# Effective Error Correction in Grammar Classes: A Students' Perspective

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## Abstract

*This study investigated the impact of successful grammatical error correction among EFL students in Saudi Arabia, addressed the issues associated with correcting students' mistakes, and grammar students' preferences regarding error correction. Descriptive analytical approach using quantitative research methods and a questionnaire to collect data from 304 female students at the third secondary grade in Riyadh was employed. The findings revealed that grammar correction helped students in language learning and in understanding and remembering the correct answer. Problems such as teachers spending too much time on error correction during class time, excessive us of Arabic language in English classes, and frustration among students when they make too many errors. However, students preferred immediate correction of grammatical mistakes and preferred written (coded) correction of their mistakes. Recommendations included the need for teachers to employ relevant error correction methods of correction, taking into consideration students' age, wishes, interests, and language proficiency levels.*

**Keywords:** Foreign Language, English, Grammar, Errors, Correction, Saudi Arabia

## *Introduction*

### Background

The interactions research in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) reports that focusing on linguistic form during communication contribute to learners' acquisition of the complex grammatical features along with particular L1-L2 contrasts (Sheen, 2006). Studies that were conducted on an interaction in classrooms have shown that feedback is essential in drawing learners' attention to form (Sheen, 2008). According to Long (2007), reactive feedback that reacts a problem is effective in facilitating second language acquisition: it distinguishes a grammatical from an ungrammatical one, adjusts the input to match the learners' proficiency level, and it draws attention to inter-language gaps, and motivates learners to modify the output. Moreover, preeminent interactions researchers of second language acquisition report of empirical evidence that short-term second-language learning is facilitated by corrective or interactional feedback, which includes verbal, error-and-form-focused, and instructional linguistic evidence of deficient yet effective second language production). Thus, researchers should work on examining how interaction aids second language development in more ascertainable ways (Mackey, 2007).  According to Lee (1997), student can make errors because of the impact of L1, misinterpretation of a rule, an attempt to speak at one's best, distraction of attention, or because of all these and other reasons combined (p. 87).

The common cause of mistakes is that students often make an effort to communicate faster in order to develop language fluency. Consequently, they lack concentration and forget about other aspects of their speech such grammar, word choice and vocabulary. Fossilization is a practice in which learners "internalize an erroneous linguistic pattern in their minds" (Leki, 1991, p. 46). These erroneous forms might not be permanent, but once the learners concentrate on communication and not on form, they will deviate toward this incorrect inter language pattern. There are also indications that many second language learners fail to obtain anticipated language competence, being unable to reach the culmination of the inter language continuum. They stop studying as soon as their inter language holds at least few rules dissimilar from those of the system of target language (Leeman, 2007).As soon as a student acquires a fossilized form, it is difficult to help him or her with further guidelines.

Ellis & Sheen (2006) suggest that this form can be treated as either a mistake or a correct target language (TL) forms. For example, it can be assumed that a positive fossilized form would be the same the target language and the inter language. A learner would acquire an incorrect fossilized form having reached a phase when a structure has a different form in the TL. The effectiveness of certain types of feedback over others is also debated. For instance, a number of researchers claim that recasts, defined as the reformulating the learners' utterances that include the correct form, are the most effective type of oral feedback that enhances second language learning. It is considered an instrument for helping learners to cognitively perceive their errors immediately after having uttered them (Doughty, 2003; Long, 2007). From another perspective, some investigators argue that verbal types of feedback that require the correct form, such as elicitation and requesting clarifications, are more likely to contribute to the SLA improvement by motivating learners to stretch their inter language (Ammar & Spada, 2006; Lyster, 2004). EFL research has thoroughly tackled the important issue of correcting mistakes, and whether it enhances learners' grammatical accuracy. The reason for that is that mistakes are naturally occurring in any learning context and are true evidence of the student's developing competence in a L2. Therefore, feedbacks have proven to be more effective in facilitating language acquisition because they present explicit information about the target-language structure.

## Statement of the Problem

Effective error correction has not received the much deserved attention in many EFL contexts despite its usefulness in language learning. In the Saudi context, Faith (2012) found that error correction during English L2 learners' oral communication in the United Kingdom and Saudi Arabia was beneficial. Furthermore, Mustafa (2012) reported that the students in Saudi Arabia do not think positively of the correctional feedback and claim that the feedback they wish for is very distinct from the one they receive. From a socio-cultural perspective, the correctional feedback approaches are not the most suitable practices of the correction theory, which present major difficulties to the learners' development. Furthermore, Grami (2005) revealed that those Saudi ESL student writers most assuredly desire and expect feedback from their teachers of writing. Thus, previously, error correction studies dedicated little attention to grammar classes and aimed largely at verbal communication and writing. As an altercation of this prevalent norm, this study attempts to investigate the successful error correction in grammar classes from the learners' point of view.

## Research Questions

The main question of this study is as follows:

1.      How does effective error correction in grammar classes influence second language acquisition from the perspective of Saudi EFL students?

A set of sub-questions were formulated to address the main question and included:

1.      To what extent does effective error correction affect Saudi EFL students' grammatical errors?
2.      What are the problems associated with error correction in grammar classes?
3.      Which preferences in error correction in grammar classes do Saudi EFL students express?

