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An investigation of teachers' self-reported and actual written feedback practices in Egyptian ESL Classes

Lidya Magdy Ibrahim Farag

The American University in Cairo

School of Humanities and Social Sciences

AN INVESTIGATION OF TEACHERS' SELF-REPORTED AND ACTUAL WRITTEN FEEDBACK PRACTICES IN EGYPTIAN ESL CLASSES

A Thesis Submitted to

The Department of Applied Linguistics

Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages Program

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for

The degree of Masters of Arts

By

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May 2014

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Has been approved by

Dr. Lori Fredricks

Thesis Committee

Supervisor_____

Affiliation_____

Dr. Atta Gebril

Thesis Committee

Reader_____

Affiliation_____

Dr. Robert Williams

Thesis Committee

Reader_____

Affiliation_____

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Dept. Chair	Date	Dean of HUSS	Date

DEDICATION

To my wonderful husband

Hany Adel Sourour

who helped me and gave me all the support I need

across the Master's journey

and

To my sweet children

Bassem and Marlyn

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Sincerely,

Lidya Magdy Ibrahim

ABSTRACT

The American University in Cairo

An investigation of teachers' self-reported and actual written Feedback practices in Egyptian ESL classes

By
Lidya Magdy Ibrahim Farag

Under the Supervision of
Dr. Lori Fredricks

There have been ongoing investigations on whether providing corrective feedback on grammatical errors in L2 writing is effective or not since the debate first emerged between Truscott (1996) and Ferris (1999). Research has focused mainly on students' performances and preferences as well as teachers' perceptions and beliefs regarding error correction. However, limited research has compared teachers' actual practices to their self-reported practices. Therefore, this study focused on written feedback practices in a university context in Egypt, where the researcher investigated how teachers actually corrected grammatical errors as compared to what they reported in the survey. The major error correction strategies used in this study were related to two categories: comprehensiveness (comprehensive and selective correction) and explicitness (direct, indirect coded, and indirect un-coded correction). Data were gathered using three instruments: (1) a survey filled out by 65 teachers, (2) written feedback samples collected from 13 teachers, and (3) follow-up interviews conducted with seven teachers. The teachers who participated in this study work at The School of Continuing Education at The American University in Cairo. Teachers' responses to the survey were compared to their actual practices in the feedback samples they provided. The results indicated that there were various differences between the teachers' actual and self-reported practices, such as over-reported, under-reported, or contrasting reported practices. The researcher conducted follow-up interviews to have an in-depth

investigation of the reasons for the differences found. The study showed that teachers tended to over-report their comprehensiveness practices and under-report their explicitness practices. In addition, the reported practices showed that the majority prefer using comprehensive, selective, and indirect coded corrections, while they actually practiced comprehensive and direct corrections. Possible implications were discussed regarding ways to minimize the differences between teachers' self-reported and actual practices, as well as suggestions for providing effective corrective feedback to L2 students' writing.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

1.1 Historical Background

Writing is generally considered a necessary skill in both professional and academic contexts. Due to the complexity of the writing process, L2 writing is difficult for most language learners; therefore, developing writing proficiency is a demanding task. Writing proficiency involves quite a range of features, such as "students' ideas, rhetoric organization, grammar, word choices, spelling, and punctuation" (Jun, 2008, p. 103). Teachers focus on all these features when providing students with feedback on their writing compositions. One of the most important problems that students face is making grammatical errors repeatedly, even after being provided with feedback and making self-corrections. The issue of grammatical errors is a common problem in students' writing. The way of addressing these errors by providing the students with feedback differs from one teacher to another. There are many techniques for giving feedback, so responding to students' errors has been an issue of pedagogical controversy (p. 103). In previous research, students have stated that error correction of local issues, such as grammatical, spelling, and punctuation errors, is essential in improving their writing accuracy (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Leki, 1991). Consequently, teachers invest a lot of time and effort in providing their students with the corrective feedback they need (Montgomery, 2007).

Both teachers and students consider written feedback to be an important issue in the writing process (Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 1995). From the researcher's point of view, providing students with feedback gives them the opportunity to learn from their errors, and therefore try to avoid them in future writings. Ferris (2001) claimed that providing students with coded feedback helps them self-edit their writings, which improves their

writing accuracy in the long run. However, providing written feedback is a complicated practice for teachers. Although Ko (2010) mentioned that most teachers feel that providing feedback is challenging because it is time-consuming as well as exhausting, teachers still believe that they should provide students with corrective feedback. There are several reasons for this: some teachers believe that written feedback is helpful in improving students' writing, while others provide written feedback to justify the grades assigned to the students. At the same time, some teachers feel obliged to do so in order to show their students that they appreciate their efforts, while others think that students appreciate teacher feedback and want their errors to be corrected (Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 2003; Lee, 2008; Leki, 1991; Montgomery, 2007).

Some studies showed that corrective feedback has a positive effect on the development of students' writing accuracy (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Fathman & Whalley, 1990; Ferris, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982; Sheen, 2007), while other studies did not report any improvement in this feature (Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992; Truscott, 2007; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). This debate started when Truscott (1996, 1999, and 2007) suggested the ineffectiveness of error correction while Ferris advocated its use (1999, 2001, 2003, 2004, 2006). Ferris was supported by numerous researchers (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, 2008; Chandler, 2004; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami & Takashima, 2008) who claimed the effectiveness of error correction. Both sides justified their claims as follows: First, Truscott (1996) argued that over-focusing on grammatical errors in writing would cause students to shorten and simplify their writings in order to minimize making errors and avoid being corrected. Additionally, students may feel that they want to receive corrective feedback because their teachers make them believe it is useful. Moreover, Truscott referred to studies that concluded that grammar correction has no or little effect on the improvement of students' writing accuracy (Hendrickson, 1981; Krashen, 1992). On the

other hand, Ferris and her supporters claimed that students appreciate receiving corrective feedback from their teachers and feel frustrated if they do not get it (Chandler, 2004; Ferris 1999; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Furthermore, error correction has some benefits in the development in students' writing, at least on a long-term basis (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999). Finally, they referred to studies that showed an improvement in students' writing accuracy with the use of corrective feedback (Ellis et al., 2008; Bitchener, 2008; Sheen, 2007).

Ko mentioned that conclusions are difficult to be drawn from the findings of these conflicting studies. Some researchers asserted that these conflicts exist mainly because the studies did not have a systematic research design and extraneous variables were not controlled (Ferris, 2004; Guenette, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006). Others attributed the resulting conflict to the previous studies' research procedures, which disregarded the effect of contextual factors, such as students, teachers, classrooms, and cultural issues (Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2008).

In addition, studies conducted in Egypt on the topic of error correction are extremely rare. Al-Saeed (2010) conducted an experimental study with three groups of students provided with one type of corrective feedback: direct correction, indirect correction, or no correction. However, this descriptive study focuses on several error correction strategies, in addition to comparing teachers' self-reported and actual practices.

1.2 Statement of Research Problem

Previous research has investigated whether error correction is helpful or harmful to students (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999; Truscott, 1996, 2007; Zamel 1985) and whether students at all proficiency levels or just beginners should be provided with corrective feedback (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a; Kepner, 1991). Previous research has also discussed whether error correction should be direct or indirect (Abedi, Latifi & Moinzadeh, 2010;

Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1997, 2001, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982; Lee, 1997, 2004; Robb, Ross & Shotreed, 1986; Semke, 1984) and whether selective or comprehensive correction is more effective (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch 2009a, 2009b; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis et al., 2008; Kepner, 1991; Lee, 1997, 2004; Sheen, 2007; Sheppard, 1992).

