the importance of students’ preferences in written error correction cannot be ignored, diversity of preferences is also a possibility.

Considering the literature, it is noticeable that teachers view the provision of written error correction as a positive pedagogic strategy. However, findings from previous studies suggest that teachers performed the task of providing written error correction in varying ways, which may be influenced by their different experiences and judgements about what is acceptable in L2 writing. In addition, findings from previous studies suggest that teachers’ beliefs differ from the actual written error correction techniques that they utilise in the classroom. Furthermore, findings from recent studies have shown that students value having their errors corrected by their teachers. By reviewing the literature, it can be inferred that there is a need for further research to investigate and explore teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction.

2.10 THE NEED FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Various implications on written error correction can be drawn from the different SLA theories that have been discussed. In addition, it is apparent that
findings from previous studies on the effectiveness of written error correction are still inconclusive. By reviewing previous studies on written error correction, it can be inferred that further research is needed to explore and investigate teacher beliefs and practices and the preferences of students regarding written error correction. The present study seeks to address this gap in the literature by examining teacher beliefs, observing teachers’ practices, and identifying the preferences of students regarding written error correction in order to explore these important aspects of L2 writing more thoroughly. By doing so, it is hoped that the present study will contribute to existing research by providing a more comprehensive investigation of teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. Furthermore, the present study may provide the opportunity for teachers to reflect on and adapt their L2 writing instruction.
CHAPTER 3
Methodology

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The previous chapter outlined the key theoretical concepts informing this investigation and the existing research on written error correction. As established in the literature review, the majority of previous studies on written error correction focused on the effectiveness of providing written corrective feedback to students’ writing, while very little research has been conducted to investigate the extent to which teachers’ beliefs translate into actual teaching practice. In addition, there are few studies that explore both teachers’ beliefs and students’ preferences regarding written error correction practices. Although the amount of research on written error correction is steadily growing (Ferris, 2004; Guénette, 2007), it is apparent that there is a lack of qualitative research into teacher beliefs and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. This is surprising, as utilising a qualitative research design has the potential to enable a more in-depth exploration and examination of teacher beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. This gap in the literature served to inform the design of the present study. This chapter explains the research design of the study, and discusses the methods used to collect data to investigate teacher beliefs, practices, and student preferences regarding written error correction.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The aim of this study is to investigate teachers’ beliefs and practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. In order to achieve this aim,
the present study incorporated aspects and features that used tools of an ethnographic research approach to collect qualitative data to provide insights into the research issue.

Specifically, this study aimed to address the following research questions:

1. What are the beliefs of L2 writing teachers regarding written error correction?
2. What are the teachers’ written error correction practices (explicit, implicit, or a combination of both)?
3. What are the preferences of L2 students regarding written error correction?

3.3 RESEARCH DESIGN

Since the research questions were essentially exploratory in nature, they could be more effectively addressed through a qualitative methodological approach. The qualitative research design adopted here involved asking participants broad, general questions; collecting the views of participants in the form of words or images; and analysing the collected information for description and themes useful for exploring and understanding a central phenomenon (Creswell, 2005). The approach is designed to be flexible in order to provide adaptability and consistency to address research issues to further explore the shared culture of a group of people. In order to address the research questions, the present study adapted aspects and features of an ethnographic research design (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Creswell, 2005; Fetterman, 2010).

Ethnography is a type of qualitative research design that features procedures for describing, analysing, and interpreting the beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours of a culture-sharing group within a context (Creswell, 2005; Fetterman, 2010).
Ethnographic designs involve interviewing, observing, and gathering documents about a culture-sharing group in order to explore their beliefs, attitudes and practices. The purpose of employing an ethnographic design is to provide a detailed day-to-day account of events to provide an understanding of a group of people within a context by allowing multiple interpretations of reality and alternative interpretations of data throughout the study (Anderson-Levitt, 2006; Fetterman, 2010). Considering the aspects and features of an ethnographic design, it can be inferred that adopting an ethnographic research design will prove effective in addressing the research questions of the present study. By utilising the methods of an ethnographic research design such as interviews, observations, and collection of documents, teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction could be meaningfully explored and investigated.

3.3.1 The Gap in Methodology of Previous Studies

As discussed in the literature review, very few of previous studies on written error correction incorporated both teachers and students as participants. In addition, most of the aforementioned studies utilised either a survey design or a mixed methods approach. Table 3.1 sets out to illustrate previous studies that investigated written error correction which incorporated both teachers and students as participants.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Previous Studies</th>
<th>Quantitative (Survey Design)</th>
<th>Qualitative</th>
<th>Combination (Mixed Methods)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ferris, Pezone, Tade, &amp; Tinti, 1997.</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1 Methodology of Previous Studies in Error Correction
Based on Table 3.1, it can be clearly inferred that few studies investigating written error correction which incorporated both teachers and students as participants have utilised a qualitative approach. Most of the previous studies undertook either a purely quantitative approach (survey design) or a combination of both quantitative and qualitative approaches (mixed methods), presenting a gap in the methodological aspects of current existing research. While a mixed methods design would expand the present study by providing further investigation through the collection and analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data, this was not possible within the scope of a Master's thesis. Moreover, the time frame available for the present study was insufficient to allow for longitudinal methods to further explore changes in teachers' beliefs, practices and students’ preferences that occur over time.

An example of a mixed methods design is Lee’s (2004) study that investigated L2 writing teachers’ perceptions and practices; and students’ beliefs and attitudes regarding written error correction. To address the research questions, her study involved 19 English teachers who filled out questionnaires and participated in semi-structured interviews. In addition, 320 students were surveyed and 27 of the students participated in follow-up interviews. The study gathered data from three sources: (1) a teacher survey made up of a questionnaire and follow-up interviews; (2) a teacher error correction task; and (3) a student survey comprising a questionnaire and follow-up interviews. Results of her study showed the teachers’ perspectives and practices, and students’ beliefs and attitudes regarding written error correction. However, her mixed methods design provided data solely from teachers’ self-reports through questionnaires and follow-up interviews. In addition, students’ perceptions and
attitudes regarding written error correction were elicited primarily from questionnaires.

Considering the limitations of Lee’s (2004) research design, it can be argued that teachers’ beliefs, practices and students’ preferences regarding written error correction could be further explored in greater depth by utilising ethnographic design methods. Classroom observations, for example, might provide detailed information on teacher’s actual practices of written error correction in the classroom. Similarly, students’ responses and teacher-student interactions could be elicited through classroom observations in order to supply follow-up questions for interviews for further investigation. In addition, focus group interviews with students might elicit more information and deeper understanding of their beliefs and attitudes towards written error correction.

Another example of a mixed methods approach is Perpignan’s (2003) study that investigated teachers’ practices and students’ perceptions and attitudes regarding written error correction. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews from two English teachers and questionnaires from 46 ESL students. The questionnaires were designed to probe students’ perceptions and attitudes regarding written error correction. The 40-50 minute semi-structured interviews were conducted to elicit teacher practices in written error correction. Results of the study showed students’ attitudes and perceptions regarding written error correction varied in a wide range. Accordingly, teachers’ written error correction practices differ based on student writings they receive. Similar to Lee’s (2004) study, the mixed methods design provided data solely from student self-reports through questionnaires. In addition, teachers’ written error correction practices were elicited primarily through semi-structured interviews.
It is also noteworthy to consider that most methodologies of previous studies on written error correction (Ferris, 1997; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Montgomery & Baker, 2007) have included the collection of physical artefacts in the form of actual student writing. These physical artefacts (usually in the form of student essays already corrected by the teachers) have been collected to reflect teachers’ actual practice of written error correction. Although most of the studies that incorporated the collection of students’ written work utilised it within the framework of a quantitative research design, the collection of physical artefacts have also been employed in the present study in order for the researcher to develop a more precise understanding of how teachers apply their beliefs regarding written error correction into actual teaching practice. In addition, the collected physical artefacts reflected the type of written error correction method (implicit or explicit) that the students experienced in their writing. This provided the researcher of the present study with insights to further investigate students’ preferences regarding written error correction.

The lack of qualitative methods used in the research design of previous studies limited the depth of exploration and investigation of teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. This gap in the methodology of previous studies served as a contributing factor for the present study to adapt data collection methods with aspects and features of an ethnographic research approach in order to achieve a depth of understanding in the time frame available for this study.

3.3.2 Research Design Rationale

Every method of inquiry has its own advantages and disadvantages. Hence, the design for this study has been selected to suit the scope of the project, the
research questions and the current state of knowledge in the field of written error correction. The main contributing factor which determined the choice of a qualitative research approach for the present study was the lack of qualitative methodologies utilised in previous studies on written error correction. Therefore, this study will provide contributing research to the growing body of literature that investigates written error correction.

As outlined in the previous section, the research questions are essentially exploratory in nature. Hence, a qualitative methodological approach was chosen for the present study. Following the ethnographic research paradigm outlined by Fetterman (2010, pp. 546-551), the present study has adopted the following principles:

- At a conceptual level, the approach of the present study was holistic in that the focus on the practice of written error correction was taken in its entirety and viewed within the context of an ESL classroom.

- The present study adapted an etic or external perspective within a nonjudgmental approach in order to suspend any personal valuation during the data collection.

- Data collection procedures incorporated aspects and features of an ethnographic design (semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, focus group interviews) in order to address the research questions.

- Participants were informed beforehand that the researcher of this project was a non-participant observer during classroom observations to encourage them to engage freely in order to reduce the likelihood of obtaining contrived or self-conscious responses.
Guided by these principles and taking into consideration the lack of qualitative research methods in previous studies, aspects and features of an ethnographic research design were adapted to suit the research questions. The selection of participants, data collection procedures, and data analysis techniques employed in the present study are further discussed in the following section.

### 3.4 PARTICIPANTS

#### 3.4.1 Introduction

Two experienced English language teachers and 30 students in two classes (15 per class) studying English at a large, inner-city, Australian university were selected to participate in this study. The teachers were located and contacted through email as recommended by the Director of Studies of the language institution. Table 3.2 illustrates the profile of the teachers with demographic information including age, gender, number of years teaching English, and qualifications. In addition, the table shows the profile of the EAP students in each class with demographic information including number of students and countries of origin.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>No. of Years Teaching English</th>
<th>Qualifications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Bachelor of Arts, M.A. Social Science, M.A. Linguistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>M.A. Linguistics, Cambridge University CELTA and DELTA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Number of Students</th>
<th>Countries of Origin</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Class A</td>
<td>6 Male, 9 Female</td>
<td>China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Philippines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Class B</td>
<td>7 Male, 8 Female</td>
<td>South Korea, India, China, Iran, Vietnam</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.2 Profile of Participants
As previously mentioned, the present study adapted features and aspects of an ethnographic research approach. However, the research design is not entirely ethnographic in nature. There are numerous variables that affect the practice of written error correction. For this reason, the present study also incorporated aspects and features of a case study research design, specifically in the selection of participants. Miles and Huberman’s (1994) bounded case study model, which uses a heart as the central focus surrounded by a circle to define the boundaries, has been adapted to describe the participants selected for the present study.

![Miles & Huberman's Bounded Case Study Model](image)

As shown in Figure 3.1, Miles and Huberman’s (1994) model defined a case as a phenomenon, which occurs in a bounded context. The focus of the study is reflected in the research questions. In this study, the research focus was on teacher beliefs, practices, and students' preferences regarding written error correction.