## Research Significance

This research study's significance anchors on addressing current educators' requirements concerning the identification of learner's needs, especially those related to the problematic areas, such as providing error correction effectively in grammar classrooms. In addition, it draws the attention of curriculum designers, teachers and teacher trainers to students' perspective on effective error correction as a way of maximizing the benefits of error correction in EFL grammar classes.

## Limitations of the Study

The limitations characterizing this study relate to place, time, and subject. Concerning place limitation, the study is limited to the Saudi female ESL students in the third secondary stage in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. With respect to time, the study was conducted on the second semester of the 2013/2014 academic year. Finally, subject limitations entail the fact that the study was limited to the students' perception of successful error correction in terms of grammar only. It addresses the questions of the impact of students' preferences regarding error correction, error correction in grammar classes, and issues associated with this process.

**Organization of the Study**

The paper is comprised of five chapters. The first chapter is an introduction to the work. Chapter two provides the literature review of the previous studies on the subject. The third chapter addresses the research methodology and its respective procedures. The fourth chapter presents what the research discovered on the given subject. In chapter five, the researcher provides the discussion of the research results, conclusions and recommendations.

*Literature Review*

**Definition of Errors**

Errors are natural in any learning context. Errors are considered evidence of the learner's developing competence in a foreign language. They have also been considered to be caused by not sufficient enough level of competence, and are internalized into the language system (Ammar & Spada, 2006). It can be said that errors are those incorrect forms that regularly occur and are evidential of the students' competence (Brown, 1980, p. 22). Errors most likely occur due to the student not knowing the right form, or not having acquired it entirely (Corder, 1973, p. 15). For example, if there is a student who says "He don't study well," it can assumed that the learner either has not yet acquired the simple present tense or that has not started learning that form. One may consider this example an error if it occurs on a regular basis, repeating in many different contexts, and if it confirms the student's lack of competence. Mistakes: mistakes result from processing limits rather than absence of competence (Ellis & Sheen, 2006, p. 45). They can emerge if the speaker is more concentrated on communication rather than a correct use of the language. Mistakes might occur due many factors, such as anxiety or fatigue (Ferris, 2002). As stated by Lee (1997), errors occur as the result of L1 influence, a rule misinterpretation, or when a student tries to speak more fluently and faster, and thus lacks the concentration for other aspects of his or her speech such grammar, word choice and vocabulary.

**Fossilized forms**

Fossilization is a process of internalizing an incorrect linguistic pattern in learners' minds (Leki, 1991). These flawed forms might not be long-lasting, but they may occur frequently as the result of learners' concentration more on communication rather than on form. Selinker also suggests that many SLA students cannot manage to reach expected language proficiency due to not reaching the inter language continuum end. They stop studying as soon as their inter language holds at least few rules dissimilar from those of the system of target language (Leeman, 2007).

**Causes of Errors**

If teachers were questioned on what they believe to be the major causes why students make errors, their responses would be very alike. Some of them would suggest that many students express careless attitudes to education, and others, basing on some linguistic facts, would be certain that errors result due to the interference caused by L1 or as a result of the translation process. Below are some of the most important aspects that contribute to the rates students' mistakes.

**Carelessness**

While speaking, mistakes may take place because the main focus is on what is being said than how it is said. It is clear that even in native language mistakes could have been easily prevented if attention had been given to what is being said.

**First language interference**

Skinner provided the concept of "mother tongue interference" meaning that learning a language is a habit formation process, and that when new habits are learned the old ones will interfere with the new ones (Loewen, 2005). This means that when learners learned their mother tongue they shaped their speech patterns to those of their parents and people with whom they had communicated. They were somehow rewarded if their level of language competence was to some degree appropriate and they would begin to repeat the patterns leading them to obtain a linguistic habit. Such habits are considered to cause interference in new habits adoption during SLA.

**Translation**

There is a clear distinction between translation and interference. Translation is a cognizant and intentional process whereas interference is an unconscious and uncontrolled process (Leeman, 2007).

When students go through the process of translation from their mother tongue to TL, they may use literal translation of idioms and colloquial phrases. Sometimes students have to express their ideas and they might use a glossary to help them cope with that assignment. During this process, other problems might come up associated with choosing the suitable word for a particular context. Another possible reason is that when learners do not know how to express what is on their minds in the target language they will retreat to the language system that is more common for them, which is generally their mother tongue.

## Overgeneralization

Overgeneralization occurs when a learner applies a rule to a context of the target language, using it incorrectly (Krashen, 1985, p. 64). For example, the past tense indicator in English is "-ed." Thus, students understand that for a regular verb to be turned into a past one they just need to add "-ed." They might come up with sentences such as: "I drived the car yesterday." In this case the students are assuming that just by adding "ed" to the verb "drive," they are correctly expressing their thoughts. As Gass and Selinker (2008, p. 46) stated, overgeneralization might occur due to ignorance of rule limitations which means that students might not understand when to apply and when not to apply a given rule.