Results and conclusions of previous research have varied considerably as researchers have conflicting opinions regarding error correction. For example, some researchers have supported the effectiveness of error correction (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener et al., 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a, 2009b; Chandler, 2003; Ellis et al., 2008; Ferris, 1997, 1999, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 1997; Sheen, 2007), while others have opposed it (Fazio, 2001; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1991; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2007; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Zamel, 1985). Some were neither in favor nor against it, and as a result, have suggested the need for further research as no conclusions could be reached from the current research (Ferris, 2004; Guenette, 2007; Russell & Spada, 2006). Some indicated that teachers are overly concerned about error correction (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb et al., 1986; Zamel, 1985), while another study reported that they are not (Sheen, 2007). Some researchers have argued that teachers' feedback is inaccurate and incomplete (Lee, 2004; Truscott, 1996), while another study found the opposite (Ferris, 2006). Some implied that teachers take students' preferences into consideration while providing feedback (Ferris, 2006; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2004), while others reported that teachers think that students are not aware of strategies that will improve their writing accuracy (Lee, 1997, 2004; Truscott, 1996). Some concluded that students want their grammatical errors to be corrected (Ferris, 1995b; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; 1996; Leki, 1991), while others implied that students prefer receiving feedback on content (Alamis, 2010; Arndt, 1993).

Although a significant number of studies were conducted to investigate the effectiveness of certain written corrective feedback strategies, and whether one is better than the others in different contexts, we still do not have a clear understanding of what teachers prefer or practice. Researchers are more attentive to students' preferences and perspectives on teacher feedback rather than teachers' beliefs and practices. As previously discussed, numerous experimental studies were conducted to examine the effect of error correction on students' performance in writing accuracy. On the other hand, there are some descriptive studies that investigated the effect of error correction, but most of them focused on the students' point of view (Alamis, 2010; Arndt, 1993; Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995b; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; 1996; Lee, 2004, 2008b; Leki, 1991; Zhang, 1995; Zhu, 2010). Consequently, research on teachers' preferences, beliefs, perceptions, or practices is very limited (Arndt, 1993; Evans, Hartshorn & Allen, 2010; Ferris, 2011a, 2011b; Hyland, 2003; Lee, 2003, 2004, 2008a, 2009; Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Moreover, studies that comparing teachers' reported/recommended and actual practices are extremely rare (Lee, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009; Montgomery & Baker, 2007), even though understanding teachers' practices is essential for gaining a meaningful and comprehensive picture of the effectiveness of L2 written corrective feedback. Research on teachers' written feedback practices implies that it is still a problematic issue that needs more investigation and research (Evans, et al., 2010; Ferris, et al., 2011a; Ferris, et al., 2011b; Hyland, 2003; Lee, 2003, 2004, 2008). Moreover, Hyland and Hyland (2006) argued, "it is difficult to draw any clear conclusions and generalizations from the literature as a result of varied populations, treatments and research designs" (p. 84).

In the studies that compared teachers' actual practices with their reported/ recommended practices (Lee, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009; Montgomery & Baker, 2007), various differences and discrepancies were found. For example, teachers reported that selective

feedback is more effective, yet they provided comprehensive feedback. Additionally, the teachers believed that they should focus on the students' writing in general, yet they mainly paid attention to language issues. Results have shown that that more research is needed in this aspect; thus, this study compared between teachers' reported and actual practices. It also investigated which strategies the teachers report to be, in their opinions, most effective (no feedback, selective, comprehensive, direct, indirect coded or indirect un-coded feedback). Regarding these six strategies, some teachers do not provide feedback on grammatical errors. If they do provide feedback, it is either selective or comprehensive. Correction of errors selectively or comprehensively may be direct, indirect coded, and/or indirect un-coded (See Figure 1 for categories of error feedback).

Feedback strategies vary from one teacher and context to another, especially since there are always discrepancies and variations in the proficiency levels of L2 writing among language learners. This can be clearly seen in Egypt, where, for example, high school graduates are expected to have good writing abilities, but are found to have weak academic writing skills by their ESL teachers at university. The main reason for this is how writing is taught in Egyptian schools. Although a student may have previously received grammar instruction, teachers will still find many grammatical errors in his/her writing. This is mainly because grammar is taught separately and not integrated with writing. In addition, writing is taught as free writing – academic writing is never taught to students in Egyptian high schools. This means that they receive grammar instruction which allows them to answer grammar exercises, but not to apply the rules to their own writing. Therefore, language teachers in universities or ESL classes play an essential role in developing students' writing accuracy. Consequently, academic writing is taught in ESL classes where teachers help their learners enhance their writing abilities and accuracy.

Since responding to students' errors in writing is important to consider, this study focused on the written feedback provided by teachers on grammatical errors. The researcher works as an English instructor in the English Studies Division (ESD) of the School of Continuing Education (SCE) at the American University in Cairo (AUC). There are different courses offered at the SCE, such as, general English, conversation, ESP, youth program, translation, TOEFL, IELTS, as well as customized English courses for companies. Many different students join these courses: children, teenagers, adults, males, females, undergraduates, and graduates. They come from various social, cultural, and academic backgrounds and from different cities and countries as well, such as Libya, Syria, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia. The students have different needs for English instruction, including travelling abroad, job opportunities, helping their children, or joining a diploma or a master's program. These purposes make them intrinsically motivated to enhance their language skills.

There are 16 levels in the general English program at the SCE. According to the Common European Framework Reference (CEFR), these levels are categorized into four stages: A1, A2, B1, and B2. Students are enrolled in these levels according to placement or achievement tests at the end of each level. In this study, the researcher considered three levels: pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate. In the SCE, there are no advanced levels – the highest level is upper-intermediate, which is categorized under stage B2 according to the CEFR. Additionally, the researcher could not consider the elementary level because students are only taught to write simple sentences, not paragraphs.

In Egypt, very little research has been conducted to investigate teachers' practices of error correction in ESL classes. Although Al-Saeed (2010) conducted a study on corrective feedback in Egypt, it only investigated the effectiveness of error correction from the students' point of view and did not look into teachers' practices. Consequently, this study focused on providing error feedback on writing in ESL classes from the point of view of teachers rather

than students. It considered teachers' beliefs regarding corrective feedback, which is reflected in their responses to the questionnaire. It also looked into how these responses matched their actual feedback practices.

1.3 Significance of and need for the study

This descriptive study is important and could be a valuable addition to the current research, with implications for ESL writing teachers. Writing is considered a complex and difficult skill for most L2 learners. Even if the students' fluency level is good, they may still make grammatical errors in their writing, which affect their writing accuracy and detract from their overall writing quality. The researcher investigated teachers' feedback strategies by comparing their self-reported practices with their actual ones in order to understand Egyptian teachers' preferences and how they relate to the teachers' instructions. The results of this study contribute to the current research on L2 written feedback and help educators recognize the relationship between their actual versus reported practices. Furthermore, the study adds to the foundation for future research, such as conducting studies on why such differences are available and the possibility of eliminating them.