The nature of error correction is too broad and too complex to consider all forms of feedback by teachers in this study. In addition, there are too many variables (students’ English proficiency level, students’ motivation for improving their English proficiency, teachers’ prior experience in error correction, the curriculum of the language program) that might influence the practice of error correction in general. In
order to select the participants for the present study, it was necessary to limit the selection of participants within four parameters. For this reason, the first parameter bounded the conceptual nature of error correction strictly in the form of written error correction. The depth of information to be collected necessitated the “size” parameter. In the present study, the case size was limited to one institution, with two separate English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classes that consist of two EAP teachers (one teacher per class) and two classes of students. Both classes consisted of 15 students. In order to address the “timing” parameter, the data collection of the present study was limited to a period of eight weeks, from November 2009 to January 2010. The location parameter is limited to an Australian university due to its physical location and convenience. Details regarding the selection of participants are discussed further in the next section.

3.4.2 Selection of Participants

As discussed in Chapter 2, previous studies on written error correction have focused on English as Second Language (ESL) teachers and students as participants. In order to be consistent with the participants that were incorporated in previous studies, the present study also selected ESL teachers and adult intermediate ESL students as participants. In addition, participants for the present study were chosen for convenience of location, and willingness to participate.

The institute chosen had to be in the Brisbane metropolitan districts and have English instructors who teach writing. Prior to the data collection, the researcher approached two teachers as potential participants in order to inquire about the English language program most suitable for the present study. The two teachers recommended the English for Academic Purposes (EAP) program. EAP entails the
training of students in order to develop the English language skills needed for academic study. The aim of EAP programs include improving the English proficiency of students to the level required to gain entry to an academic program. The program also aims to support and assist students in gaining English language proficiency skills required for success in a university. According to the two teachers, the EAP program has a specific focus on English writing, among the other macro skills (reading, listening, speaking), as opposed to General English (GE) that features a curriculum aimed at all four macro skills. For this reason, the EAP program was chosen for study, since the focus of this project was written error correction.

To provide in-depth exploration, two EAP teachers (henceforth referred to as Teacher A and Teacher B) were selected for the present study. Both teachers were accepting of the researcher and the research methods. They were enthusiastic about the opportunity to participate and contribute to the study, as reflected by their accommodation in providing physical artefacts in the form of corrected student essays as needed by the researcher. They also showed interest in the focus of the research: namely, written error correction. This interest was demonstrated by their willingness to participate and ability to meet time requirements for the interviews and classroom observations.

Two EAP classes (henceforth referred to as Class A and Class B) consisting of ESL students were facilitated by Teacher A and Teacher B, respectively. Class A consisted of 15 adult students taking up a course in EAP. The teacher of the class, Teacher A, is in charge of daily monitoring, assessing, and facilitating the learning of the students in the classroom. The cultural diversity of the students in Class A is apparent since most of the students came from various countries around the world, including China, South Korea, Saudi Arabia, Japan, and the Philippines.
Similarly, Class B consisted of 15 adult EAP students. The teacher of the class, Teacher B, is also in charge of daily monitoring, assessing, and facilitating the learning of the students in the classroom. Students from Class B came from various countries including South Korea, India, China, Iran, and Vietnam. It is important to note that according to both Teacher A and Teacher B during the interviews, students who enrolled in the EAP course were randomly allocated into classes. All of the students from both classes consented to be involved in the weekly classroom observations. In addition, five students from each class volunteered to participate in the focus group interviews.

Multiple data collection techniques featuring aspects of an ethnographic research approach and case study research design have been selected from a large body of research methods in order to strengthen the inquiry of the present study. The data collection techniques employed in the present study are outlined and further discussed in the next section.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

3.5.1 Data Collection Outline

The present study involved the collection of different forms of data (initial interviews, classroom observations, collection of written texts, post-observation interviews, and focus group interviews) in order to investigate the extent to which teacher beliefs regarding written error correction translate into their teaching practice, and the possible connection between teachers’ written error correction practices and student preferences. A time frame for the data collection methods is outlined in Table 3.3.
Table 3.3 illustrates the data collection timeline of the present study. The duration of each data collection procedure is shown in number of weeks per month. The initial semi-structured interview to elicit teacher beliefs was conducted on the first week of November 2009, after receiving ethical clearance for the study; while five weeks was allotted to observation of two L2 writing classes. One week was allotted for the post-observation interview with the teachers, as well as the focus group interview with the students. Table 3.4 sets out to show the structure of participation in the present study.

The teachers participated in semi-structured interviews and classroom observations. The students participated in the classroom observation and focus group interviews. Figure 3.2 shows the collection of multiple forms of qualitative data.
from two EAP classes (Class A and Class B) to arrive at an analysis of results to address the research questions.

The data collection procedures used in the study included: weekly classroom observation of two ESL writing classes; initial and post-observation interviews with two ESL teachers; two focus group interviews with ESL students from each class; and collection of written artefacts of corrected student writing.

Figure 3.3 illustrates the flow of data collection procedures employed in the present study, the results of which, have been analysed in order to address the
research questions. The multiple data sources were chosen to address each research question as shown in Table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research Questions</th>
<th>Semi-structured Interviews</th>
<th>Classroom Observation</th>
<th>Focus Group Interviews</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>RQ1: Teacher’s Beliefs</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ2: Teacher’s Practice</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RQ3: Student Preferences</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.5 Research Questions and Data Sources

Table 3.5 sets out to show that each data collection method provided data informing each research question on teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. Two semi-structured interviews (initial and post-observation) elicited teacher beliefs and practices regarding written error correction (RQ1 and RQ2). The weekly classroom observations provided data on the teachers’ actual practice of written error correction in the classroom (RQ2). In addition, the observations also elicited students’ reactions regarding their teacher’s practice of written error correction in the classroom (RQ3). Lastly, the focus group interviews were conducted to obtain more in depth information on students’ preferences regarding written error correction. Each of the methods, and its role in answering the research questions, will be discussed further in the following sections.

3.5.2 Semi-Structured Interviews (Initial)

Conducting semi-structured interviews involves the researcher asking open-ended questions and recording the responses in order to obtain in-depth, meaningful, and important information from a participant in the study (Creswell, 2005; McKay, 2006). According to Yin (2003), interviews are guided conversations rather than structured queries that aim for fluidity in conversation, rather than rigidity.
One of the advantages of an interview is that it allows the researcher to focus directly on the research issue. Another advantage of interviews is that they provide meaningful insights to supply perceived causal inferences towards a specific phenomenon. By using semi-structured interviews, teachers’ beliefs regarding written error correction were elicited in detailed account and were used to investigate their practices of written error correction during the classroom observations.

Considering these strengths, the research design included two audio-recorded semi-structured interviews with two ESL teachers—one interview was conducted prior to the classroom observations, and one after. The purpose of the interviews was to investigate the teachers’ beliefs and attitudes toward written error correction as an instructional method for improving their students’ writing accuracy.

Two rounds of interviews were conducted with each teacher separately: one initial interview; and a follow-up interview after the weekly classroom observations. The following set of open-ended questions adapted from Lee’s (2008) previous study was asked to both teachers in order to elicit their beliefs regarding the importance of providing written error correction and their practice of written error correction in the classroom:

- Do you use error correction strategies to correct grammatical errors in your student’s writing? Why?
- What error correction strategies do you use? Why do you choose these strategies?
- What are the advantages in the error correction strategies you have chosen to use? Are there any disadvantages?
• Is it the teacher’s job to locate and correct errors in student’s writing? Or should it be the other way around—that students should locate and correct errors for themselves? Please explain your answer.

• After providing error corrections in your student’s writing, what do you expect them to do afterwards?

• What concerns or problems, if any, do you have in correcting student errors in writing?

• In your experience as a teacher, is providing error correction effective in helping students develop and enhance their writing accuracy? Please explain further.

• In your opinion, what is the best way to go about error correction? Please explain your answer.

Teacher A was interviewed on the 30th of October 2009 at 3:00pm. The interview lasted approximately 30 minutes. Teacher B was interviewed on the same day at 4:00pm. The interview lasted approximately 35 minutes. Both interviews were audio-recorded. The purpose of the interviews was to elicit teachers’ beliefs regarding the importance of written error correction. Another purpose of the questions was to probe and investigate their beliefs regarding their own practice of written error correction inside the classroom.

The semi-structured interviews were fully transcribed and analysed before any observation of classes. The transcription of the initial interviews with Teacher A and Teacher B was designed to provide guidance about features of interest in the classroom observations. In addition, the transcript of the initial interviews was used in the formulation of post-observation interview follow-up questions.
3.5.3 Weekly Classroom Observations

Observation is a qualitative data collection procedure of gathering open-ended, direct information by observing participants in order to identify and record behaviour and interactions occurring at a research site (Creswell, 2005, Glatthorn & Joyner, 2005). Direct observation allows the researcher to become immersed in the culture-sharing group of people in order to observe a phenomenon of interest (Yin, 2003). One of the main strengths of conducting observations is that it allows the researcher to gather data that covers events in real time and encompass the entire context of an event. However, the disadvantage of conducting observations is the difficulty in recording events since the context is observed in its entirety and a number of variables could emerge outside the scope of the research.

To compensate for this weakness, the present study utilised the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) Observation Scheme, an instrument used in the observation of teaching and learning (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995). This observation scheme provided the researcher with a checklist for daily classroom activities that served as guidelines for selective observation in order to direct the recording of data to target issues specifically toward written error correction in the classroom.

The COLT scheme is divided into two parts: Part A and Part B. The purpose of Part A was to describe classroom events at the level of episode and activity during “real time” when the researcher was present in the classroom as the lesson unfolded. An example of Part A of the COLT scheme is shown in Figure 3.4.
Part A of the COLT scheme allowed the researcher to record pertinent information regarding the classroom observation such as school, teacher, and subject, duration of the lesson, date, and visit number. In addition, the observation sheet features various categories to suit the recording of events in the classroom. However, the observation sheet was adapted to focus primarily on written error correction inside the classroom. Hence, some of the features of the Part A observation sheet were not used.

Part B of the COLT scheme enabled the researcher of this study to analyse the communicative features of verbal exchanges between teachers and students in the classroom as they occur within each episode or activity. Because this level of analysis is more detailed than Part A, the coding for Part B was done after the weekly classroom observations, from transcripts made from audio recordings. An example of Part B is shown in Figure 3.5.
Part B enabled the COLT scheme the researcher to analyse the weekly classroom observation recordings further based on Part A. However, since the present study focused on teachers’ written error correction practices, the observation sheet was adapted to focus primarily on written error correction inside the classroom. Hence, some of the features of the Part B observation sheet were not used. Sample recorded observation sheets are provided and further discussed in the data analysis section. Also, an example of the COLT scheme observation sheet (Parts A and B) is provided in Appendices 2 and 3.

In the present study, two separate EAP classes were observed where the researcher took the place of a non-participant observer and recorded daily activities and interactions between students and teachers in the classroom environment. The researcher was guided by the COLT observation scheme in order to focus the observation towards written error correction in the classroom. The purpose of the weekly classroom observations was to investigate and record the extent to which ESL teachers’ beliefs regarding written error correction was put into practice as well as the students’ reactions to the teachers’ writing instruction in the L2 classroom. In
addition, the classroom observations were audio-recorded to provide an accurate rendition of classroom events. Furthermore, the purpose of having the weekly classroom observations was to elicit the enacted beliefs of teachers regarding written error correction on discourse level problems, i.e. how the teachers talk about written error correction in the classroom and how their beliefs regarding written error correction are enacted orally.