## Grammatical Error Correction

Grammar is vital for EFL acquisition. Celce-Murcia (1994, 233) considers that the capability to communicate one's thoughts in written or oral form and to perform that with high precision and consistency is a great success in SLA. As Olshtain (1994, p. 235) claims, "Within the communicative framework of language teaching, the skill of writing enjoys special status." It is obvious that any piece of writing or speech should have such features as proper grammar so that the listener can understand what the speaker means.

# Previous studies

An increasing amount of studies has also been studying whether specific types of CF are more efficient than others in aiding LSA learners' improvement of the accuracy in language classes. A significant number of researchers divide feedback strategies into direct and indirect ones and investigate to what extent each of them enhances linguistic accuracy (Ferris & Hedgcock, 1998; Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986). Direct or explicit CF is when the educator indicates a mistake and provides the correct version, while indirect approaches occur when the educator lets the students know that they have mistaken but are not intended on correcting them, thus letting the student to find and amend the error on their own. In addition, researches that examine the impact of indirect feedback approaches have inclined to offer a further distinction based on whether they sue a code. Coded feedback indicates where exactly an error has occurred, and the type of a mistake is marked with a certain code (for instance, PS refer to an error in the use or past simple tense forms). Un-coded feedback deals with situations when the educator indicates to an error, circles it, or put an error tally on the side, but, in every case, lets the learner to independently identify and correct the mistake.

On the other hand, the studies conducted by Lee (1997) and Ferris and Roberts (2001) had control groups which did not receive any CF. Lee's work on error correction among Chinese EFL college students discovered a substantial effect for the group whose mistakes were underlined, compared with the classes that were given no CF or only a marginal proofreading. Ferris and Roberts (2001) studied the effects of three different approaches (corrections indicated with codes; merely underlining mistakes, but not labeling them in any other way; and no error CF) and discovered that both groups of students that were provided with CF showed better performance than the control group with no comments on their mistakes. However, just as to Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986), they concluded that there were only little difference between the first two groups. Additionally, it is worth noting that Ferris and Roberts (2001) focused on revisions and not news papers. Ferris et al. (2000) have studied the effects of various conditions of feedback on both revisions and news papers. In Discussion sections of the study, Ferris (2002) stated that direct error CF resulted in a higher rate of successful amendments made to the papers (88%) than indirect CF (77%). On the other hand, it has been discovered that over the course of study, those students who were provided with indirect feedback showed the reduction of their error frequency rates considerably more than those who were given direct feedback. Bitchener, Young and Cameron (2005) studied the influence of different types of CF on the writing performance among ESL students. The study showed a substantial effect for the mixture of written feedback and feedback sessions on the levels of accuracy in studying the definite article and the past simple tense in news papers but no general effect on accuracy level progress for feedback categories when the three error types were treated as one group.

Noteworthy differences in accuracy among the four pieces of writing back up previous SLA findings that second language learners, in the process of obtaining new language forms, may achieve high accuracy on one instance but fail to do the same on other similar instances.

## Error correction in the Saudi ESL context

Error correction is one of the matters that were hardly ever investigated in the Saudi ESL context at all educational stages. Very few studies have tackled error correction effectiveness especially in grammar classes and mainly focused on oral interaction and writing. This section provides an overview of the studies that addressed the subject matter of correcting mistakes among EFL students in Saudi Arabia. Faqeih (2012) examined the efficiency of error correction methods in oral communication among ESL & EFL students in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Saudi Arabia. The research aimed at examining the impacts that two types of oral CF, namely met linguistic information and recasts, have on verbal assignment presentation on the subject of English modal verbs (must, can and will). These methods were paralleled to interference with identical assignments but with no correction feedback given.

The investigation also showed to which extent instructional context (EFL in Saudi Arabia; ESL in the UK) and students' attitudes towards correctional feedback mediated the influence of feedback on SLA. ESL adult students of pre-intermediate level and EFL students in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia were randomly assembled into one of the three groups: recast, met linguistic information or task only (no feedback). The findings advocated that both recasts and met linguistic information are advantageous for the comprehension of English modals, but efficiency was affected by the result measures applied, the length of the period between interference and test, as well as the setting (the UK and Saudi Arabia). Both types of feedback were reported to be very beneficial in the majority of procedures regardless of the context. For most measures, the group with no CF in the UK showed no major gains but in Saudi Arabia showed significant gains. The study showed that students had an equal preference for both techniques in the EFL framework, but the ESL students preferred recasts. Mustafa (2012) held both informal and semi-structured personal interviews in Saudi Arabian educational institutions in order to summarize the students' attitudes towards the feedback provided to them, and about their insights on what they consider to be helpful feedback. The researcher used socio-cultural theory as the methodological framework. The results state that the Saudi students do not give a high rating to the feedback and that the feedback they receive is distinctly different from what they expect. The students noted several weaknesses of feedback. From a socio-cultural perspective, the feedback practices do not stick to the best practices of the system, resulting in major obstructions to the learners' development.