Moreover, due to the gaps found between teachers' reported/recommended and actual practices in the previous research (Lee, 2003, 2004, 2008, 2009; Montgomery & Baker, 2007), this study implied that there are training needs for teachers with differences between their actual and reported practices in order to avoid any possible disparity and to help them match what they believe they should do with what they actually do. Researchers noted that "training programs and workshops should play an important role in assisting future and experienced teachers to be better equipped with sufficient knowledge on providing written feedback" (Ko, p.13). Finally, this study is valuable in Egypt, where studies on teachers' practices are extremely rare.

1.4 The Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to compare reported and actual written feedback practices among teachers at the School of Continuing Education (English Studies Division) at The American University in Cairo, and look into possible reasons for any differences. Furthermore, this study aims at investigating what types of error correction strategies do the teachers report to be, in their opinions, most effective, and how these strategies differ from one context to another.

1.5 Research Questions

Teachers should report the practices they believe are most effective, mentioning the different contexts in which they select a particular strategy rather than another. Such reported practices should actually match the corrective feedback they provide to their students.

1- What types of error correction strategies do teachers report practicing?

   a) Do the reported error correction strategies differ from one context to another? How?

2- What types of error correction strategies do teachers actually practice as compared to their self-reported practices?

3- What are some possible reasons for differences between teachers' self-reported and actual practices?

In sub-question (a), the term context refers to the factors, according to which the feedback is provided, such as students' proficiency level, teacher's expectations, drafts, time of the semester, students' preferences, grammar lesson taught, etc.

1.6 Delimitations

This study did not investigate students' preferences; it focused merely on teachers' practices. Moreover, it did not look into peer feedback; only teachers' feedback was investigated. It was conducted at the School of Continuing Education (English Studies Division) at the American University in Cairo. Therefore, the study cannot be generalized or serve as a model for other Egyptian ESL programs.

1.7 Definitions of Constructs

1.7.1 Theoretical definitions.

- *Grammatical accuracy of writing* is the extent to which the students' writings are free from grammatical errors and their ability to correct these errors (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).
- *Error feedback* is indicating the grammatical errors in students' writings to help them produce accurate writing (Ferris, 2003).
- *Corrective feedback* refers "to any feedback provided to a learner, from any source, that contains evidence of learner error of language form" (Russell and Spada, 2006, p. 134).

1.7.2 Operational definitions.

The word *context* used in the first research sub-question refers to various factors as to how the feedback strategy may differ from one student to another, depending on his/her needs or proficiency level, or from one error to another, depending on whether or not the grammar structure was taught, or it could even depend on the teacher's expectations, submitted drafts, time of the semester, or any other factors.

- *Grammatical accuracy of writing* is the students' ability to write essays with the minimum number of grammatical errors, such as tenses, prepositions, articles, etc.
- *Global aspects / issues* of student writing refer to the essay's content, organization, and rhetoric.
- *Local aspects / issues* of student writing refer to the essay's vocabulary, word choice, grammar, and punctuation.
- *Error correction* refers to the feedback provided by the teachers on grammatical issues in students' writings. The term is interchangeable with corrective feedback. Error correction/corrective feedback has several techniques/strategies depending on the comprehensiveness (selective or comprehensive) and explicitness (direct, indirect coded, or indirect un-coded) of the correction. The strategies (See Figure 1) used in this study are:
    - ♦ *No feedback: i*gnoring grammatical errors.
    - ♦ *Selective feedback / correction:* selecting certain types of errors to focus on; for example, articles, propositions, or verb tenses.
    - ♦ *Comprehensive feedback / correction:* correcting each and every type of error.
    - ♦ *Direct feedback / correction:* direct correction of the error, where the teacher indicates the error and corrects it, i.e. providing the correct form of the grammatical error; for example, *has went* (has gone), *in time* (on time).
    - ♦ *Indirect coded feedback / correction:* indicating the error (underline/circle) and providing a code for each type; for example, *has went* (T) - which means verb tense, *in time* (Prep) - which means preposition. It could also include providing a hint and writing a code in the margin, for example, T, Prep.

- ♦ *Indirect un-coded feedback / correction:* indicating the error (underline/circle) without providing a code for the error's type; for example, <u>*has went*</u>, <u>*in time*</u>. It could also include providing a hint in the margin without writing a code (by putting a mark). In addition, it could be by writing comments in the endnote.

- *Teachers' self-assessment* means teachers' self-reported practices regarding providing corrective feedback.
- *Over-reported practices* means when teachers self-report giving more feedback than they actually practiced.
- *Under-reported practices* means when teachers self-report giving less feedback than they actually practiced.
- *Contrasting reported practices* means when teachers self-report different error correction strategies than they actually practiced.

1.7.3 Definitions of abbreviations.

The abbreviations that will be used in this study are:

AUC	the American University in Cairo
ESD	English Studies Division
ESL	English as a Second Language
SCE	School of Continuing Education

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

Although the main focus of this study is teachers' practices, this chapter aims to provide a complete description of the research done in the field of error correction in ESL writing. It looks into various aspects of error correction from different points of view – teachers' beliefs and practices, as well as students' preferences and perceptions. It also presents a theoretical framework on which the study is based. As an introduction, the review first describes the historical background of the field of error correction in many aspects. In the next section, it explores the main debate, which is between Truscott and Ferris; accordingly, the review consists of experimental studies opposing and supporting the effectiveness of error correction. After that, the review discusses descriptive studies on students' preferences and perceptions. The following section presents studies that investigated teachers' perceptions and beliefs. The last section focuses on teachers' actual practices as compared to their reported ones.

In this chapter, the researcher provides a review of the error-correction debate and research on students' preferences as well as teachers' perceptions and beliefs to discuss multiple influences on teachers' views and practices. The studies included range from 1982 to 2011.

2.1 The Historical Background

A substantial amount of research has been conducted in the field of error correction in L2 writing. Previous research mainly discussed the effectiveness of L2 writing feedback. Studies on this topic have been conducted since the mid-1980s (Semke, 1984; Zamel, 1985). After that, the number of studies on error correction decreased significantly for about a decade because the focus was on meaning rather than on form, using communicative

language teaching methods. Another reason for the decrease was that some researchers discouraged further research on that topic concluding that correcting students' errors in writing does not have a positive effect on their writing accuracy (Kepner, 1991; Rob, Ross & Shortreed 1986; Sheppard, 1992). However, the effectiveness of error correction gained attention once more after Truscott's study (1996) on the ineffectiveness of error correction.

2.1.1 The Truscott-Ferris debate.

Truscott (1996) argued that error correction in L2 writing should be abandoned not only because it is ineffective but also harmful to the enhancement of students' writing abilities. Several researchers who support the effectiveness of error correction conducted some critical studies in response to Truscott's study. Ferris (1999; 2004) was the one who criticized and strongly opposed Truscott's arguments and a strong debate ensued on the topic of error correction. Ferris claimed that students and teachers are concerned about error feedback because they know its importance and effectiveness. She said that Truscott's definition of grammar error correction was too vague; she also added that he did not fully support his arguments and that he overstated the negative evidence while disregarding positive research results. Furthermore, Ferris (1999) gave evidence from one of her previous studies, Ferris (1995a), of improvement in students' grammatical accuracy when provided with corrective feedback. Therefore, instead of abandoning grammar correction as Truscott suggests, Ferris claims that it would be better to provide students with feedback as long as it can improve their writing. She also added that if students do not get used to receiving feedback, they will never take the importance of self-editing skills seriously.