As outlined in Table 3.4, the classroom observations were conducted over a period of five weeks, from November 2009 to December 2009. Both classes were observed twice a week, approximately 2 hours each, which provided ten observation sessions per class. This was to limit the data gathered into a manageable amount. To strengthen the consistency of the data collected through the observation; both classes were observed over a period of 120 minutes. As a non-participant observer, the researcher recorded daily activities and interactions between teachers and students specifically regarding the practice of written error correction. Transcription was made selectively after the analysis of the initial interview when important issues relating to the research focus have emerged. The transcriptions were later used to extract important excerpts for data analysis.

3.5.4 Collection of Written Artefacts

The present study included the collection of student writing from both Teacher A and Teacher B. The purpose of this was to further examine the extent to which teachers’ beliefs translate into actual practice of written error correction, since most previous studies (Ferris, 1997; Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Montgomery & Baker, 2007) included the collection of physical artefacts in the form of actual teacher-corrected student writing.
Both Teacher A and Teacher B were very accommodating in providing photocopied samples of their students’ corrected written essays. These physical artefacts were collected with the underlying assumption that it reflected the teachers’ practices of written error correction. In addition, it was assumed that the collected written artefacts reflected the written error correction methods utilised by the teachers on the grammatical/syntactical level. Analyses of the written correction techniques based on the collected student essays were used to develop some the follow-up questions for the post-observation interview.

It is important to note that the collected written essays were initially corrected by the teachers, and then photocopied. Hence, it only reflected the teachers’ written error correction practice specifically when they first receive writing from their students, since it was collected by the researcher before the students were able to make the recommended revisions. Taking this into consideration, the present study assumed that the written essays are not a reflection of how the students edited and revised their writing after receiving written error correction. Although revised essays from students after receiving written error correction are potentially valuable, it is beyond the scope of the present study. Examples of a corrected student writing from both Class A and Class B are included in the Appendices.

3.5.5 Semi-Structured Interviews (Post-Observation)

Interviews with both Teacher A and Teacher B were conducted after the weekly classroom observation period. The post-observation interview had three purposes: (1) to further investigate the teachers’ beliefs regarding written error correction through follow-up questions generated after analysis of data from initial interview and classroom observation; (2) to examine the extent to which their beliefs
translated into actual practice of written error correction after classroom observation; and (3) to probe their underlying beliefs regarding their own practice of written error correction as reflected in the collected physical artefacts.

Teacher A was interviewed (post-observation) on January 30, 2010. The interview lasted approximately 40 minutes. Teacher B was interviewed on January 28, 2010. The interview lasted approximately 38 minutes. The following set of open-ended questions adapted from Lee’s (2008) previous study were asked to both teachers in order to elicit their beliefs regarding the importance and their practice of written error correction in the classroom:

- In your opinion, what is the English proficiency level of your EAP students? Please explain how you gauged their proficiency level.
- In your opinion, should error correction methods focus primarily on sentence structure, rather than meaning, or the other way around? Why?
- In your opinion, is it important that students are able to detect and correct their own errors in writing? Why is it important? Please explain your answer.
- In your opinion, how much help does error correction provide in improving students’ writing accuracy? Please explain your answer.

These general open-ended questions were followed by branching questions specifically tailored for each teacher. Since Teacher A and Teacher B have varying beliefs and practices regarding written error correction in some aspects, it is necessary to adapt the follow-up questions to achieve fluidity in the interview. Examples of follow-up questions during the post-observation interview include:

- Does the manner in which you utilise error correction in students’ writing depend on your perceived English Proficiency level of your students? Please explain your answer.
• Do you adapt your error correction methods based on what you perceive as your students' weaknesses in writing?

• Have you experienced your students finding it difficult or confusing to understand your method of error correction? What do you do in such a situation?

A complete log of the guide questions for each teacher with specific follow-up questions is included in the Appendices.

3.5.6 Focus Group Interviews

A focus group interview is the process of collecting qualitative data through interviews with a group of people to gather shared understandings, attitudes and beliefs (Creswell, 2005). Focus group interviews are particularly useful for exploratory research where very little is known about the phenomenon of interest (Stewart, Shamdasani, & Rook, 2007). The use of focus groups enables the researcher to gather data more quickly as compared to individual interviews. It also allows the researcher to interact directly with the participants of the study in order to obtain large and rich amounts of data. In addition, focus groups are very flexible. They allow for the examination of a wide range of topics as well as discussion targeted topics relating to the research questions. Lastly, focus groups allow the participants to engage more freely and respond naturally with very little discomfort, providing in-depth information for the study. Considering these advantages, the present study chose to conduct focus group interviews with students to explore their beliefs, attitudes and preferences regarding their teacher's practice of written error correction.
Following the weekly classroom observations, two follow-up audio-recorded focus group interviews with five ESL students from Class A and Class B were conducted in order to obtain more comprehensive information about the beliefs and preferences of students regarding written error correction. Random selection was employed to determine the five participants in each focus group. Class A focus group was interviewed on January 14, 2010. The interview lasted approximately 27 minutes. Class B focus group was interviewed on January 15, 2010. The interview lasted approximately 28 minutes. Students from both groups responded vigorously to each interview question, which demonstrated their enthusiasm in participating in the focus group.

The following set of general questions adapted from Lee’s (2004) previous study was asked to each focus group from Class A and Class B in order to investigate their beliefs and preferences regarding their teachers’ practices of written error correction. During the focus group interviews, it was assumed that the students were unfamiliar with the different methods of providing written error correction. However, it was also assumed that they were aware that their teachers are providing written error correction on their writing. Because of this, follow-up questions (in italics) were also asked according to the responses of the students during the focus group interviews in order to further elicit their beliefs and preferences regarding written error correction.

- When you studied English back in your country, how did your teacher correct errors in your writing?
  - Could you please explain how your previous teachers corrected your errors in your writing?
- Do you like the way your current teacher responds to your errors in writing?
o Can you please describe how your teacher corrects your writing errors? Do you find the way your teacher corrects your writing to be helpful?

- Do you prefer your teacher to provide the corrections in your writing directly, i.e. giving the correct word right away? Why, or why not?
  - Would you prefer that your teacher used underlining, or encircling instead? Why, or why not?
  - Would you prefer if your teacher used error correction codes instead of directly giving you the correct answer?

- Which error correction method do you find most/least helpful? Why?
  - Do you find it more helpful if your teacher pointed out your errors in writing and gave the correct answer right away? Why, or why not?

- Are error correction codes easy or difficult to use? Please explain your answer.
  - Why do you sometimes find it difficult to understand error correction codes? Could you please explain further?

- In your opinion, does error correction help in improving your writing accuracy? Please explain your answer.
  - When your teacher provides written error correction on your writing, do you find it useful in improving the way you write?

- Do you prefer that your teacher corrects your grammatical errors in writing for you, or do you prefer to discover and correct them on your own? Why?

- In your opinion, whose responsibility is it to correct errors in student writing?
  - Do you think teachers should be the ones correcting errors? Do you think students should discover and correct their own mistakes? Why?
The purpose of the focus group interview was to elicit the students’ attitudes regarding their teachers’ practice in written error correction. Another purpose of the questions was to explore whether the students preferred their teacher’s practice of written error correction. The recordings of the focus group interviews with both Class A and Class B were fully transcribed, and responses relating to the research questions were extracted as excerpts for data analysis.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS

3.6.1 Method of Analysis

Thematic analysis entailing a combination of a block-and-file approach and conceptual mapping (Grbich, 2007) was applied. The audio-recorded interviews (semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews) were considered a foundational data source because of their depth and richness, and the way their semi-structured nature could adapt to focus on emerging themes. The other rich source of data was the set of classroom observation transcripts. In particular, they added detail to the interaction between teachers and students regarding written error correction and its application in the classroom environment.

Cohen et al. (2007) suggested five ways of organising and presenting qualitative data: (a) by groups of participants; (b) by individuals; (c) by issues; (d) by research questions; and (e) by instrument. The present study is a combination of (a) and (d), that is, groups of participants and instruments. The research questions were used as initial themes, with more specific sub-themes developed as they emerged from the data. In addition, a process of pattern matching (Yin, 2003) was used to
compare and contrast themes from the data with the theoretical positions embodied in the research questions.

To strengthen the trustworthiness of the inquiry, emerging themes from the transcripts were triangulated (Yin, 2003; Fetterman, 2010) with data from multiple sources. Analysis began early in the data collection process in order to use previously identified themes to focus subsequent interviews and classroom observations on the research questions. The purpose of this was to provide opportunities for further investigation and examination during the post-observation interviews and focus group interviews.

3.6.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

Audio-recordings from the semi-structured interviews with the teachers were transcribed. The text was coded into the qualitative software, NVivo8 in order to organise the data into a manageable amount. NVivo8 is a qualitative data analysis computer software package that has been designed by QSR International for qualitative researchers working with very rich text-based information, where deep levels of analysis on large volumes of data are required (Bazeley, 2007; Edhlund, 2008). NVivo8 helped the researcher to organise the information in a professional manner which made locating the elements of information easy and manageable. However, it should be noted that although the NVivo8 software can be used in storing and managing the text-based information to assist data analysis, it does not analyse the encoded information itself and actual detailed analysis of the data was performed by the researcher.

After encoding the transcriptions of the semi-structured interviews with the teachers into the NVivo8 software, the data was initially analysed through the use of a block-and-file approach (Grbich, 2007). Through the use of this approach, data
reduction was achieved by highlighting the main ideas from each passage of the transcribed interviews. An example of a passage from the interview transcript analysed through the block-and-file approach is shown in Figure 3.6.

**[INTERVIEWER]:** Do you use error correction strategies to correct grammatical errors in your student's writing, and why?

**[TEACHER A]:** Yes, I do. Why? Because I feel and I hope that it's going to improve their writing. I think that quite often students have, you know, some idea of how to construct sentences and how to explain themselves in English. But, perhaps, and I'm sure they've had grammar drilled into them at least, on a theoretical basis probably in their own home countries, if not, in General English courses that we teach here. But I think that sometimes the application of that theoretical knowledge is quite difficult for students. So, if I get them to write pieces of text for me, and then we could actually go through that and proof read it on the blackboard, or if I go through their pieces of writing on a one-to-one basis, I think it makes them more aware of what's going on and what mistakes they've done.

![Figure 3.6 Teacher’s Interview Transcript Passage](image)

The main idea from the responses of the teachers to each interview question was highlighted. Each main idea was then extracted from the original transcript and encoded separately into NVivo8 for further analysis. Excerpts from the transcripts that were relevant to the research questions were selected and referenced in the software to organise the data and allowed for easy identification of themes. Coding was reviewed concurrently with the progression of data collection and data analysis. The purpose of this is to support and reinforce the development of emerging themes and progressively identify links to other data sources. An example of the encoded data is shown in Figure 3.7.
After the main ideas from the interview transcripts were extracted, each main idea was encoded into the NVivo8 software in the form of “free nodes.” Free nodes are nodes that have not been categorised or placed in a certain context which helps in capturing early ideas (Edhlund, 2008). Encoding the excerpts containing main ideas from the transcripts into free nodes enabled the researcher to extract relevant information and achieve data reduction in order to make the data more manageable. These free nodes were then categorised into themes as similar patterns relating to the research questions emerged. These themes or main categories were encoded into the NVivo8 software as “tree nodes.” Tree nodes, or “parent nodes” are representative nodes by being “examples of,” or “context for,” the free nodes which are related to them (Gibbs, 2004; Edhlund, 2008). The purpose of tree nodes is to provide an organisational hierarchy to the corresponding free nodes related to them by representing themes, headings, or subheadings in several levels. By creating tree nodes, emerging patterns from the free nodes were organised and categorised accordingly and initial themes relating to the research questions were formulated.
Thematic analysis through conceptual mapping was applied after repeated patterns of responses from the semi-structured interview data were identified. Conceptual mapping provides a simpler, more flexible picture of issues emerging from the text-based data (Grbich, 2007). Through conceptual mapping, a visual representation of the emerging themes relating to the research questions from the interview data was devised. An example of a conceptual map of the teachers’ responses in the semi-structured interviews is shown in Figure 3.8.