Grami (2005) conducted a survey using structured questionnaires to examine a number of Saudi university level ESL learners' opinion on written feedback their teachers provide. The emphasis was mainly laid on linguistic mistakes. The main aim of the research was to examine whether ESL learners would prefer to have their written assignments corrected and all the mistakes commented, and if they do think that educators' comments are effectives. The most prominent finding is that the ESL student writers at KAAU in Saudi Arabia certainly wish for and expect the teachers to provide them with feedback. The study also showed that learners also think that they would benefit much from correctional feedback. This can be clearly seen through the high responses rates that definitely display solid evidence that they would appreciate CF.

## Learners' Attitudes towards Error Correction

Educators and students do not have the same attitudes toward error correction. Teachers are more worried about addressing errors than causes behind them. Some educators share a view expressed by Corder (1967), "if we were to achieve a perfect teaching method the errors would never be committed in the first place, and that therefore the occurrence of errors is merely a sign of the present inadequacy of our teaching techniques." Thus, educators try much technique to prevent the learners from making mistakes by corrections which they consider to be helpful in making students aware of their errors in order not to repeat them again. Contrariwise, some educators argue that insisting on correction and grammatical correctness may discourage students form studying foreign languages. They also consider continuous correction to contribute to the rise of level of anxiety among students, which can impede a learning process (Krashen, 1982). Like teachers, it is not surprising to see that some learners appreciate being corrected periodically as they find it beneficial to the progress of language learning. According to Cathcart and Olsen (1976), students support the practice of frequent correction of their mistakes in oral activities. In a survey conducted on student writers, Leki (1991) finds that 100 per cent of these students want all their written errors corrected.

Nevertheless, some foreign language learners can become very annoyed by continuous corrections, which they find discouraging and distracting. They believe that they should be corrected if the mistake is dramatic yet they still feel upset when they make one. Some report strong disapproval of corrections during speaking activities and some would not even continue taking part in the classroom discussion just because they do not like to be corrected. Because of so many dissimilar attitudes, both educators and students should develop a practical technique of dealing with error-correction issues successfully. They should take into serious consideration and adapt to each other's preferences in learning and teaching.

## *The Research*

The current study uses quantitative and qualitative methods that describe and analyze effective error correction in grammar classes from students' perspective. The study design constructed here is based on the study questions formulated. These questions were raised from the researcher's observation and the literature.

### Participants and Questionnaire

This research comprised a sample of (304) female students at the 3rd secondary grade in the Saudi secondary schools in Riyadh city. The selected students were regular students enrolled in the academic year 2013-2014. The native language of the participants is Arabic and their second language is English. The language levels of the participants range intermediate to upper intermediate as obtained from their responses to the research data collection tools. The researcher prepared a questionnaire about error correction in grammar classes. The questionnaire is composed of (42) statements. The researcher prepared the questionnaire based on the appropriate literature and previous studies that tackled feedback in English language learning. The researcher issued (320) questionnaire forms for both genders and got back (304) validly completed. Questionnaires. A 5-Likert point scale was used for this study (1= "strongly disagree" through5= "strongly agree")

### Data Analysis

Several statistical tests including Pearson correlation tests, reliability tests, and generation of descriptive statistics such as means, frequencies, and standard deviation were performed using SPSS. Validity is the extent to which a study accurately reflects or assesses the specific concept that the researcher is attempting to measure (Robson, 1993). The researcher achieved the face questionnaire validity by submitting it to experts and requesting their opinions on the suitability of the survey to the research objectives. More than half of the experts conveyed that the questionnaire is suitable for what it is designed to measure as shown in Table 1 at the Appendix. Reliability is defined by the extent to which study or any measuring activity produces the same result on recurring tests (APA, 1985). The researcher conducted reliability tests and realized a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.772 (see Table 2), which was deemed satisfactory as shown in Table 2.Table 2 demonstrates that the values of the coefficient of reliability of the segments using Cronbach's Alpha were estimated between (0.849) and (0.418) which are considered good to high reliability coefficients. In addition, the overall reliability coefficient for the Research Instrument (i.e. for all the points of the questionnaire: 42 points) is (0.772), which is a high reliability coefficient. This confirms the high levels of research instrument's reliability and its suitability for application.

## Results

This chapter presents the results of the study. It demonstrates the results of the field study in terms of the research sample' responses to the items of the questionnaire. The results of the field study are interpreted, according to the following study questions:

1.      To what extent does effective error correction affect Saudi EFL students' grammatical errors?
2.      What are the problems associated with error correction in grammar classes?
3.      What are Saudi EFL students' preferences for error correction in grammar classes?

### Responses to the First Question

Table 3 shows that the research sample responses to *the impact of correcting grammatical errors in English on the linguistic errors* were high, with an overall mean of (3.97). In other words, the students agreed that there is an impact of correcting grammatical errors in English on linguistic errors in general. Below is a description of the participants' responses to each item in this section. The items are ranked from the highest mean to the lowest mean as follows. The results concerning the impact of English grammatical errors correction on the rate of linguistic errors made by students all over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Table 4 shows that the responses to *the impact of English grammatical errors correction on the rate of linguistic errors made the students all over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia* were high, with an overall mean of (3.99). In other words, the students agreed that there is an impact of English grammatical errors correction on the rate of linguistic errors made by students all over the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

**Results of the Second Question**

As shown in Table 5, the research sample responses to the items of these sections are low with a mean score (2.76). In other words, the students neither agreed nor disagreed in their response to whether there are problems related to grammatical errors corrections in the classroom in general or not. Below is a description of the participants' responses to each item in this section. The constituent items are ranked from the highest mean to the lowest mean for ease of reference.