Accordingly, the debate over the effectiveness of providing error feedback to students has resulted in a generation of numerous studies on error correction. It became a topic of controversy as most studies conducted to investigate the effectiveness of error correction had

conflicting results. Some of these studies supported the effectiveness of error correction (Ashwell, 2000; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener et al., 2005; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a, 2009b; Chandler, 2003; Ellis et al., 2008; Ferris, 1997, 1999, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lee, 1997; Sheen, 2007), while others found grammatical error correction in L2 writing to be ineffective (Fazio, 2001; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998; Sheppard, 1991; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2007; Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Zamel, 1985).

2.2 Experimental Studies on Error Correction

2.2.1 Studies against the effectiveness of error correction.

Truscott (1996) argued that all forms of error correction in L2 writing should be abandoned regardless of their comprehensiveness (comprehensive or selective), explicitness (direct, indirect coded, or indirect un-coded), or the proficiency level of the students (highly proficient or not). He provided the following reasons for this conclusion: (1) there is a developmental sequence that should be followed, and teachers have very limited abilities to do so; (2) teachers sometimes fail to notice errors made by students, and even if they do, they will not be able to discuss them with their students because of the difficulty and complexity of grammar explanation; (3) if teachers are capable of explaining, they will fail because of the large burden of being busy through grading a large number of assignments, which is exhausting and time consuming; therefore, this will affect their patience and the quality of their corrections; (4) if the teachers succeed in explaining the principles clearly, the students may fail to understand them because the teacher does not know why the student made the error. In addition, Leki argued that if the students understand the comment, they might fail to digest the general principle and so will repeat the same error in other contexts (as cited in Truscott, p. 351). Moreover, students will forget this new principle especially if the explanation is complex and if the mistake is not the only one. Yet another reason is that (5) it

is difficult for the teacher to be consistent in his/her correction, especially when dealing with many students and many different mistakes, which makes it more difficult for students to understand and remember these mistakes. The final reason Truscott gives for the abandonment of error correction is that (6) students will not be motivated because it is neither fun nor easy. Even if they believe that error correction is necessary, they do not like it and feel stressed about it. Furthermore, he added that grammar error correction is a waste of time for teachers and students. He suggested selective error correction as a better alternative, which he argued would prevent students from becoming overburdened and would also make it easier for teachers to be consistent in their responses. However, he mentioned afterwards that this strategy is not a solution and is ineffective as well. Consequently, he concluded that correction of grammatical errors is harmful and therefore should be abandoned.

Semke (1984) conducted an experimental study with learners of German as a foreign language. He used the results of three tests – writing accuracy, writing fluency, and cloze – to compare improvements in students' accuracy by using four methods of providing feedback: (1) written comments only, (2) direct correction, (3) direct correction with positive comments, and (4) indirect coded correction (self-correction). He found that there was no significant difference in the enhancement of accuracy between the four groups and that progress in the students' writing was not from providing error feedback but because of the practice itself. Moreover, Truscott (1996) pointed to the fact that the group which received only written comments without correction scored better in the writing fluency and cloze tests than the other three groups and that the group which had to make self-corrections got the worst score in the writing fluency test.

Robb et al. (1986) also conducted an experimental study with Japanese learners of English. He used four methods to compare the development of the students' writing accuracy and fluency as well as complexity: (1) direct correction, (2) indirect coded correction, (3)

indirect un-coded correction, and (4) writing the number of errors in the margin. After correcting their errors, the students were required to rewrite their compositions. They concluded that there was minimal difference in the improvement in the students' writing accuracy and fluency; however, this development was because of the practice and not the feedback provided. Therefore, they concluded that error correction is ineffective; and Truscott (1996) used their conclusions to support his argument.

Kepner (1991) conducted an experimental study with learners of Spanish as a foreign language to investigate the effect of feedback on grammatical accuracy, with two groups receiving two types of feedback: comprehensive error correction and content-oriented feedback. Kepner found that there was no significant difference between the two groups in terms of grammatical accuracy. In addition, the quality of writing of the first group was better than that of the second group. Kepner concluded that error correction does not help students improve their writing accuracy but actually hinders them from writing in a higher quality. Truscott (1996, 1999) used Kepner's study as evidence against the effectiveness of grammar error correction.

Sheppard (1992) has also emphasized the ineffectiveness of error correction. An experimental study was conducted that focused on two different types of feedback: comprehensive correction using codes and content-oriented feedback. Sheppard compared the effect of feedback in terms of accuracy in verb forms and in marking sentence boundaries as well as complexity of writing. Regarding the accuracy of verb forms, the author found that the two groups improved significantly with no difference in the improvement between them. As for marking sentence boundaries, the content-oriented feedback group improved significantly while the group that was provided with error correction did not. With respect to complexity of writing, the content-oriented feedback group did not improve significantly, while the error-correction group became significantly worse. Truscott (1996) interpreted

these findings as evidence against error correction, arguing that it hinders the improvement of students' writing.

Polio et al. (1998) conducted their study with college ESL students. These researchers examined the following hypotheses: first, there would be no improvement in the students' writing accuracy by the end of the semester; second, there would be no difference between the revised essays and the original ones; and third, there would be no difference in accuracy between the groups who received training in grammar and editing texts and those who did not. Polio et al. had two groups: the experimental group who received feedback, reviewed grammar, and trained to edit texts, and the control group who did not receive any feedback or training. The researchers found that there was no significant difference between the accuracy of the two groups and their performance by the end of the semester. Consequently, they concluded that error correction is ineffective and time consuming.

Fazio (2001) conducted her study with 5th graders students in a French school. She had three types of feedback in her experimental study: (1) corrections, (2) comments, and (3) a combination of corrections and comments. The results showed that there was no improvement in accuracy in the three groups. Although Fazio connected the obtained results to the fact that the students did not pay attention to the provided feedback rather than to the ineffectiveness of error correction itself, Truscott (2007) used these results as evidence to show that error correction has negative effects on the improvement of students' writing accuracy.

Truscott and Hsu (2008) conducted a study with Taiwanese EFL graduate students focusing on the effect of students' revision on the improvement of accuracy. They found that errors were reduced when the students revised their writings; however, when they rewrote the writings a week later, there was no improvement in accuracy. Truscott and Hsu concluded

that the result of error reduction caused by the revision process should not be an indicator of development in writing.

In the researcher's opinion, if teachers followed Truscott's suggestion in not providing the students with corrective feedback on their grammatical error, the students' fluency in writing might improve, but there could be doubt in improving their writing accuracy. If the students' grammatical errors were not corrected, they might not be aware of the errors they have made, and so would repeat their errors in the future.

2.2.2 Studies supporting the effectiveness of error correction.

Truscott's argument (1996, 1999, 2007) regarding the ineffectiveness of error correction and his proposal for abandoning it in writing classrooms have been criticized by many researchers. Ferris (1999) was the one who responded to him and strongly opposed him. She claimed that Truscott (1996) had two major weaknesses in his argument: "the problem of definition and the problem of support" (p. 3). Regarding the definition problem, she argued that it was too vague; and with respect to the support problem, she claimed that Truscott did not give enough support to his arguments and overstated the negative evidence – he exaggerated the importance of the studies that supported the ineffectiveness of error correction while ignoring those in favor of corrective feedback. Ferris added that research has proved that effective error correction does in fact help at least some students with their writing. Accordingly, Ferris concluded that error correction should be practiced and that further research should be conducted to give evidence on its effectiveness or ineffectiveness.