As shown in Figure 3.8, repeated patterns from the responses of teachers regarding written error correction during the semi-structured interviews were categorised. By analysing the data collected through the semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to identify four key themes from the teachers’ responses: (1) advantages, (2) disadvantages, (3) importance, and (4) practice. From this conceptual map of the teacher’s responses, the following can be inferred:

- Teachers regard the practice of written error correction as important;
Teachersones have a set of beliefs about how they practice written error correction in the classroom, and;

Teachers are aware that the practice of written error correction has its advantages and disadvantages.

Following the analysis of data from the semi-structured interviews with the teachers, data from the weekly classroom observations was encoded and analysed. The method of analysis for the weekly classroom observation data is discussed in the next section.

3.6.3 Focus Group Interviews

Audio-recordings from the two focus group interviews with two groups of students were transcribed. Similar to the data from the semi-structured interviews and weekly classroom observations, the text was coded into the qualitative software, NVivo8, in order to organise the data into a manageable amount. Again, it is important to note that although the NVivo8 software can be used in storing and managing the text-based information to assist data analysis, it does not analyse the encoded information itself and actual detailed analysis of the data was performed by the researcher.

After encoding the transcriptions of the focus group interviews with the students into the NVivo8 software, the data was initially analysed through the use of a block-and-file approach (Grbich, 2007). An example of a passage from the interview transcript analysed through the block-and-file approach is shown below.

[Interviewer]: When you studied English back in your country, how did your teacher respond to the errors in your writing? How did your teacher correct your errors in writing? In general, for example, you submitted a piece of writing and then she gives it back to you with corrections for revision. So, how did your teacher correct your writing?

[Student 2]: Red pen. [Laughs]
[INTERVIEWER]: Oh, red pen? That's good. Anyone else experienced red pen as an error correction?

[Student 3]: Sometimes cross. If the sentence has a wrong, then big cross.

[Student 4]: Yes. And they write cross on everything, all words which are not correct. A lot on spelling, and sometimes words missing in the sentence.

Figure 3.9 Student Focus Group Interview Transcript Passage

The main idea from the responses of the students to each interview question was highlighted. Each main idea was then extracted from the original transcript and encoded separately into NVivo8 for further analysis. Excerpts from the transcripts that were relevant to the research questions were selected and referenced in the software to organise the data and allowed for easy identification of themes. An example of the encoded data is shown below.

Figure 3.10 Student Focus Group Interview Data Encoded in NVivo

After the main ideas from the interview transcripts were extracted, each main idea was encoded into the NVivo8 software in the form of “free nodes.” These free nodes were then categorised into themes as similar patterns relating to the research questions emerged. These themes or main categories were encoded into the NVivo8 software as “tree nodes.” By creating tree nodes, emerging patterns from the
encoded free nodes were organised and categorised accordingly and themes relating to the research questions were identified.

Thematic analysis through conceptual mapping was applied after repeated patterns of responses from the focus group interview data were identified. As previously discussed, conceptual mapping provides a simpler, more flexible picture of issues emerging from the text-based data (Grbich, 2007). Through conceptual mapping, a visual representation of the emerging themes relating to the research questions from the interview data was devised. An example of a conceptual map of the students' responses in the semi-structured interviews is shown in the figure below.

![Conceptual Mapping of Data from Focus Group Interviews with Students](image)

As shown in Figure 3.11, repeated patterns from the responses of the students regarding written error correction during the focus group interviews have been categorised. By analysing the data collected through the focus group interviews, the researcher was able to identify four key themes from the students' responses: (1) advantages, (2) disadvantages, (3) importance, and (4) practice. From this conceptual map of the students' responses, the following can be inferred:
• Students regard the practice of written error correction as important in helping them locate their errors and revise their writing;
• Students have varied beliefs about their preference regarding their teacher's written error correction practice in the classroom, and;
• Students are aware that receiving written error correction as a form of feedback in their writing has its advantages and disadvantages.

3.6.4 Classroom Observations

The weekly classroom observations were recorded through the use of the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) Observation Scheme (Spada & Fröhlich, 1995) in order to direct the recording of data to target issues specifically toward written error correction in the classroom. As previously discussed, Part A of the COLT scheme was encoded during the classroom observations, and Part B was encoded after the classroom observations. It is important to note that the COLT scheme was adapted to enable the researcher to focus primarily on written error correction practices in the classroom. For this reason, only certain parts of the COLT scheme were utilised. An example of an encoded Part A observation sheet is shown in the figure below.

![Figure 3.12 Encoded COLT Observation Sheet Part A](image-url)
As shown in Figure 3.12, the Participant Organisation and Content categories were used to encode data during the weekly classroom observations. The Participant Organisation category refers to the way in which the students of the class were organised by the teacher during the activity. The Content category refers to the subject matter or theme of the activities which the teacher focused on during each episode. Since the focus of the present study was the practice of written error correction of teachers in the classroom, other categories of the Part A observation sheet were not applicable. After the classroom observations, audio recordings were further analysed using the Part B observation sheet as shown in the figure below.

![Figure 3.13 Encoded COLT Part B Observation Sheet](image)

As shown in Figure 3.13, each episode or activity from Part A was further analysed to record the communicative features of verbal exchanges between teachers and students. Since the focus of the present study is teachers’ practices of written error correction in the classroom, the Teacher Verbal Interaction category of the Part B observation sheet was used. The Student Verbal Interactions category, which refers to student-to-student interactions in the classroom, was not applicable for this study.
The observation notes using the COLT observation scheme were used to identify important sections of the audio-recording for transcription and detailed analysis. The transcribed text was encoded into NVivo8 to reinforce the identification of key themes and sub-themes. It is important to note that the researcher focused primarily on the enacted beliefs of the teachers regarding written error correction. In addition, excerpts conveying the interaction of students and teachers with regard to written error correction were also used in the theme identification.

Similar to the semi-structured interviews and focus group interviews, thematic analysis through the use of block-and-file approach (Grbich, 2007) was used to analyse data from the weekly classroom observations. A sample excerpt from the classroom observations is shown below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>[Teacher A correcting one-on-one]</th>
<th>What do you think about this one? [Points to a sentence]</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>[Student]</td>
<td>So, if I say that, &quot;The more bad thing about..&quot;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[Teacher A]</td>
<td>No. You wouldn't say &quot;more bad,&quot; rather, you could say &quot;the worst thing about it.&quot; Ok? &quot;The worst thing.&quot; That's what you should say. Ok?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 3.14 Sample Classroom Observation Excerpt

The main idea of the transcribed excerpts from the weekly classroom observations was highlighted. Each main idea was then extracted from the original transcript and encoded separately into NVivo8 for further analysis. Excerpts from the transcripts that were relevant to the research questions were selected and referenced in the software to organise the data and allowed for easy identification of themes. An example of the encoded data is shown in Figure 3.15.
Each main idea was encoded into the NVivo8 software in the form of "free nodes." These free nodes were then categorised into themes as similar patterns relating to the research questions emerged. These themes or main categories were encoded into the NVivo8 software as "tree nodes." By creating tree nodes, emerging patterns from the encoded free nodes were organised and categorised accordingly and themes relating to the research questions were identified.

Thematic analysis through conceptual mapping (Grbich, 2007) was applied after repeated patterns of responses from the classroom observation data were identified. Through conceptual mapping, a visual representation of the emerging themes relating to the research questions from the interview data was devised. An example of a conceptual map of the data from the weekly classroom observations is shown in the figure below.
As shown in Figure 3.16, repeated patterns from the data during the weekly classroom observations have been categorised. By analysing the data collected through the classroom observations, the researcher was able to identify four key themes from teachers' practice of written error correction: (1) advantages, (2) disadvantages, (3) importance, and (4) practice. From this conceptual map, the following can be inferred:

- Teachers practice written error correction to help their students locate their errors and revise their writing;
- Teachers practice written error correction in order to generate awareness in their students regarding their errors in writing;
- Teachers spend a lot of time correcting (whether explicitly, or through the use of error correction codes) their students’ writings;
- Teachers are able to encourage students to read more and learn independently by providing written error correction; and
Teachers utilise both explicit and implicit methods of written error correction.

This section of the chapter has discussed the data analysis methods that were applied to organise, manage, and interpret the qualitative data collected in the present study. Research ethics and limitations of this study will be discussed in the next section.

3.7 RESEARCH ETHICS

The present study acquired an ethical clearance from the Research Ethics Committee and complied with Queensland University of Technology ethical guidelines. The research proposal of this study was analysed and it was determined that an application for Low Risk ethical clearance was necessary before collecting the data. Application and consent forms were submitted to the Research Ethics committee for examination.

Once ethical clearance for the study was granted (Ethics Clearance Number: 0900001263), the Participant Information and Consent Forms were distributed to the two ESL teachers to elicit their consent to take part in two audio-recorded semi-structured interviews; and audio-recorded weekly classroom observations. Participant Information and Consent Forms were also distributed to the two groups of ESL students to elicit their consent to participate in an audio-recorded focus group interview and weekly classroom observations. A sample of the discussed Participant and Information Consent Forms are provided in the Appendices.

Prior to committing to participate in this study, the consent forms were made available for perusal by the teacher and school involved to ensure informed consent. It was hoped that an awareness of the benefits of the present study both to the
teacher and students involved, and, in long term, future educational studies, would encourage an open and cooperative environment.

To avoid disclosing identities of participants, pseudonyms have been used in the present study. Appropriate security of storage is being used for all documents and recordings.

### 3.8 RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

#### 3.8.1 Methodology

Although extensive classroom observations were conducted, transcription from the observations was made selectively, focusing on responses from participants that were related to the research questions. Most of the data collected in the present study came from interview responses, which were self-reported in nature, rather than from any kind of objectively measured data. Taking this into consideration, various limitations associated with this approach should be acknowledged. For example, it is possible that the responses from the interviews with the teachers might not exactly reflect their actual beliefs, rather, a response triggered by what they perceive as what the interviewer wants to hear. As for the focus group interviews, there is a risk that the responses of the participants may not be as articulate or clear when they were interviewed in English as they would if they were interviewed in their first language.

Another problem, with observations in particular, is that the researcher’s presence, no matter how non-participant and non-interactive, might affect how the students behave inside the classroom. Their behaviour might well be different from their natural behaviour when an observer is not present.
3.8.2 Time Constraints

Due to time constraints, the number of participants in the present study was limited to only two EAP teachers and two EAP classes. It would have been ideal to observe and interview more participants to provide the study with a richer degree of information. However, conducting interviews, whether one-to-one or focus group, is very time consuming, as is the observation of classes. Because of this, having a greater number of teachers and students as participants was not possible in the present study.