**Responses to the Third Question**

As illustrated in Table 6, the research sample responses to the items of these sections are not high with a mean score (3.32). This means that the students expressed varying opinions with regards to their preferences to error correction in grammar classes. Below is a description of the participants' responses to each item in this section. The items are ranked from the highest mean to the lowest mean.

## *Discussion, Conclusions, and Recommendations*

This chapter presents a discussion of the research results mentioned in the above-mentioned chapter. In addition, this chapter presents a conclusion of the results of the study and provided recommendations for better handling of the research issue.

**Discussion of Results**

The first question in this study was about identifying the students' perception of the impact of English grammatical error correction on their rate of linguistic errors. The findings of this question revealed that the students see that the grammatical errors help them in language learning, the students benefit when the teacher corrects their English grammatical errors, learning grammar helps them in language learning, they listen carefully to their teacher when she corrects their grammatical error, and that they benefit from repeating the sentences after correcting them. In addition, the students expressed that the teachers are not very interested in correcting their grammatical errors. This is because the teachers point out their errors, do not repeat the errors after correction, and they make grammatical errors because of their ignorance of the grammatical rules. On the other hand, students were of the opinion that English grammatical errors have an impact on the rate of their linguistic errors. They expressed that error correction helps them remember the correct answer in the following times, error correction helps them, error correction helps them understand the correct answer, they care for the errors corrected by the teacher so as not to repeat them, and that error correction encourages them to search for the correct answer and compare the right and wrong answer. However, students did not highly estimate that the teacher helps them to understand their grammatical errors after correction and that the teacher points to their mistakes immediately.

These findings were supported by scholars such as Mustafa (2012) and Mackey (2007). They confirmed that correction of grammatical errors helps students in language learning. Also, Lyster (2004) and Long (2007) support the findings of these study that students make a grammatical error due to poor knowledge of grammatical rules and that the teacher plays a key role in correcting grammatical errors. From a pedagogical standpoint, error correction is a vital factor of form-focused instruction and it is recommended for successful L2 teaching (Long, 2007) and that feedback delivered through verbal communication can help L2 acquisition by linking form and meaning. When given in response to mistakes during conversational interaction, error correction offers a possibility for learners to focus their attention on form as it is important to the intended meaning (Grami, 2005). The results of the second question revealed the most common challenges that learners experience with regard to error correction practices. The top ranking challenges included the perception that teachers corrects the grammatical errors during the exercises more than the activities, excessive use of the Arabic language too much in the English class, and teachers paying more attention to the word usage, spelling, and articulation problems than to the grammatical mistakes. In addition, the students ranked several other challenges lowly. These included teachers correcting grammatical errors without helping students understand the errors, the frustration when teachers correct their grammatical errors, embarrassment when the instructor points out an error, and resistance against error correction.

These findings confirm previous studies' findings that reported that EFL students have linguistic and emotional problems with regards to their errors in the class. For example, Leeman (2007) and Grami (2005) revealed that students feel reluctant to participate in the class as they fear being embarrassed by their teachers. Also, this is supported by Ammar and Spada (2006) who confirmed that the key reason beyond EFL students' grammatical errors is the overlap between their target language and their mother tongue. The third research question was about student preferences for correcting mistakes in grammar classes among EFL students in Saudi Arabia. The findings from this section showed that students prefer when educators correct all their inaccuracies, provide written feedback especially with special code marking, and correction during group activities. In addition, students prefer when teachers point learners to their inaccuracies as they speak and such correction should be conveyed orally. A significant result, therefore, was that most students find error correction to be a positive emotional experience once applied using relevant procedures. For example, when the students were asked if they preferred to be corrected every time they made a mistake or only when the mistake was important, most students did not prefer correction of every error. This revelation matches the findings by Lyster (2002) and Révész (2002).

Other questions inquired whether the learners were more comfortable if the teachers corrected their inaccuracies in front of the group or in private. Most students preferred to be corrected in as a group and not individually. This result receives support from Truscott (1999) and Han (2002) who affirm that students may feel embarrassed during oral error correction. A related item asked if the students preferred to be corrected immediately or after class. Many students reported a preference for delayed correction, which again strengthens the students' responses concerning the affective impact of error correction. The data collected from the questionnaire illustrated that some correction techniques were more or less helpful than the others. The results correlate with Sheen's (2004) findings that point to the direct correlation between the context in which an error occurs and the efficiency of a given type of error correction. While this variability has not been clearly visible in terms of student perception, this option should not be ignored. Type of activity, classroom changing aspects (Morris & Atone, 2003), and the time when the error occurs could be significant in shaping learners' preferences. An error at the end of a sentence, for example, may leave students more exposed to a met linguistic explanation that would stimulate self-correction. A mistake that occurs mid-utterance might result in learners preferring to have a recast, which would let them finish their thought without going into reverse.