Lalande (1982) conducted an experimental study with L2 German students to compare two types of feedback: indirect coded correction and rewriting the compositions after correcting the errors and direct correction. The results showed that over a period of

time, the former group performed better than the latter group. The limitation of this study is that Lalande did not have a no feedback group to compare between providing and not providing error correction. Truscott (1996) pointed out that the significant difference that resulted between the two groups was not because of the progress of the first group, but because of the decline in accuracy of the second group.

Fathman and Whalley (1990) conducted an experimental study with ESL college students in the USA, who were required to make immediate revisions based on the feedback they received. The authors had four groups of students: two groups were provided with indirect un-coded correction, one group had content-based feedback, and one group did not receive feedback (control group). Fathman and Whalley found that the errors of the two error-correction groups reduced significantly, while the errors of the other two groups did not. They concluded that error correction had a positive effect on the improvement of the students' writing accuracy. Truscott (1996, 2007) reported, "Fathman and Whalley have shown that students can produce better compositions when teachers help them with those particular compositions" (1996, p. 339), meaning that this is not an indicator that those students would write better in the future.

Lee (1997) referred to overt correction as direct correction, and error feedback as indirect correction, which can be defined as merely underlining errors, providing codes, or marking the error's location in the page margin. She found that error feedback (indirect correction) is more preferable than error correction (direct correction). However, when using codes, teachers must handle them carefully as students have difficulty in understanding the grammatical terminologies or concepts used by teachers. A major problem Lee discovered was that students had a hard time detecting errors; for this reason, it is important for teachers to provide the students with error correction. The teacher should also keep in mind that some errors need more attention than others.

Most studies conducted in the 1980s and 1990s on the effectiveness of grammar error correction were criticized by Truscott (1996, 1999, and 2007) as not being able to answer the question, "Does error feedback make L2 students better writers?" From his point of view, they are irrelevant either because of the inappropriateness of their research designs or the overgeneralization of their results. Consequently, authors have taken these criticisms into consideration for their recent studies, specifically by including a no feedback group. Below are some examples of these studies.

Ashwell (2000) conducted a longitudinal study over a period of one year. He investigated the effect of providing content and form feedback on the students' first and second drafts. Ashwell divided the students into the following four groups, who received: (1) content feedback on the first draft and form feedback on the second draft, (2) form feedback on the first draft and content feedback on the second draft, (3) content and form feedback on both drafts, and (4) no feedback (control group). The results showed that there was no significant difference between the three feedback groups; however, the feedback groups outperformed the control group in terms of accuracy.

Ferris and Roberts (2001) conducted a quasi-experimental study with ESL university students. They investigated the ability of students to self-edit their writings. There were three groups of students: (1) an indirect coded correction group, (2) an indirect un-coded correction group, and (3) a no feedback group (control group). They reported that the groups who received error correction significantly outperformed the control group in their ability to self-edit their writings, but there was no difference between the performances of the two error-correction groups. Furthermore, a student questionnaire revealed that all of them expected feedback from their teachers, with indirect coded correction most preferred. Although Ferris and Roberts had a no feedback group, Truscott

(2007) mentioned that one of the study's limitations is that it only measured accuracy on immediate revisions rather than considering long-term effects of error correction.

Chandler (2003) conducted an experimental study with ESL students to examine the effect of error correction. Chandler had two phases in this study. In the first, there were two groups: (1) the experimental group whose students received indirect un-coded correction and were required to correct their errors before submitting the next assignment, and (2) the control group whose students were provided with the same type of feedback, but were required to correct their errors by the end of the semester. Chandler reported that the experimental group's accuracy in writing improved significantly, while there was no improvement in the control group in terms of accuracy. Moreover, both groups performed better in terms of fluency. In the second phase, Chandler wanted to investigate which type of correction was most effective in terms of improving students' accuracy in writing. There were four types of feedback: (1) direct correction, (2) indirect correction by underlining the errors and providing codes, (3) indirect correction by only providing codes, and (4) indirect correction by only underlining the errors. Chandler found that the students' accuracy and fluency improved during the semester, but there was significant difference in the performance of groups one and four. According to Chandler, this could be because students found it easier to correct their errors using their teacher's direct correction or the errors underlined by the teachers. Chandler concluded that direct correction was the most effective feedback strategy, and that the students liked the method because it was clearer and more time efficient than the others. This conclusion contradicts the findings of other studies (Ferris, 2004; Ferris & Roberts, 2001) claiming that indirect feedback is more effective for students, as it gives them the chance to self-edit their grammatical errors, which helps them improve their writing accuracy in future writing. Since Chandler's participants were all

music major students and thus their language proficiency was not usually high, this agrees with Ferris's (2004) claim:

> In the majority of instances, teachers should provide indirect feedback that engages students in cognitive problem solving as they attempt to self-edit based upon the feedback that they have received. (Exceptions may include students at lower levels of L2 proficiency, who may not possess the linguistic competence to self-correct (p. 60).

Bitchener is also one of the authors who support the effectiveness of error correction. He conducted several experimental studies on this topic (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a, 2009b; Bitchener et al., 2005). First, Bitchener et al. (2005) conducted their study with post-intermediate ESL students, comparing the effect of three types of feedback on writing accuracy improvement over a period of 12 weeks: (1) direct correction and individual conferences, (2) direct correction only, and (3) no feedback (control group). The researchers used selective correction where they only focused on three types of errors: prepositions, the past simple tense, and the definite article. In the individual conferences, they discussed the errors, clarified the rules, and gave illustrative examples to help the students notice the difference between their errors and the correction. The results showed that the accuracy of the group that was provided with direct correction and individual conferences improved significantly in the use of past simple and the definite article.

Moreover, Bitchener (2008) investigated the effect of error correction with low-intermediate ESL students. There were four methods for providing feedback to students: (1) written and oral explanation, (2) written explanation, (3) direct correction, and (4) no feedback (control group). The participants were asked to produce four pieces of writing: pre-test, immediate post-test, and two delayed post-tests. The researcher used selective correction as he mainly focused on the definite article "the" and the indefinite article "a". He found that

groups one and three outperformed group four. Consequently, Bitchener concluded that the group of students who received written feedback outperformed the other groups.

Furthermore, Bitchener and Knoch (2009a) investigated the effect of error correction by comparing three different types of feedback: (1) direct correction with written and oral explanation, (2) direct correction with written explanation, and (3) direct correction only. Bitchener focused on the use of articles (selective). They found that there was no difference between the four groups and that error correction itself was enough to improve the students' writing accuracy. Finally, Bitchener and Knoch (2009b) reported that the experimental group that was provided with corrective feedback performed better than the control group that did not receive any feedback.