In addition, it would have been ideal to study a number of students with varying English proficiency levels as well as teachers with varying degrees of teaching experience. Time constraints have limited the number of participants in the present study for convenience and manageability.

3.8.3 Scope

As discussed in Chapter 2, there are various forms of providing feedback to students’ writing. The present study focused solely on written error correction, specifically with regard to teachers’ beliefs and students’ preferences. Other forms of error correction such as peer-to-peer evaluation, oral error correction, and group error correction are beyond the scope of this study. In addition, it can be argued that there are a number of other variables that might influence teachers’ practice of written error correction. In the present study, however, the assumption is that teachers’ beliefs have a direct impact and influence on their actual teaching practice. Other variables that might affect their written error correction practice are beyond the scope of this study.
Furthermore, the present study focused on the specific methods in providing written error correction that teachers utilised. As previously discussed, there are different types of errors that L2 students make, i.e. global and local errors. However, this study focused on how the teachers provided written error correction, and the type of errors to which teachers provided feedback are beyond the scope of this study.

3.9 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the design, the description of the context and participants, data collection and analysis procedures, and the rationale of the methods utilised in the present study. An overview of previous studies with similar design was also highlighted, and the limitations of the research was provided and discussed.
CHAPTER 4
Results and Discussion

The present study sought to explore and investigate teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. Extensive data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups interviews, weekly classroom observations and collection of written artefacts. As the data were collected and analysed, themes were identified relating to the research questions. This chapter presents the results of the study according to each research question and discusses the research outcomes in relation to results and findings of previous literature and studies.

4.1 TEACHERS’ BELIEFS

Teacher beliefs, which have been a common focus of previous studies in second language education (Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985; Lee, 2004; Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Phipps & Borg, 2009), are important aspects that influence teacher practice. Very few studies have investigated teacher beliefs and perceptions about written error correction; and even fewer have explored the correspondence or difference between students’ preferences and actual teaching practice in written error correction (Yates & Kenkel, 2002; Lee, 2004). In addition, very few studies (Perpignan, 2003; Lee, 2004) have utilised a qualitative approach in investigating teachers’ beliefs regarding written error correction. This study addresses the gap in the literature by bringing together teacher beliefs, practices, and student preferences regarding written error correction.
As previously discussed in Chapter 3, the beliefs of both Teacher A and Teacher B regarding written error correction were elicited through semi-structured interviews. After analysis of the data, four key themes were identified from the responses of the teachers, as shown below.

As shown in Figure 4.1, repeated patterns from the responses of teachers regarding written error correction during the semi-structured interviews have been categorised. By analysing the data collected through the semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to identify four key themes from the teachers’ responses: (1) advantages, (2) disadvantages, (3) importance, and (4) practice. The next section outlines each theme that emerged from the data analysis and provides example excerpts of the teachers’ responses during the semi-structured interviews. Note that the following acronyms have been used to specify the examples from the data: TA = Teacher A; TB = Teacher B; INI = Initial Interview; POI = Post-Observation Interview;
CA = Class A Observation; CB = Class B Observation, FA = Focus Group A; and FB = Focus Group B.

4.1.1 Advantages of Written Error Correction

Based on the results of the present study, teachers believe that providing written error correction on their students’ writing has its advantages. Teachers consider these advantages when providing written error correction in order to guide and facilitate the learning of their students in the classroom (Borg, 2001; Hyland & Anan, 2006). Teachers’ beliefs regarding the advantages of providing written error correction were reflected in their responses during the semi-structured interviews. Excerpts of recurring responses of the teachers during the semi-structured interviews are outlined below.

Extract 1: Of course, it [written error correction] has advantages (TA, INI)
Extract 2: You’re helping them [students] proofread it after (TA, INI)
Extract 3: And you get to proofread it with them on the board (TA, POI)
Extract 4: When you make them aware of their mistakes (TA, POI)
Extract 5: Generally… helps students improve their writing (TA, POI)
Extract 6: Students become more aware of their writing (TB, INI)
Extract 7: The correction tells them what their mistakes are (TB, INI)
Extract 8: Helps them revise their writing more efficiently (TB, INI)
Extract 9: Easier to get them [students] to rewrite their sentences (TB, POI)
Extract 10: They [students] learn to proofread by themselves. (TB, POI)

Figure 4.2 Teachers’ Responses Regarding Advantages of Written Error Correction

As outlined in Figure 4.2, the results of the teachers’ responses during the semi-structured interviews show that teachers believe that providing written error correction is advantageous in that it:

- Helps students improve their proofreading skills (Extracts 2, 3, & 10);
- Generates awareness of their mistakes in writing (Extracts 4 & 6); and
- Helps students revise their writing more efficiently (Extracts 5, 8, & 9).

86
In addition, it can be inferred from these results that teachers believe that providing written error correction is helpful in improving students' writing accuracy, similar to current research findings (Ferris, 1999; Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Bitchener, 2008) regarding the effectiveness of written error correction. Furthermore, based on these results, teachers believe in the helpfulness of written error correction despite the growing number of studies investigating its claims (Truscott, 1996; Truscott & Yi-ping Hsu, 2008).

4.1.2 Disadvantages of Written Error Correction

Although teachers believe that providing written error correction is beneficial in some respects, they also believe that it has disadvantages. The responses of the teachers support current research findings (Ferris, 2002; Ferris, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006) that providing written error correction is time consuming and students might not understand the feedback. Excerpts from the teachers’ responses during the semi-structured interviews support the earlier findings from the literature, as outlined below.

Extract 11: Well, it [written error correction] takes a lot of time, firstly (TA, INI)
Extract 12: Of course, it [written error correction] takes quite a bit of time (TA, INI)
Extract 13: You spend a lot of time correcting their [students] papers (TA, POI)
Extract 14: Also... You need to explain your corrections (TA, POI)
Extract 15: They [students] sometimes don’t understand your correction (TA, POI)
Extract 16: It’s [written error correction] time consuming for me, and for the students as well (TB, INI)
Extract 17: Some [students] find it hard to understand the corrections you’ve made in their writing (TB, INI)
Extract 18: Even if you’re using [error correction] codes, it still takes up a lot of time because you have a lot of papers to correct (TB, POI)
Extract 19: Sometimes I spend almost an entire session discussing similar mistakes that they’ve [students] made. (TB, POI)
Extract 20: And they [students] still ask you about the corrections. (TB, POI)
The results of the teachers’ responses during the semi-structured interviews show that teachers believe that providing written error correction has disadvantages in the following aspects:

- Time consuming (Extracts 11, 12, 13, 16, & 18)
- Students might not understand the feedback (Extracts 14, 15, 17, 19 & 20)

Thus, the teachers in this study believe that providing written error correction has its disadvantages; however, they still chose to provide it on their students’ writing. Furthermore, the fact that teachers still believe in the effectiveness of written error correction despite its disadvantages reflects the strength of their view that written error correction is effective in improving their students’ writing accuracy.

4.1.3 Importance of Written Error Correction

Providing feedback on student writing is, perhaps, the most widely used method for responding to student writing (Ferris, 2003). Despite the ongoing debate on the effectiveness of written error correction, teachers still feel that providing corrective feedback is important in helping their students improve their writing accuracy (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Brown, 2007). Teachers’ beliefs regarding the importance of providing written error correction were reflected in their responses during the semi-structured interviews. Excerpts of recurring responses of the teachers during the semi-structured interviews are outlined in Figure 4.4.

| Extract 21: Well, the goal is to help them [students] improve their writing (TA, INI) |
| Extract 22: Of course, as teachers, we want them [students] to write better, in academic standards (TA, INI) |
| Extract 23: Another thing it [written error correction] does is that it helps them [students] to read more (TA, INI) |
| Extract 24: It [written error correction] helps them become more independent as writers (TA, POI) |
| Extract 25: They [students] are also encouraged to learn their mistakes on their own, and to correct their errors on their own. (TA, POI) |
| Extract 26: In my experience, it helps improve their writing, definitely. (TB, INI) |
The results of the teachers’ responses during the semi-structured interviews show that teachers believe that providing written error correction is important in the following aspects:

- Improving writing accuracy (Extracts 21, 22, 26, 28, & 30);
- Promotes independent learning (Extracts 24, 25, 27, & 29); and,
- Encourages students to read more (Extract 23)

Based on the responses of the teachers during the semi-structured interviews, it can be inferred that teachers believe that providing written error correction to their students’ writing is important in helping them improve their written accuracy. In addition, the results also show that teachers believe that providing written error correction also encourages students to read more in order to help them become better writers.

4.1.4 Practice of Written Error Correction

For teachers, written error correction plays an integral role in improving the L2 writing accuracy of their students (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 2004; Brown, 2007). Results from the present study show that teachers still prefer to provide written error correction because it allows for an individualised teacher-to-student communication that is rarely possible in the day-to-day operations of an L2 writing class. This finding supports that of current existing literature on written error correction (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997). Teachers’ beliefs regarding their practice of providing written error correction...
error correction were reflected in their responses during the semi-structured interviews. Excerpts of recurring responses of the teachers during the semi-structured interviews are outlined below.

| Extract 31: More often, I find that it’s less confusing if you give them [students] the correct answer right away (TA, INI) |
| Extract 32: I leave comments on the margins or at the bottom of their [students] paper about their writing (TA, INI) |
| Extract 33: I go through their pieces of writing on a one-on-one basis (TA, INI) |
| Extract 34: Sometimes, I circle areas where errors have been made (TA, INI) |
| Extract 35: I discuss similar errors that a lot of students made with the entire class, and we correct them together. (TA, POI) |
| Extract 36: I usually tell them [students] about the grammar, and not about the exact error in their writing (TB, INI) |
| Extract 37: I use error codes to help them [students] figure out what the mistake is for themselves and correct them (TB, INI) |
| Extract 38: I feel that it’s better to give them [students] the error code and let them learn to edit or revise their writing on their own (TB, INI) |
| Extract 39: Sometimes I just underline sentences that are awkward, or that don’t make sense (TB, INI) |
| Extract 40: I also put comments on their [students] paper, especially when error codes are not applicable for their mistakes in writing. (TB, POI) |

The results of the teachers’ responses during the semi-structured interviews show teachers’ beliefs regarding their own practice or providing written error correction could be summarised in the following aspects:

- Use of error correction codes (Extracts 36, 37 & 38);
- Providing detailed comments (Extracts 32 & 40);
- Underlining and encircling of errors (Extracts 34 & 39)
- Explicit written error correction (Extracts 31, 33, & 35)

It can be inferred from these results that teachers have a set of beliefs about their own practice of written error correction. In addition, the results show that teachers have varied beliefs on how to provide written error correction. Although both teachers believe in the effectiveness of written error correction, Teacher A believes in an explicit manner of providing feedback. Teacher B, on the other hand,
believes in an implicit manner, through the use of error correction codes, in providing feedback. The different patterns of their beliefs and preferences could be interpreted as a reflection of the differences in their previous experiences regarding providing written error correction.