### Conclusions

Based on the significant findings from this study and the data obtained from previous studies, four conclusions were made. First, there is an indication that effective error correction can be achieved through striking a balance between making errors clear to students and correcting them in a relevant manner that does not cause embarrassment, fear, or feeling of discomfort. Second, there is evidence of the effectiveness of error correction, involving a variety of explicit ad implicit technique combinations that promote noticing of errors and learning of structures. Thus, it is entirely possible and necessary to combine error correction techniques depending upon the particular learning circumstances. Third, timely explicit and implicit error correction is beneficial in helping students to enhance their language skills. Precisely, error correction is of a great significance in increasing students' understanding of their linguistic limitations and thus affects their inter-language structures.

### Recommendations

1.      Teachers are recommended to adopt and employ relevant error correction techniques in correcting student's errors at the secondary stage and other stages taking into consideration students' age, needs, interests and linguistic proficiency levels.

2.      Implementation of error correction should be integrated within an overall plan of the whole curriculum and its results should be evaluated within this overall perspective as well.

3.      Curriculum designers, teacher-trainers and textbook writers should make use of error correction methodology as means of developing students' learning in grammar. Teachers' books should include instructions on procedures of applying relevant error correction techniques and procedures.

### Suggestions for Further Research

The current study investigated Saudi EFL students' perspective on effective error correction in grammar classrooms. However, further research support is needed to explore Saudi EFL students' perspective on effective error correction in other areas such as teaching vocabulary, reading, listening, writing and speaking.

Secondly, further research is required to examine Saudi EFL students' perspective on effective error correction with other student populations at different levels of education and in different locations. Thirdly, research investigating Saudi EFL students' perspective on effective error correction, different techniques and strategies, and the relative effectiveness of each technique and strategy would be beneficial in giving educators insights to the most effective error correction approaches from a student perspective.

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## *Appendix*

| Part 1 | | Part 2 | | Part 3 | | Part 4 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| S | Pearson | S | Pearson | S | Pearson | S | Pearson |
| 1 | .182** | 1 | .617** | 1 | .455** | 1 | .396** |
| 2 | .632** | 2 | .588** | 2 | .613** | 2 | .312** |
| 3 | .331** | 3 | .678** | 3 | .647** | 3 | .253** |
| 4 | .629** | 4 | .639** | 4 | .632** | 4 | .415** |
| 5 | .607** | 5 | .597** | 5 | .660** | 5 | .518** |
| 6 | .522** | 6 | .729** | 6 | .423** | 6 | .550** |
| 7 | .639** | 7 | .623** | 7 | .598** | 7 | .442** |
| 8 | .569** | 8 | .704** | 8 | .618** | 8 | .404** |
| 9 | .527** | - | - | 9 | .657** | 9 | .369** |
| 10 | .548** | - | - | 10 | .663** | 10 | .316** |
| - | - | - | - | 11 | .690** | - | - |
| - | - | - | - | 12 | .535** | - | - |
| - | - | - | - | 13 | .501** | - | - |
| - | - | - | - | 14 | .351** | - | - |
| ** Correlation is important at the level of 0.01. | | | | | | | |
| *Correlation is important at 0.05. | | | | | | | |

*Table 1.* **Correlation scores for questionnaire scale items**

| Sections | N | Cronbach's Alpha |
|---|---|---|
| The effects of correcting mistakes in English grammar classes from the learners' point of view. | 10 | 0.684 |
| The effects of correcting mistakes in English grammar classes in the Saudi Arabia setting. | 8 | 0.802 |
| The problems related to grammatical error correction in the class. | 14 | 0.849 |
| Error correction techniques favored by the learners in the class. | 10 | 0.418 |
| **Total** | **42** | **0.772** |

*Table 2.* **Cronbach's alpha for questionnaire reliability**

| S | Statements | | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Mean | Std. d. | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | My grammatical errors in the English class are too many. | F | 40 | 91 | 81 | 75 | 17 | 3.20 | 1.12 | 10 |
| | | % | 13.1 | 29.7 | 26.5 | 24.5 | 5.6 | | | |
| 2 | I benefit when the teacher corrects my English grammatical errors. | F | 156 | 115 | 15 | 13 | 7 | 4.31 | 0.92 | 2 |
| | | % | 51.0 | 37.6 | 4.9 | 4.2 | 2.3 | | | |
| 3 | My grammatical errors are due to my ignorance of the grammatical rules usage. | F | 68 | 98 | 64 | 55 | 19 | 3.46 | 1.20 | 9 |
| | | % | 22.2 | 32.0 | 20.9 | 18.0 | 6.2 | | | |
| 4 | The correction of grammatical errors helps me in language learning. | F | 165 | 102 | 27 | 10 | 1 | 4.38 | 0.81 | 1 |
| | | % | 53.9 | 33.3 | 8.8 | 3.3 | .3 | | | |
| 5 | Learning the grammar helps me in writing the sentences correctly. | F | 173 | 86 | 21 | 19 | 6 | 4.31 | 0.98 | 3 |
| | | % | 56.5 | 28.1 | 6.9 | 6.2 | 2.0 | | | |
| 6 | I do not repeat the errors that my teacher corrects for me. | F | 71 | 91 | 97 | 37 | 10 | 3.58 | 1.07 | 8 |
| | | % | 23.2 | 29.7 | 31.7 | 12.1 | 3.3 | | | |
| 7 | I listen carefully to my teacher when she corrects my grammatical | F | 143 | 124 | 23 | 14 | 2 | 4.28 | 0.84 | 4 |