Ferris (2006) investigated how ESL students benefit from the corrective feedback provided by their teachers in their revisions. She found that error correction was effective in reducing the number of errors and improving the accuracy of the students' revision tasks. However, it was not very effective in reducing the number of verb errors. Ferris found that the teachers provided accurate and comprehensive feedback to their students; she asserted that these findings contradicted the claims of previous research that teachers' feedback was incomplete and inaccurate, and ignored by students, who found it hard to utilize in their revisions (Truscott, 1999; Zamel, 1985). This study also showed that students were able to effectively utilize both direct and indirect (coded and un-coded) corrections in their revisions. However, in terms of effectiveness over time, indirect correction proved to be more helpful in improving students' writing accuracy.

Sheen (2007) conducted an experimental study with intermediate ESL learners on the effect of corrective feedback on the improvement in the use of articles. Sheen had three groups in her study – two experimental groups, (1) direct correction, (2) direct correction with comments, and one control group, (3) no feedback. The results of the immediate post-

test showed that the two experimental groups performed better than the control group. Additionally, Sheen found that the results of the delayed post-test of the group that received comments were higher than that of the other experimental group. Sheen concluded that using the selective strategy in providing error correction (on articles in this particular study) proved to be effective in the improvement of students' accuracy. Moreover, giving some comments to the students is also helpful.

Ellis et al. (2008) conducted an experimental study to investigate the effect of selective and comprehensive correction on students' accuracy. In the selective correction, they focused on the use of articles. They compared the effects by using a pre-test, immediate post-test, and delayed post-test. Ellis et al. used three methods with three groups of EFL learners in Japan – two experimental groups, (1) selective correction (articles), (2) comprehensive correction, and one control group, (3) no feedback. They found that the control group's accuracy in the use of articles was unstable and inconsistent from one test to another. However, it was more consistent in the two experimental groups as there was a general gain in accuracy from one test to another. This means that the corrective feedback helped the students gain accuracy and use the articles more consistently, even more so in the long term. There was no significant difference between the selective and comprehensive groups, but the selective group outperformed the comprehensive group in the end.

Abedi et al. (2010) conducted an experimental study to compare the effect of error correction and detection on the improvement of students' writing abilities. They made two groups, one receiving direct correction and the other indirect correction. The researchers disagreed with Truscott's (1996) argument regarding the ineffectiveness of indirect error correction, as this study indicated that the students who received indirect correction outperformed the direct correction group when they got coded error feedback. However, they supported his claim concerning the ineffectiveness of providing direct feedback, as the direct

feedback group did not show significant improvement as compared to the other group. Moreover, the students said that when their errors were corrected for them (direct correction), they only had to read the corrections; however, when the errors were just underlined with codes (indirect coded correction), they had to correct the errors themselves and thus, their writing accuracy improved.

The researcher supports Ferris and her advocates because writing involves both fluency and accuracy. Providing students with corrective feedback on their grammatical errors can help them maintain writing accuracy and avoid mistakes in the future. Fluency may also be accomplished when students write second drafts after being corrected. Teachers can also help students improve their fluency by asking them to write new writings more often. Consequently, accuracy and fluency may develop simultaneously.

2.3 Descriptive Studies on Error correction

Some researchers conducted descriptive studies to investigate teachers' written feedback practices from the points of view of the students (preferences) as well as the teachers (beliefs, perceptions, or actual practices). Guenette (2007) stated that "these descriptive studies, though few in number, may play an important role in filling the gap by providing a mine of information as to the various dimensions of feedback as a pedagogical tool" (as cited in Ko, p.50). Most of these descriptive studies mainly investigated students' preferences; however, studies that focused on teachers are relatively rare. As Ko mentioned, "Given that L2 writing researchers have been inclined to give more attention to the needs of students rather than teachers, research investigating L2 teacher perspectives on written feedback is extremely rare" (p. 38).

2.3.1 Students' preferences for error correction.

Students' preferences varied considerably in the descriptive studies conducted between the mid-1980s and 2010. Some students reported that teachers mainly focused on local rather than global aspects (Cohen, 1987), which was more preferable to students in some studies as they felt they needed feedback on grammar and vocabulary rather than content and organization (Ferris, 1995b; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; 1996; Leki, 1991); however, others wanted teachers to focus on global issues (Alamis, 2010; Arndt, 1993). The most wanted error correction type was comprehensive correction (Ferris, 1995b; Lee, 2004; Leki, 1991; Zhu, 2010). Zhu found that the majority of the students in the study favored comprehensive feedback to help them make more progress, while others said they needed their teachers to correct serious errors only (selective correction) in order not to lose confidence. With respect to the explicitness of error correction, researchers reported that students found indirect correction to be more beneficial than direct correction (Arndt, 1993), while others preferred the opposite (Alamis, 2010). Some students mentioned that it was more useful for written feedback to be combined with individual conferences (Arndt, 1993; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994). Sometimes it depended on the proficiency level of the students. For example, Lee (2008b) found that high proficiency students were more concerned with receiving corrective feedback from their teachers than low proficiency students. The problem is that some studies reported that students sometimes faced difficulties in understanding and using their teachers' feedback provided by their. This supports the previous argument, which says that teachers' error feedback is inaccurate and incomplete; accordingly, students find themselves unable to make use of it or even understand it (Truscott, 1996; Zamel, 1985). Finally, in most cases, students preferred teacher feedback rather than peer feedback and self-evaluation (Zhang, 1995; Zhu, 2010).

From the researcher's point of view, teachers should consider their students' preferences because each person has his/her own learning style, which may be different from the teachers' feedback style. Therefore, if the teacher considered this issue and provided students with their preferred feedback strategy, this could lead to more learning motivation and higher writing improvement.

2.3.2 Teachers' practices on error correction.

Hyland and Hyland (2006) claimed that while corrective feedback is not the only factor responsible for the improvement of writing accuracy, it is still important. They also argued that the effectiveness of providing feedback for students' writings may vary considerably depending on several factors – the teacher factor, for example. Teachers' practices vary considerably due to several factors, such as differences in teachers' beliefs or perceptions, students' preferences, principles imposed by the administration, or cultural differences. As an example of applying different error correction strategies because of different cultures, Ko stated that the teacher's role is more dominant than that of the student's in western cultures, such as East Asia. Consequently, self-correction is not considered to be effective in these countries (Carson and Nelson, 1994). On the other hand, in other cultures where teachers expect students to do their best work on merely their first draft, teachers might not consider the multiple-draft approach to be effective. Accordingly, since students receive feedback only once, teachers might think it is more helpful to mainly focus on negative rather than positive comments (Brock, 1994; Lee, 2008; Warner, 1998). Thus, "… teachers born and educated in different cultures in different languages may respond to student writing in dissimilar ways" (Ko, p. 9). Although this study focuses on teachers' actual practices as compared to their reported practices, Lee (2009) claims that research "has demonstrated that beliefs have an important impact on teachers' practice" (p. 13).

Arndt (1993) conducted a study with 75 students and eight teachers, using questionnaires to determine students' and teachers' preferred written feedback strategies. With regard to teachers, Arndt found that: (1) global feedback was more important than local feedback, (2) indirect correction was more effective than direct feedback, (3) face-to-face conferences were beneficial, and (4) teachers favored providing their written comments on separate sheets, while the students preferred to have them close to where their errors occurred.

Hyland (2003) used a case study approach to investigate "the relationship between teacher feedback and student revision in two academic writing classes" (p. 217). The participants were two academic writing teachers and six students. To collect the data, the author used teacher think-aloud protocols, teacher and student interviews, and student texts. Hyland investigated whether or not teachers were concerned about grammatical errors while providing feedback and how students made use of this feedback in their revisions. The results showed that focusing on grammatical errors is important for teachers and appreciated by students. However, not all of the students improved; only two of the six students showed progress in their language because of their own motivation.