To summarise, four key themes were identified from the responses of the teachers during the semi-structured interviews in order to address the first research question of the present study. Based on the teacher’s responses to the semi-structured interviews, the following can be inferred about their beliefs regarding written error correction:

- Teachers regard the practice of written error correction as important;
- Teachers have a set of beliefs about how they practice written error correction in the classroom;
- Teachers are aware that the practice of written error correction has its advantages and disadvantages;
- Teachers believe that providing written error correction promotes independent learning;
- Teachers believe that providing written error correction generates awareness, helps students improve their proofreading skills and assists in revising their writing more efficiently;
- Teachers believe that there are some errors that cannot simply be corrected by conventional means, and;
- Teachers believe that providing written error correction is time consuming.
4.2 TEACHERS’ PRACTICES

Error correction, whether oral or written, is the process of providing clear, comprehensive, and consistent corrective feedback on a student’s grammatical errors for the purpose of improving the student’s ability to write accurately (Ferris, 2002). The second research question of the present study asked what the teachers’ written error correction practices are. In order to address this research question, data collected through weekly classroom observations of Class A and Class B were analysed. Similar to the data from the semi-structured interviews, data collected through the weekly classroom observations were categorised and four key themes were identified, as shown below.

As shown in Figure 4.6, repeated patterns from the data collected during the weekly classroom observations have been categorised. By analysing the data collected through the classroom observations, the researcher was able to identify four key themes from teachers’ practice of written error correction: (1) purposes, (2) concerns, (3) importance, and (4) observed practice. The next section outlines each theme that emerged from the data analysis and provides example excerpts of the
teachers’ responses and actual teacher-corrected student writing samples collected during the weekly classroom observations. Note that the same acronyms from section 4.1 have been used to specify extracted responses from the data.

4.2.1 Purposes of Written Error Correction

As previously discussed, teachers believe that providing written error correction is advantageous in helping students improve their proofreading skills; generating awareness of their mistakes in writing; and helping students revise their writing more efficiently. Teachers’ beliefs regarding the advantages of providing written error correction were reflected in their interactions with students during the weekly classroom observation. Excerpts of recurring responses of the teachers during the weekly classroom observations are outlined below.

| Extract 41: What do you think is wrong with this sentence here? (TA, CA) |
| Extract 42: Do you like this sentence? Why not? (TA, CA) |
| Extract 43: I think this [writes a word on the students’ paper] is a better word to use. What do you think? (TA, CA) |
| Extract 44: But that [points to a word on a student’s writing] isn’t really a very academic word. There are better words that you can use. (TA, CA) |
| Extract 45: You’ve got to think clearly about what you’re writing (TA, CA) |
| Extract 46: This sentence is very weird (TB, CB) |
| Extract 47: What sentence do you think makes more sense? (TB, CB) |
| Extract 48: You have to know your grammar well (TB, CB) |
| Extract 49: Could you please rewrite the sentence? I’ve provided codes on some errors you’ve made (TB, CB) |
| Extract 50: What do you think is the error in this sentence? (TB, CB) |

Figure 4.7 Teachers’ Observed Responses Regarding Purposes of Written Error Correction

Based on Figure 4.7, the results of the teachers’ responses during the weekly classroom observations show the teachers’ purposes in providing written error correction are summarised in the following aspects:

- Locating errors in writing (Extracts 41, 44, 47 & 50);
- Helping students revise their writing (Extracts 43 & 49), and;
- Generating students’ awareness of their errors (Extracts 42, 45, 46 & 48)
It can be inferred from these results that teachers have different techniques on how to provide written error correction. Teacher A practiced a direct (explicit) manner of error correction, while Teacher B practiced an indirect (implicit) manner of error correction. This variation could be interpreted as a reflection of the difference in their previous experiences of providing written error correction. Furthermore, teachers purposefully provide written error correction to generate students’ awareness of their errors, which is reflective of Schmidt’s Noticing Hypothesis.

4.2.2 Concerns in Providing Written Error Correction

As established in Chapter 3, part of the data collection procedure during the weekly classroom observations was the use of the Communicative Orientation of Language Teaching (COLT) observation scheme. As previously discussed, the COLT sheet enabled the researcher to record the time of events and classroom activities. Since teachers believe that one of the main disadvantages of providing written error correction is its time-consuming nature, the researcher recorded how much time it took for Teacher A and Teacher B to conduct their practice of written error correction in the classroom. The time it took for both Teacher A and Teacher B to provide written error correction on the writings of their students is illustrated in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Type of Error Correction</th>
<th>No. of Students</th>
<th>Total Time (minutes)</th>
<th>Average time per student</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Teacher A</td>
<td>Explicit &amp; One-on-one</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>9.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teacher B</td>
<td>Implicit &amp; One-on-one</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>132</td>
<td>8.8</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1 Teachers’ Error Correction Time
Based on Table 4.1, Teacher A conducted explicit one-one-one correction with fifteen students, for a total time of 147 minutes. This means that the average time that teacher A spends on providing written error correction is 9.8 minutes per student. Teacher B, on the other hand, conducted implicit (with the use of error correction codes) one-on-one error correction with fifteen students, for a total time of 132 minutes. This means that Teacher B spends an average of 8.8 minutes in providing written error correction for each of her students’ writing. This data supports previous literature (Ferris, Pezone, Tade, & Tinti, 1997; Ferris, 2010) that teachers perceive the provision of written error correction on their students’ writing as time consuming.

Another disadvantage of providing written error corrections, based on the beliefs of teachers, is that not every writing error has an applicable error correction code. In addition, teachers also believe that not every error in writing can be corrected simply by changing the grammar of the sentence or substituting words. Furthermore, teachers do not know for certain that the students will look up the code corresponding to their errors and act on that information in order to improve their writing accuracy. An example of this is shown in the figures below. More examples of the collected written artefacts are provided in Appendices 4 and 5.

Figure 4.8 Sample Corrected Student Writing
As illustrated in Figure 4.8, there is very little written explicit error correction employed in the student writing. It is also apparent that a number of “question marks” (?) could be seen throughout the writing. These question marks imply that the teacher does not understand what the student is trying to say in the sentence. Another interpretation could be that teachers are prompting the students to explain the sentence more clearly because the meaning of their writing is not obvious. Therefore, it can be inferred that the errors in the sentences could not be corrected by simply changing the grammar of the sentence or by substituting words. In addition, no error correction codes are applicable for the errors made in the sentence.

The results of the teachers’ observed practice during the weekly classroom observations support the teachers’ belief that providing written error correction entails the following areas of concern:

- Providing error correction is time consuming, and;
- Not every error has an applicable error correction code, or technique.

Based on the results, it is clear that although the practice of providing written error correction is advantageous in helping students improve their proofreading skills; generating awareness of their mistakes in writing; and helping students revise their writing more efficiently; it takes up a lot of time to implement effectively. In addition, due to the range of different writing errors that students make, providing written error correction does not apply to every writing error made by students.

4.2.3 Importance of Written Error Correction

Teachers believe that providing written error correction to their students’ writing is important in helping them improve their writing accuracy. In addition,
teachers believe that providing written error correction also encourages their students to read more in order to help them become better writers. Excerpts of teacher responses to students when providing written error correction during the weekly classroom observations are shown in Figure 4.10.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract</th>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Teacher Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>You should learn to detect your errors in writing</td>
<td>TA, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Grammar is very important</td>
<td>TA, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Read and analyse what you’re writing</td>
<td>TA, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>It is important that you read carefully to see your mistakes</td>
<td>TA, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>The more you read your work, the more you learn about the structure of the sentences you’re writing</td>
<td>TA, CA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Read your sentences carefully, please</td>
<td>TB, CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>You use the error codes as hints so you can correct your own mistakes in your sentences</td>
<td>TB, CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Learn to detect and correct your errors</td>
<td>TB, CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Grammar is important, so please learn to check your grammar</td>
<td>TB, CB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Read your sentence structure carefully</td>
<td>TB, CB</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.9 Teachers’ Observed Responses Regarding Importance of Written Error Correction

Based on Figure 4.9, the results of the teachers’ responses during the weekly classroom observations show the teachers’ stated beliefs about their practices of written error correction are important in the following aspects:

- Students learn independently (Extracts 51, 52, 57, 58 & 59), and;
- Students read more (Extracts 53, 54, 55, 56, & 60).

It can be inferred from these results that teachers’ practices of written error correction reflect how important they think it is to provide written error correction to their students’ writing. In addition, teachers’ stated beliefs on the importance of providing written error correction was also demonstrated when they utilised error correction methods to encourage their students to read more in order to become better writers. Furthermore, the results from the weekly classroom observations support the teachers’ beliefs, as reflected by their responses during the semi-structured interviews.
4.2.4 Observed Practice of Written Error Correction

In order to provide useful feedback on their students’ writing, L2 teachers are assumed to have proficiency in the L2, knowledge about writing and the local curriculum, and a collection of relevant techniques for responding to their students’ writing (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008). Teachers’ practices of providing written error correction were enacted during the weekly classroom observation. Excerpts of recurring responses of the teachers during the weekly classroom observations, and examples of teacher-corrected student writings that reflect their practice of providing written error correction are shown below.

| Extract 61: [TA] Hmm.. Ok, so let's have a look at these [points to an example sentence on the board]. "There is a direct correlation between smoking and cancer as illustrated by research." Is that ok? [Asks the entire class] [Student, CA] A strong correlation? [TA] A strong correlation? I guess if you have a strong correlation, you could say that there is a direct correlation. Provided there is a very strong correlation, I guess you could say that. [Writes over the example sentence] I would probably say, "...as illustrated by THE research."

Extract 62: [TA] What do you think about this one? [Points to a sentence] [Student] So, if I say that, "The more bad thing about..." [TA] No. You wouldn't say "more bad," rather, you could say "the worst thing about it." Ok? "The worst thing." That's what you should say. Ok? |

Based on Extracts 61 and 62 in Figure 4.10, Teacher A’s practice leans more towards an explicit method of written error correction. This is demonstrated by the manner in which he responds to his students and directly corrects them when they make a grammatical error in their sentences. His explicit manner of written error correction is further illustrated in Figure 4.11.
As illustrated in Figure 4.11, Teacher A provides most of the correct words, and deletes unnecessary phrases in the paragraph. He provides correct word forms, and deletes incorrect words used in each sentence. This is a clear reflection that Teacher A practices written error correction in an explicit manner.

Teacher B, on the other hand, shows a different method of providing written error correction, as shown in Figures 4.12 and 4.13.

Extract 63: [TB] You can say there is more pressure "ON" as well [points to the example on the board]. So, not just "AMONG" or "FOR," you can also use more pressure "ON."
[Student, CB] How about "with"?
[TB] With? No. "With" doesn't really go with the context. "Pressure with teachers" is a little strange. One of these [points to examples written on the board] prepositions is better. "With" is not really a good collocation.

Extract 64: [TB] So, does anyone have any questions about this one? [Points to the example sentence on the board]
[Student] Can we say "having crazy" action?
[TB] Crazy action? Yes, I guess so. But, because we're talking about behaviour, it's more of doing than having. So, I think maybe "have" is the wrong word. Maybe "act in a crazy way" is better. Make it more verbal. Because "behaviour" is something that we do, and not something that we think, or what we have.

Based on Extracts 63 and 64 in Figure 4.12, Teacher B leans more towards an implicit manner of written error correction. This is demonstrated by the manner in...
which she responds to her students and indirectly corrects them when they make a grammatical error in their sentences. She provides a number of suggestions to the students. The purpose of this is to encourage the students to learn independently by locating and correcting their own errors. This supports Teacher B’s stated beliefs during the semi-structured interviews. Her implicit manner of written error correction, specifically her use of error correction codes (see Appendix 1 for a complete list of error correction codes utilised by Teacher B) is further illustrated in Figure 4.13.