| S | Statements | | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Mean | Std. D | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | errors. | % | 46.7 | 40.5 | 7.5 | 4.6 | .7 | | | |
| 8 | I feel that the teacher is interested in correcting my grammatical errors. | F | 132 | 99 | 48 | 14 | 13 | 4.06 | 1.07 | 6 |
| | | % | 43.1 | 32.4 | 15.7 | 4.6 | 4.2 | | | |
| 9 | The teacher explains to me the error I made in the grammar. | F | 112 | 120 | 26 | 32 | 15 | 3.92 | 1.15 | 7 |
| | | % | 36.6 | 39.2 | 8.5 | 10.5 | 4.9 | | | |
| 10 | Repeating the sentences after correcting them helps me in learning English grammar. | F | 150 | 100 | 32 | 20 | 4 | 4.22 | 0.96 | 5 |
| | | % | 49.0 | 32.7 | 10.5 | 6.5 | 1.3 | | | |
| **Total Mean** | | **3.97** | | | | | | | | |

*Table 3*: **Responses to the first question**

| S | Statements | | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Mean | Std. D | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | Pay attention to errors that the teacher corrected so as not repeat them in the next times. | F | 108 | 139 | 43 | 11 | 4 | 4.10 | 0.87 | 3 |
| | | % | 35.3 | 45.4 | 14.1 | 3.6 | 1.3 | | | |
| 2 | The teacher corrects my grammatical errors immediately. | F | 82 | 105 | 66 | 42 | 11 | 3.67 | 1.12 | 8 |
| | | % | 26.8 | 34.3 | 21.6 | 13.7 | 3.6 | | | |
| 3 | The teacher helps me understand my grammatical errors after correction. | F | 94 | 126 | 38 | 35 | 12 | 3.84 | 1.11 | 6 |
| | | % | 30.7 | 41.2 | 12.4 | 11.4 | 3.9 | | | |
| 4 | Error correction helps in understanding the correct answer. | F | 157 | 110 | 23 | 13 | 1 | 4.35 | 0.82 | 2 |
| | | % | 51.3 | 35.9 | 7.5 | 4.2 | 0.3 | | | |
| 5 | Error correction helps in remembering the correct answer in the following times. | F | 162 | 108 | 26 | 8 | 2 | 4.37 | 0.80 | 1 |
| | | % | 52.9 | 35.3 | 8.5 | 2.6 | .7 | | | |
| 6 | Error correction encourages seeking for the right answer. | F | 112 | 99 | 48 | 37 | 9 | 3.88 | 1.12 | 4 |
| | | % | 36.6 | 32.4 | 15.7 | 12.1 | 2.9 | | | |
| 7 | Error correcting lead to make a comparison between the right and wrong answer. | F | 94 | 122 | 48 | 33 | 8 | 3.86 | 1.06 | 5 |
| | | % | 30.7 | 39.9 | 15.7 | 10.8 | 2.6 | | | |
| 8 | Correction by the teacher helps me to correct my errors myself. | F | 104 | 94 | 69 | 29 | 10 | 3.83 | 1.10 | 7 |
| | | % | 34.0 | 30.7 | 22.5 | 9.5 | 3.3 | | | |
| **Total Mean** | | **3.99** | | | | | | | | |

*Table 4.* **Impact of English grammatical error correction on linguistic error rate**

| S | Statements | | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Mean | Std. D | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I use the Arabic language too much in the English class. | F | 77 | 91 | 36 | 61 | 40 | 3.34 | 1.39 | 2 |
| | | % | 25.2 | 29.7 | 11.8 | 19.9 | 13.1 | | | |
| 2 | The teacher corrects the grammatical errors without helping me to understand them. | F | 25 | 48 | 54 | 109 | 67 | 2.52 | 1.23 | 10 |
| | | % | 8.2 | 15.7 | 17.6 | 35.6 | 21.9 | | | |
| 3 | The teacher embarrasses me when I make an error. | F | 24 | 35 | 35 | 95 | 115 | 2.20 | 1.28 | 13 |
| | | % | 7.8 | 11.4 | 11.4 | 31.0 | 37.6 | | | |
| 4 | I feel frustrated when the teacher corrects my grammatical errors. | F | 21 | 46 | 49 | 98 | 90 | 2.38 | 1.24 | 12 |
| | | % | 6.9 | 15.0 | 16.0 | 32.0 | 29.4 | | | |
| 5 | The teacher does not encourage me to correct my errors myself. | F | 29 | 43 | 64 | 110 | 58 | 2.59 | 1.22 | 9 |
| | | % | 9.5 | 14.1 | 20.9 | 35.9 | 19.0 | | | |
| 6 | I do not want to know the correction of my grammatical errors. | F | 14 | 22 | 27 | 109 | 132 | 1.94 | 1.11 | 14 |
| | | % | 4.6 | 7.2 | 8.8 | 35.6 | 43.1 | | | |
| 7 | I feel frustrated when I repeat the same error. | F | 50 | 98 | 53 | 51 | 53 | 3.13 | 1.35 | 4 |
| | | % | 16.3 | 32.0 | 17.3 | 16.7 | 17.3 | | | |
| 8 | I do not want to speak so as not to make an error. | F | 65 | 67 | 38 | 77 | 55 | 3.03 | 1.44 | 6 |
| | | % | 21.2 | 21.9 | 12.4 | 25.2 | 18.0 | | | |
| 9 | I am not used to getting my grammatical errors corrected. | F | 34 | 52 | 63 | 91 | 65 | 2.67 | 1.29 | 7 |
| | | % | 11.1 | 17.0 | 20.6 | 29.7 | 21.2 | | | |