In the researcher's opinion, teachers sometimes practice what they believe or perceive to be more effective, but others may still use other strategies even though they are aware that they may not be very effective.

2.3.3 Teachers' actual practices as compared to their reported/recommended practices.

Lee conducted three descriptive studies concerning teachers' correction practices. First, Lee (2003) wanted to investigate teachers' beliefs regarding written error feedback by using a questionnaire and follow-up interviews. "The findings from the questionnaires as well

as the interviews suggest that teachers' error correction practices are not always consistent with their beliefs" (p. 230). Although the teachers were aware that selective correction was recommended by the Curriculum Development Council of 1999 (as cited in Lee, p. 221), the majority reported that they corrected the students' errors comprehensively. The main reason behind this, the teachers reported, was that comprehensive correction was required by the school/panel. Lee stated other reasons, as reported in the interviews: Teachers want to evaluate the overall performance of their students, especially if the compositions are not too long; marking all errors is always thought to be the job of the teachers, will be considered lazy if they do not do so; students and parents prefer correcting all the errors; and the students mainly rely on the teachers to understand their errors.

Lee also mentioned the teachers' reasons for favoring selective correction: teachers say that marking all errors is a heavy load because the compositions are too long, which makes it time consuming. At the same time, students do not really improve in all these errors and will still make them the next time. Therefore, comprehensive correction is considered a waste of time that could be better spent on teaching or preparing lessons. Consequently, those teachers preferred correcting the students' errors selectively to make the students focus on specific areas. On the other hand, the teachers reported that they used codes for correcting errors, which matches the practices recommended by the Curriculum Development Council in terms of correction type.

Second, Lee (2004) conducted another study to investigate teachers' and students' perceptions and beliefs. Lee collected her data using the following: (1) a student questionnaire and follow-up interviews, (2) a teacher questionnaire and follow-up interviews, and (3) a teacher-error correction task. When Lee compared the teachers' actual practices with their responses to the questionnaire and the follow-up interviews, she found that the majority of the teachers reported and used comprehensive correction. On the other hand, most

of the teachers used direct correction, while 43% reported that they used indirect coded correction, and 36% reported that they used direct correction (21% used other methods). Lee asserted that even when errors were corrected using indirect correction, the teachers only used codes, which means that they were unaware of other methods/strategies of indirect correction. She implied that teachers should be trained on how to provide feedback on grammatical errors in writing.

Third, in Lee's study (2008a), she referred to the recommended types of feedback as concluded in her last study (2007): (1) indirect correction is more helpful than direct correction, (2) coded feedback is beneficial, and (3) selective correction is more effective than comprehensive correction. Lee (2008a) used a questionnaire and follow-up interviews with teachers to investigate whether or not they followed the previously mentioned strategies of error correction. The study was conducted with 26 Secondary English teachers who provided feedback to 174 students. The results showed that (1) teachers focused more on local issues than global ones, (2) direct correction was favored over indirect correction, and (3) comprehensive correction was dominant over selective correction. After interviewing the teachers, Lee concluded that differences existed between the teachers' practices and the recommended methods because avoiding grammatical errors was considered the most important issue in the exams.

Lee (2009) wrote an article about the differences found in one of her studies between teachers' beliefs regarding providing error feedback and their actual practices. These discrepancies were found when she compared the teachers' reported responses with their feedback provided in the students' writing samples. The researcher summarized the discrepancies found in Lee's study in the following table, which includes ten differences between what teachers believe and what they actually do:

	Teachers' Beliefs	Teachers' Practices
1	Teachers believe that they should focus on the students' writings in general.	Teachers pay most attention to language issues.
2	Teachers prefer selective correction.	Teachers mark errors comprehensively.
3	Teachers know that they should use indirect correction to help students learn how to correct their own errors.	Teachers tend to correct students' errors (direct correction).
4	Teachers think that error codes are difficult for students to understand.	They provide feedback to the students using codes.
5	Teachers are certain that when they grade the students' writings, students' attention is focused on the grades rather than the feedback provided.	Teachers still grade students' writings.
6	Teachers know that they should focus on students' strengths and weaknesses.	Teachers mainly focus on students' weaknesses.
7	Teachers are aware that when they provide direct correction, students have little responsibility for learning (by correcting their own errors).	Teachers provide direct correction on the students' writings.
8	Teachers think that process writing (multiple drafting) is effective.	Teachers ask their students to do one-shot writing (single draft).
9	Teachers believe that the students' errors will recur.	Teachers still provide students with error correction.
10	Teachers think that their effort does not pay off, in other words, "the effectiveness is not too high" (p. 18).	Teachers still provide students with error correction.

Lee concluded that teachers may or may not be aware of the previous differences. Additionally, she is not certain whether the reasons provided by the teachers "are real explanations for the mismatches or mere excuses that teachers use to justify their practices". Furthermore, Lee claimed that teachers' practices may differ from one context to another

depending on several issues: “institutional and sociocultural context, the student factor, the teacher factor, and other factors may impinge on teachers’ feedback practice” (p. 19).

Montgomery and Baker (2007) conducted a study with 15 teachers and 98 students to determine if (1) teachers’ feedback practices match students’ perceptions of teacher written feedback, and (2) whether or not teachers’ self-assessment matches their actual performance. Both teachers and students were surveyed and their surveys were compared to the teachers’ actual practices. The results showed the following: (1) teachers’ self-assessment and students’ perceptions matched well, “although students perceived receiving more feedback than teachers perceived giving”, and (2) “teachers provided more feedback on local than global issues, unlike what they perceived themselves doing” (p. 82). In the researcher’s opinion, this means that there was a good match between students’ expectations and teachers’ practices; however, there was some discrepancy between teachers’ self-assessment and their actual practices. The teachers thought that they provided more feedback on global rather than on local issues, while in fact they did the opposite. “The authors concluded that L2 teachers often tend to be more attentive to students’ needs than their beliefs about written feedback” (as cited in Ko, p. 42).

Evans et al. (2010) claimed that there are only five studies that focused on asking teachers about their beliefs and practices regarding written error correction (Ferris, 2006; Ferris, et al., 2011a; Ferris, et al., 2011b; Hyland, 2003; Lee, 2004). Consequently, Evans et al. conducted an interesting study in that it did not focus merely on one country; instead, it focused on 69 countries. An international survey was filled out by 1,053 teachers and researchers from 69 different countries. This means that they examined teachers’ practices from different cultures and backgrounds. The survey was developed by a program called Qualtrics survey software. Evans et al. investigated the extent to which teachers provide error correction on grammatical errors in writing. Selecting multiple responses was possible in the

survey; accordingly, Evans et al. reported the results as follows: (1) the majority of the teachers provide feedback (99%), (2) indirect correction (82%) prevailed over direct correction (67%), and (3) providing feedback differed from one context to another – (a) student proficiency level (65%), (b) student expectations (36%), (c) administration expectations (11%), (d) purpose of learning (76%), or (e) the particular draft (50%).