![Figure 4.13 Teacher B Sample Corrected Writing](image)

As illustrated on Figure 4.13, Teacher B utilises error correction codes to provide the students with hints regarding the errors they made in their writing, i.e. “WW” for “Wrong Word,” “WF” for “Word Form,” and “SIV” for “Subject-Verb Agreement.” In addition, she also provides appropriate words that should be used in each sentence. This is a clear reflection that Teacher B practices written error correction primarily in an implicit manner.

To summarise the results of teachers’ practices of written error correction during the weekly classroom observations, the following can be inferred:
• Teachers practise written error correction to help their students locate their errors and revise their writing;
• Teachers practise written error correction in order to generate awareness in their students regarding their errors in writing;
• Teachers spend a lot of time correcting (whether explicitly, or through the use of error correction codes) their students’ writings;
• Teachers are able to encourage students to read their own work more and learn independently by providing written error correction, and;
• Teachers utilise both explicit and implicit methods of written error correction.

4.3 STUDENTS’ PREFERENCES

As previously discussed in Chapter 2, students’ preferences play an important role in the effectiveness of written error correction employed in the L2 writing class. Previous studies (Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Komura, 1999; Leki, 1991) have consistently shown that L2 writing students want, expect, and value teacher feedback for the improvement of their writing accuracy. The third research question of the present study asked about the preferences of students regarding written error correction. To address this research question, the data collected through focus group interviews with students from Class A and Class B was analysed. Four key themes were identified from the responses of the students, as shown below.
As shown in Figure 4.14, repeated patterns from the responses of the students regarding written error correction during the focus group interviews have been categorised. By analysing the data collected through the focus group interviews, the researcher was able to identify four key themes from students’ preferences of written error correction: (1) advantages, (2) disadvantages, (3) importance, and (4) practice. The next section outlines each theme that emerged from the data analysis and provides example excerpts of the students’ responses during the focus group interviews. Note that the same acronyms from section 4.1 have been used to specify extracted responses from the data.

4.3.1 Advantages of Written Error Correction

Based on the results of the present study, students believe that receiving written error correction from their teachers has its advantages. This supports current existing literature (Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Ferris, 1995; Hyland & Anan, 2006)
that students find the written error correction they receive from their teachers to be helpful in improving their writing accuracy. Excerpts of students’ responses during the focus group interviews are outlined in Figure 4.15.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65</td>
<td>It [written error correction] lets us see the wrong in our writing.</td>
<td>(FA) 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66</td>
<td>Helps us a lot when we rewrite our essays.</td>
<td>(FA) 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>67</td>
<td>It [written error correction] tells us what’s wrong in the sentence.</td>
<td>(FA) 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Helps us learn from our writing mistakes.</td>
<td>(FA) 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>69</td>
<td>Makes it easy to write the sentence again correctly.</td>
<td>(FB) 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>When we see the correction, we know what our mistakes are.</td>
<td>(FB) 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>71</td>
<td>We easily learn our writing errors because of the correction.</td>
<td>(FB) 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>72</td>
<td>We can correct our own errors when writing sentences.</td>
<td>(FB) 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4.15 Students’ Responses Regarding Advantages of Written Error Correction**

As shown in Figure 4.15, students in this study believe that receiving written error correction on their writings from their teachers is beneficial in the following aspects:

- Written error correction is helpful in locating errors in writing (Extracts 65, 67 & 70);
- Written error correction makes it easy to revise writing (Extracts 66, & 69), and;
- Written error correction encourages students to learn from their mistakes (Extracts 68, 71 &72).

In addition, it can be inferred from the results of this study that the responses of the students are consistent with current literature (Leki, 1991; Komura, 1999; Montgomery & Baker, 2007) that students view written error correction as playing as important role in helping them improve their writing accuracy.

### 4.3.2 Disadvantages of Written Error Correction

Although results of the responses of students during the focus group interviews show that they believe written error correction is beneficial in certain
aspects, they also believe it has its disadvantages. Excerpts from the students’ responses during the focus group interviews support earlier findings from the literature, as outlined below.

Extract 73: It takes us a long time to make our writing right. (FA)
Extract 74: Sometimes, we have to wait for a long time for the teacher to look at our writing. (FA)
Extract 75: Sometimes, I don’t know how to use the teacher’s corrections to rewrite my sentences. (FA)
Extract 76: It [written error correction] is sometimes hard to understand. (FA)
Extract 77: Sometimes I get confused, so, how to I make this correct? (FB)
Extract 78: It takes a long time to look at every correction code and then make your sentences correct using them. (FB)
Extract 79: It [written error correction] is really very time consuming. (FB)
Extract 80: Sometimes, we don’t know how the teacher... expects us to make our sentences correct based on the codes. (FB)

Based on the students’ responses during the focus group interviews, it can be inferred that students believe written error correction has disadvantages in the following aspects:

- Written error correction is time-consuming (Extracts 73, 74, 78 & 79);
- It is difficult to understand the teacher’s feedback (Extracts 76 & 80), and;
- It is confusing as to how to correct the error in writing (Extracts 75 & 77).

Thus, the students in this study believe that written error correction has its disadvantages; although it is still beneficial in helping them improve their writing accuracy. Furthermore, students still expect their writing to be corrected by their teacher, despite the time-consuming and confusing aspects of written error correction.

4.3.3 Importance of Written Error Correction

As established in the literature (Ferris, 1997; Ferris 2001; Perpignan, 2003), students value the written error correction they receive from their teachers. Students’
beliefs regarding the importance of written error correction were reflected in their responses to the focus group interviews. Excerpts of the students’ responses are outlined below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extract 81: It [written error correction] helps us become good writers. (FA)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extract 82: When you see a correction in your paper, you can see where you got it wrong in your sentence. (FA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract 83: Sometimes, we can see the wrong in the sentence before the teacher tells us what it is. (FA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract 84: We have learned to use error codes to make correct our own mistakes in our sentences. (FB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract 85: Sometimes, when we see the [error] code, we already know how to make our writing correct. (FB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract 86: The [error] codes really helps in writing better sentences. (FB)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extract 87: When we are able to correct out own writing using the [error] codes, we think it makes us better writers. (FB)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 4.17 Students’ Responses Regarding Importance of Written Error Correction

The results of the students’ responses during the focus group interviews show that students believe that receiving written error correction from their teachers is important in the following aspects:

- Written error correction helps students locate and correct their own errors in writing (Extracts 82, 83, 84 & 85), and;
- Written error correction helps students become better writers (Extracts 81, 86 & 87).

Based on the responses of the students, it can be inferred that students view written error correction as important in helping them locate and correct their own errors. Furthermore, students value receiving written error correction from their teachers because they believe that it helps them become better writers.

4.3.4 Practice of Written Error Correction

As previously discussed, students want and expect written error correction from their teachers (Ferris, 2003). In addition, previous research also indicates that
students rely on teachers for error correction in improving their L2 writing accuracy (Lee, 2004). Students’ responses during the focus group interviews regarding their preference in their teachers’ practices of written error correction are outlined below.

Extract 88: Teacher A always tells us how to correct the sentence. (FA)
Extract 89: Writes comments at the end of the paper to tell you what to change in your writing. (FA)
Extract 90: Underlines the wrong sentences, then explains why they are wrong. (FA)
Extract 91: [Teacher A] tells us what our mistakes are in the sentence, then explains to us how to make them correct. (FA)
Extract 92: Teacher B encircles words and parts in the sentence, then she puts the correction codes to tell us what is wrong. (FB)
Extract 93: She [Teacher B] uses error codes most of the time. (FB)
Extract 94: [Teacher B] writes notes at the end of the paper, and tells us how to make our writing better. (FB)
Extract 95: Sometimes puts question mark in the sentence to say that the sentence does not make sense. (FB)

Figure 4.18 Students’ Responses Regarding the Practice of Written Error Correction

To summarise, four key themes from the students' responses during the focus group interviews regarding written error correction were identified: (1) advantages, (2) disadvantages, (3) importance, and (4) practice. Based on the students’ responses, the following can be inferred:

- Students regard the practice of written error correction as important in helping them locate their errors and revise their writing;
- Students have varied beliefs about their preference regarding their teacher’s written error correction practice in the classroom;
- Students find written error correction encouraging in learning from their own mistakes;
- Students feel unsure on how to revise their writing based on the written error correction provided by their teacher, and;
- Students also feel that the process of providing written error correction is time consuming.
4.4 TEACHERS’ PRACTICES AND STUDENTS’ PREFERENCES

The results of the interviews and observations showed that teachers employ various methods in providing written error correction. In addition, results from the focus group interviews also suggested that students want, expect, and value the written error correction they receive from their teachers. By further analysing the results from the teacher interviews, classroom observations, and focus group interviews, it can be inferred that an alignment of students’ preferences and teachers’ practices of written error correction has emerged as shown in the figure below.

![Alignment of Students' Preferences and Teachers' Practices](image)

Figure 4.19 Alignment of Students’ Preferences and Teachers’ Practices

Results from the interviews suggest that Teacher A and Teacher B employ explicit and implicit methods of written error correction, respectively. Based on the responses of the students during the focus group interviews, students prefer the methods of written error correction employed by their respective teachers. As shown in Figure 4.19, Teacher A practices explicit methods of written error correction, while
Teacher B practices implicit methods of written error correction. Results from the students’ responses suggest that students’ preferences have adapted towards their teachers’ written error correction methods. From this, it can be inferred that the preferences of students regarding written error correction have adapted towards the methods employed by their teachers. In other words, whatever method of written error correction teachers utilise, that is the method that their students will find helpful in improving their writing accuracy. Whether teachers utilise explicit or implicit methods of written error correction, and regardless of the disadvantages of providing written error correction; the preferences of students will adapt accordingly in order to make full use of their teachers’ written error correction methods in revising their writing and improving their writing accuracy.

4.5 SUMMARY

This chapter presented the results of the present study according to each research question and discussed the research outcomes in relation to results and findings of previous literature and studies. The present study sought to explore and investigate teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. Extensive data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus groups interviews, weekly classroom observations and collection of written artefacts. Results of the responses of the teachers and students during the semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, and weekly classroom observations were outlined, highlighted and discussed in relation to findings of current existing research. The next chapter will discuss the implications of the results of the present study as well as recommendations for further research in written error correction.
CHAPTER 5
Implications and Recommendations

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study investigated teachers’ beliefs and practices, and students’ preferences regarding written error correction. Extensive data were collected through semi-structured interviews, focus group interviews, weekly classroom observations, and collection of written artefacts in order to address the research questions. The previous chapter presented the results of the study according to each research question and discussed the research outcomes in relation to the findings of previous studies. This chapter provides a brief overview of results and discusses implications for teaching, teacher education, and recommendations for further research into the field of written error correction.

5.2 SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Results from this study suggest that teachers regarded the practice of written error correction as important in improving students’ writing accuracy. Teachers believe that providing written error correction helps students improve their proof-reading skills in order to revise their writing more efficiently. However, results also show that providing written error correction is very time consuming. In addition, students sometimes experience difficulty in understanding the written feedback that teachers provide. Because of this, teachers allocate additional time during class in order to explain the written feedback they have provided. Even the implicit manner of providing written feedback is a concern of teachers because error correction codes
are limited and cannot adequately accommodate the variety of writing errors that their students make. Analysis of the collected written artefacts indicates that teachers utilise both implicit (using error correction codes, writing comments on the margins, underlining and encircling) and explicit (provision of appropriate words, synonym suggestions) written error correction methods to address the writing errors of their students. Furthermore, teachers prefer to provide explicit written feedback strategies during the early stages of the language course, and move to a more implicit strategy of providing written error correction in order to facilitate language learning.