| S | Statements | | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Mean | Std. D | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 10 | I do not feel that my teacher is interested in the grammatical error correction. | F | 27 | 36 | 60 | 93 | 90 | 2.40 | 1.26 | 11 |
| | | % | 8.8 | 11.8 | 19.6 | 30.4 | 29.4 | | | |
| 11 | The teacher does not correct many of my grammatical errors in the class. | F | 30 | 49 | 66 | 90 | 70 | 2.60 | 1.27 | 8 |
| | | % | 9.8 | 16.0 | 21.6 | 29.4 | 22.9 | | | |
| 12 | I need much time to think of my grammatical errors. | F | 48 | 91 | 84 | 55 | 28 | 3.25 | 1.19 | 3 |
| | | % | 15.7 | 29.7 | 27.5 | 18.0 | 9.2 | | | |
| 13 | The teacher pays more attention to the vocabulary, spelling and pronunciation errors than the grammatical errors. | F | 46 | 65 | 99 | 55 | 41 | 3.07 | 1.24 | 5 |
| | | % | 15.0 | 21.2 | 32.4 | 18.0 | 13.4 | | | |
| 14 | The teacher corrects the grammatical errors during the exercises more than the activities. | F | 75 | 90 | 85 | 31 | 25 | 3.52 | 1.20 | 1 |
| | | % | 24.5 | 29.4 | 27.8 | 10.1 | 8.2 | | | |
| Total Mean | | 2.76 | | | | | | | | |

*Table 5:* **Problems associated with error correction in grammar classes**

| S | Statements | | SA | A | DK | D | SD | Mean | Std. D | Rank |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | I prefer oral correction for my errors. | F | 65 | 101 | 38 | 79 | 23 | 3.35 | 1.27 | 6 |
| | | % | 21.2 | 33.0 | 12.4 | 25.8 | 7.5 | | | |
| 2 | I prefer written correction for my errors. | F | 107 | 100 | 49 | 38 | 11 | 3.83 | 1.14 | 2 |
| | | % | 35.0 | 32.7 | 16.0 | 12.4 | 3.6 | | | |
| 3 | I prefer that the teacher corrects my errors immediately when I speak. | F | 96 | 113 | 30 | 46 | 18 | 3.74 | 1.22 | 3 |
| | | % | 31.4 | 36.9 | 9.8 | 15.0 | 5.9 | | | |
| 4 | I prefer that the teacher corrects my errors after I finish speaking. | F | 75 | 77 | 40 | 84 | 30 | 3.27 | 1.35 | 7 |
| | | % | 24.5 | 25.2 | 13.1 | 27.5 | 9.8 | | | |
| 5 | I prefer that the teacher corrects my errors after finishing the activities. | F | 47 | 70 | 59 | 93 | 34 | 3.01 | 1.27 | 8 |
| | | % | 15.4 | 22.9 | 19.3 | 30.4 | 11.1 | | | |
| 6 | I prefer that the teacher corrects my errors after the end of the lesson. | F | 34 | 53 | 33 | 115 | 70 | 2.56 | 1.31 | 9 |
| | | % | 11.1 | 17.3 | 10.8 | 37.6 | 22.9 | | | |
| 7 | It is preferred that errors are corrected during group work. | F | 81 | 119 | 60 | 27 | 18 | 3.71 | 1.13 | 4 |
| | | % | 26.5 | 38.9 | 19.6 | 8.8 | 5.9 | | | |
| 8 | I prefer that my teacher and my colleagues correct my errors. | F | 55 | 113 | 49 | 57 | 30 | 3.35 | 1.25 | 5 |
| | | % | 18.0 | 36.9 | 16.0 | 18.6 | 9.8 | | | |
| 9 | I like that the teacher corrects all my grammatical errors. | F | 155 | 84 | 35 | 25 | 6 | 4.17 | 1.05 | 1 |
| | | % | 50.7 | 27.5 | 11.4 | 8.2 | 2.0 | | | |
| 10 | I do not like that the teacher corrects all my grammatical errors. | F | 19 | 36 | 36 | 110 | 105 | 2.20 | 1.21 | 10 |
| | | % | 6.2 | 11.8 | 11.8 | 35.9 | 34.3 | | | |
| Total Mean | | 3.32 | | | | | | | | |

*Table 6.* **Saudi EFL students' preferences for error correction in grammar classes**