On the other hand, results of the focus group interviews suggest that students regarded their teachers’ practice of written error correction as important in helping them locate their errors and revise their writing. However, students also feel that the process of providing written error correction is time consuming. In addition, students sometimes feel unsure about how to revise their writing based on the written feedback provided by their teacher. Nevertheless, students want and expect their teachers to provide written feedback because they believe that the benefits they gain from receiving feedback on their writing outweigh the apparent disadvantages of their teachers’ written error correction strategies.

Furthermore, results of this study suggest that the preferences of students regarding written error correction have adapted towards the methods employed by their respective teachers, and whatever written error correction method their teachers utilised is what the students found to be useful and helpful in revising their writing more effectively. From this result, it can also be inferred that regardless of the disadvantages of providing written error correction, the preferences of students will adapt accordingly.
5.3 IMPLICATIONS OF RESULTS

5.2.1 Implications for Teaching

Firstly, results of this study suggest that ESL teachers’ perceptions of grammatical errors are highly influenced by their beliefs about how they should provide written feedback. The implications of this are that ESL teachers’ beliefs influence their specific style of responding to students’ errors and that their mode of providing feedback is closely linked to their personal philosophies. Therefore, it can be argued that there may be a need for reflection on the teacher’s part to become more conscious regarding the written error correction strategies they utilise. ESL teachers might develop reflective practices in order to examine their own strategies of providing written error correction. In addition, this study has found that teachers provide written error correction in accordance with their beliefs. The implication that may be drawn from this is that ESL teachers should be able to adapt and tailor their written corrective feedback strategies so that they will adequately address the writing weaknesses unique to each individual student. Reflective practices may help ESL teachers in adapting and adjusting their written error correction strategies suitable to the writing needs of the students.

Secondly, it appears from the focus group interview data that students experience a degree of difficulty in understanding the written corrective feedback that they receive on their writing. ESL teachers have to explain the written feedback they have provided in order for their students to fully understand it. This finding may imply that it is not enough to simply provide written error correction; rather, there is a need to combine it with ample explanation so as to avoid confusion or misunderstanding on the part of the student. Another implication that may be drawn from this is that ESL teachers should combine different strategies of providing written corrective
feedback so that the disadvantages of one strategy may be compensated when combined with another strategy.

Thirdly, providing written error correction requires a considerably large amount of time. Results showed that ESL teachers also spend time explaining the written feedback they have provided. This finding suggests that teachers need to adapt their lesson plans in order to adequately accommodate extra time spent on providing written feedback. Another implication of this finding is that ESL teachers may need to integrate their lesson plans to allocate sufficient time to explain the written corrective feedback they have provided on their students’ writings. In addition, ESL teachers could be more explicit towards their students regarding their written error correction strategies. For example, ESL teachers could spend the early stages of the writing course discussing how they will provide written feedback, together with the underlying reasons as to why they chose to employ such written error correction techniques.

Albeit time consuming, teachers’ written feedback appears to be expected and valued by students. This may imply that students rely on the written corrective feedback provided by their teacher, whether explicit or implicit, in order to effectively revise their writing. Thus, it may be argued that teachers should continue to provide written corrective feedback to their students’ writing in order to help them improve their writing accuracy, despite the ongoing debate on its effectiveness.

Lastly, students’ preferences in written error correction appear to adapt towards the written error correction methods utilised by their teachers. The implication of this could be that teachers need to ensure that the written error correction methods they are employing adequately address the writing needs of their students. Since the students will find their teachers’ written error correction methods
to be useful regardless of its explicitness, there is a need for ESL teachers to further evaluate and examine the effectiveness of the written error correction strategies that they choose to utilise in the classroom.

5.3.2 Implications for Teacher Education

Based on the results of this study, it can be inferred that there is a need for integration of principles of providing effective written error correction on teacher education syllabi. Teachers are guided by their beliefs as to what constitutes effective written feedback strategies. Therefore, teacher training syllabi might be enhanced to incorporate various methods and techniques in providing written error correction more effectively. The results of this study imply that teachers undergoing training should receive additional instruction focusing on the different ways of providing feedback and employing effective written error correction strategies that address the specific writing weaknesses unique to each individual student. For example, workshops could be conducted so that teachers could discuss the various techniques in providing written error correction. Through workshops, teachers could compare their written error correction methods with that of other teachers in order to discuss possible enhancements to further refine their written error correction strategies. Practice sessions could be conducted wherein participating teachers are encouraged to rehearse and refine their own written error correction techniques.

In addition, teacher training syllabi may also incorporate self-evaluation strategies to help upcoming teachers reflect on their own strategies in providing written error correction. Through the development of reflective strategies, upcoming teachers may be able to improve their own techniques in providing written error correction. Teachers may be able to prepare themselves mentally, by being more aware of the needs of their students and adjusting appropriate written feedback
strategies to address those needs. Furthermore, incorporating reflective practices into teacher training syllabi may help teachers become more aware of the impact their provision of written feedback has on their students.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

As summarised above, the present study has raised and documented a number of issues concerning written error correction. While these findings may contribute to second language acquisition, particularly to the area of written error correction, there were shortcomings that could be further explored. This section will discuss recommendations for further research and will conclude the final chapter of this thesis. Table 5.1 shows the limitations of this study and the corresponding recommendations for future research.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Limitations of the Present Study</th>
<th>Recommendations for Future Research</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Data collected though semi-structured interviews</td>
<td>• Utilise questionnaires together with interviews</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Data were self-reported</td>
<td>• Data are collected and reported by multiple interviewers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Time constraints</td>
<td>• Longitudinal research designs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Small number of participants</td>
<td>• Large number of participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Limited scope of participants</td>
<td>• Wider scope of participants with varying ages, English proficiency levels, cultural backgrounds, etc.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1. Limitations and Recommendations

Firstly, data from the teachers in the present study were collected through semi-structured interviews. Taking this into consideration, it is possible that the teachers’ responses during the interviews were triggered by what the teachers
thought the interviewer wants to hear and might not exactly reflect their actual beliefs regarding written error correction. Therefore, it is recommended that future research designs focus on in-depth exploration on teachers’ beliefs regarding their written error correction strategies. Possible ways of exploring this may be by utilising other data collection methods such as questionnaires in conjunction with the interviews to elicit a richer depth of information. In addition, the data collected through interviews were self-reported in nature. Thus, future research may utilise research designs that include data to be collected by more than one interviewer in order to strengthen the credibility of data on teachers’ beliefs regarding written error correction.

Secondly, data from the weekly classroom observations were collected with the researcher acting as a non-participant observer. Taking this into account, the presence of the researcher inside the classroom environment might have affected the behaviour of the teachers and students being observed, rendering the possibility that the data collected was biased and unnatural. Therefore, it is recommended for future research to utilise other data collection methods in conjunction with observations to reinforce the trustworthiness of the collected data.

Thirdly, due to time constraints and restricted resources, the participants in this study were limited to only two ESL teachers and two groups of adult intermediate ESL students. It would have been ideal to conduct observations and interviews on a wider scope of participants, with varying ages, different English proficiency levels, and diverse ESL learning experiences regarding written error correction. This limitation of the present study suggests that future research could investigate a larger group of participants in order to increase the possibility of producing a more generalized result. Furthermore, examining a larger group of participants may produce a richer degree of information about teachers’ beliefs,
practices, and students’ preferences than the present study was able to investigate. Examining a wide range of participants may produce a more diversified categorisation of themes regarding beliefs and practices of written error correction.

Lastly, data for this study was collected within a period of eight weeks. Due to time constraints and the limit of a Master’s thesis, a longer time frame for data collection was not possible. Because of this, it is recommended that future research could be conducted in a longitudinal manner in order to collect data which could only be obtained through follow-up interviews and observations of participants over time. Possible ways of exploring this could be through the use of longitudinal research designs that could investigate the long term effects of teacher’s written corrective feedback strategies on students’ writings. In addition, longitudinal research designs can probe and explore the extent to which students utilise the written corrective feedback they receive from their teachers. Overall, the improvement in the limitations of the present study would be necessary to future studies in order to draw firmer conclusions with regard to the investigation of teachers’ beliefs, practices, and students’ preferences in written error correction.
REFERENCES


Lightbown, P. M. & Spada, N. (1990). *Focus-on-Form and Corrective Feedback in*


# Error Correction Codes

Many students make the same errors all the time in their writing. Using a code is one of the best ways to learn from your errors and become a better writer.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
<th>Example &amp; Correction(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WW</td>
<td>Wrong word</td>
<td>There is a nice place. It is a nice place.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^</td>
<td>Missing word</td>
<td>I two boyfriends. I have two boyfriends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Punctuation</td>
<td>i study english! I study English!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>T</td>
<td>Tense</td>
<td>I have studied at QUT last year. I studied at QUT.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF</td>
<td>Word form</td>
<td>The movie is very bored. The movie is very boring.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIV</td>
<td>Subject verb agreement</td>
<td>The cat are very playful. It love chasing string. The cat is very playful. It loves chasing string.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>pl/sing</td>
<td>Plural/Singular</td>
<td>He have a cars. He has a car. He has two cars.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>sp</td>
<td>Spelling mistake</td>
<td>English is a fun language to learn. English is a fun...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>prep</td>
<td>Preposition</td>
<td>I went the beach on 10am. I went to the beach at 10.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO</td>
<td>Word order</td>
<td>English is a language fun. English is a fun language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Article use</td>
<td>The English is language. The English is a Language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Extra word(s)</td>
<td>That is very extremely cool. That is extremely cool.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>??</td>
<td>Don’t understand</td>
<td>My monkey ate two soups during sleeping. ?????</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>R</td>
<td>Register</td>
<td>This essay’s gonna talk about... This essay will explore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>act/pass</td>
<td>Active/Passive</td>
<td>He killed in the accident. He was killed in the accident.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Awkward</td>
<td>I want to meet other countries’ students. I want to meet students from other countries.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Don’t forget to look at what things you did well, these are marked (✓)

- Good!
- Great!
- Excellent!!
Appendix 2: COLT Scheme Part A
Appendix 3: COLT Scheme Part B
Appendix 4: Student’s Text Corrected by Teacher A

Deciding... on what career path to choose is difficult. There are always many things to be considered whether it can be suitable for the characteristics of the individual. For example, if the job is highly paid, this essay will compare and contrast the different nature of occupations according to the benefits it gives to both the individual and society.

[For example, job is highly paid, or offered at subsidized accommodation.]

Is it not an indication of whether a job offers personal or professional growth too much detail?

Learning... It is obviously well written apart from the section noted, which does not fit with the rest of the section. Keep working...

...on this point...

...in conclusion...

...introduction...

...it seems...

...of particular importance...
<Summary>
in winter, the warm-keeping system in house cause air pollution problem. Besides, the air in a house involves varieties of poisonous chemicals. therefore, plants may be great useful to clean indoor air. Scientist Wolverton to a reach on the ability of plants cleaning air pollution. Plants uses their leaves to do this, which is a part of natural cleaning process. At least, Wolverton predicts there is a good future of developing this system.

All main points so u. good summary, but a number of language issues to work on, especially subject-verb agreement.