Ferris et al. conducted two separate studies (2011a, 2011b) with college writing instructors. In both studies they collected data by using a survey (n = 129), interviews (n = 23), and commentary on samples of student writings. They wanted to investigate "the training backgrounds, philosophies, and practices of college-level writing teachers with regard to providing response to L2 student writing" (as cited in Evans et al., p. 52). Ferris et al. (2011a) concluded that most college writing instructors "have not had any substantive formal training in working with L2 writers" (p. 223). Accordingly, teachers' practices varied considerably, with most tending to provide feedback based on students' needs. Ferris et al. (2011b) argued that research "has relied too heavily on either student reports or researchers' descriptions and judgments without adequately consulting teachers themselves as informants about what they do with feedback and why" (p. 42). Consequently, the authors conducted this study to investigate the college writing instructors' perceptions with respect to providing feedback and how it affects their frustrations. Ferris et al. found that teachers believe that error correction is effective for student writers and frustrating for teachers, who feel it is time-consuming and not beneficial for some students' progress. When the authors analyzed the teachers' comments in the students' writing samples, they "found that what the interviewees said they believed was not always consistent with what they actually did" (p. 55).

From the researcher's point of view, some teachers may report what they believe they should do while providing their students with corrective feedback. This is in their opinion, the most effective error correction strategy, and also possibly the one recommended in the field

or required by department policy. However, they may use a different strategy when actually practicing error correction, as shown in the previous studies. Accordingly, the researcher decided to conduct this study to investigate if there are differences between the teachers' actual and self-reported practices, and the possible reasons for any differences found.

2.4 Conclusion

Based on the controversial studies and debates that have taken place as a result of Truscott's (1996, 1999) claims and Ferris's (1999) response, researchers have stated that more research is needed to prove the effectiveness or ineffectiveness of correcting grammatical errors in L2 writing. Ferris, in her studies, reported that error correction has mostly positive effects on the improvement of students' writings; however, this is still a debatable problem and needs more investigation. She also suggested that researchers should replicate some studies due to previous research findings being incomparable, which could be affected by and related to several variables, such as participants, treatments, or research design.

Research has mainly focused on conducting experimental studies on the effect of error correction on the improvement of students' writing accuracy. Despite the fact that there are some descriptive studies on error correction, most of them are from the students' point of view, as the researchers investigated their preferences and how they responded to the feedback provided by their teachers. Additionally, only very limited research has investigated teachers' preferences, beliefs, perceptions, or practices. Moreover, research comparing teachers' reported and actual practices is extremely rare, especially in Egypt. As a result, this study compared between teachers' self-reported and actual practices in an Egyptian ESL context. The researcher also investigated the feedback strategies used in terms of comprehensiveness and explicitness of error correction.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Data

3.1 Proposed Design of Study

This chapter describes the methodology used in this study, including the study design, participants, procedures for data collection, and data analysis.

3.1.1 Design.

This study compared teachers' reported and actual practices of grammar correction in writing. The study follows a mixed-methods design with both quantitative and qualitative techniques. The researcher used triangulation by collecting data from different sources to increase the reliability of the study (Perry, 2011). Using the survey, feedback samples, and the follow-up interviews, the researcher investigated the comprehensiveness (selective or comprehensive) and explicitness (direct, indirect coded, or indirect un-coded) of providing written feedback and the effective techniques/strategies of error correction.

3.1.2 Participants.

The population of this study consists of teachers from the English Studies Division (School of Continuing Education) at The American University in Cairo. The researcher targeted a sample of instructors who teach pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate ESL students. The researcher did not target the elementary levels where students are only able to write simple sentences and not paragraphs. In addition, the highest levels in the SCE are the upper-intermediate levels; there are no advanced levels. Teachers at the SCE come from various social, cultural, and academic backgrounds, such as TESOL, Education, Applied Linguistics, Composition/Rhetoric, and Translation (as shown in Table 1). In addition, the majority has more than six years of ESL teaching experience and around two-thirds have more than six years of experience in teaching writing (as shown in Table 2).

Consequently, strategies of error correction used amongst teachers vary from one teacher to another according to their experiences as to what is more effective. Because the researcher teaches in this program, convenience sampling was used with a sample size of 65 participants. Out of the 65 teachers who filled out the survey, 13 teachers provided feedback samples, and seven of them were interviewed.

Regarding education, about half of the participants have a Master's degree, one-third have a Bachelor's degree, and only 3% have a Doctoral degree. Table 1 shows the academic background of the teachers who participated in this study. With respect to receiving formal training in responding to students' error correction in writing, only 9% of the teachers had not received any training, while others had as part of graduate/undergraduate courses, pre-service/in-service training for a current/former job, or at a professional conference.

Table 1. Academic backgrounds of the participants.

Academic background	Teachers (n = 65)	Percentage
TESOL	37	30%
Education	23	19%
Applied Linguistics	22	18%
Composition/Rhetoric	7	6%
Translation	13	11%
Other	21	17%

Regarding the teachers' experiences, about 85% of the teachers have more than six years of ESL language teaching experience and 79% of the participants have been teaching ESL writing for more than six years. The details of the participants' experiences are provided below in Table 2. In addition, the participants usually teach the four different levels of ESL learners: elementary (21% of the teachers), pre-intermediate (31% of the teachers), intermediate (30 of the teachers), and upper-intermediate (17% of the teachers). Moreover, the majority of the teachers (74%) teach writing every semester.

Table 2. Teaching experience of the participants.

Years of experience	ESL language teaching		Teaching ESL writing	
	n=65	%	n=65	%
1-2	2	3%	11	17%
3-5	8	12%	16	25%
6-10	22	34%	16	25%
11-20	20	31%	11	17%
+20	13	20%	11	17%

3.1.3 Instruments.

To answer the research questions, the researcher collected data using a questionnaire (Appendix A) as well as feedback samples from ESL classes. This was done to compare teachers' responses to the questionnaire with their actual feedback provided on the students' writing. The survey was sent to the teachers of SCE, where 65 participants responded to it. The survey looked into the different strategies and practices used by teachers to provide their students with feedback on the grammatical errors in their writings. The researcher took into consideration that "asking too many questions would diminish return rates, and asking too few questions would limit the depth of collected data" (Evans et al., p. 53). Additionally, the researcher has developed only three open-ended questions in the survey. The survey was piloted with instructors in the English Language Institutes at The American University in Cairo. Furthermore, after comparing their surveys with their actual feedback provided to the students' compositions, the researcher conducted follow-up interviews with seven teachers to have an in-depth analysis of the issue of interest. They were chosen according to the differences found between their responses and their actual feedback provided in the collected samples. The interview focused on discussing the reasons for the differences found.

From the researcher's point of view, the instruments and data collection procedures used are the most appropriate, as the questionnaire contained a variety of items targeting the

research questions. Furthermore, the feedback samples showed whether the teachers actually practiced what they have reported. In order to ensure validity, all the items in the questionnaire were designed and developed to answer the research questions and covered teachers' personal backgrounds and education, as well as their practices of the different written feedback strategies.

The Questionnaire consists of different types of questions; there are three parts with a total of 33 items: multiple-choice, four-point Likert agreement scale (Strongly agree, Agree, Disagree, Strongly disagree), and open-ended questions. Part 1 includes demographic information about the teachers, such as their educational background, training received in responding to students' writing, years of teaching experience, and the currently taught levels. Part 1 also has some multiple-choice items addressing the various strategies used in providing corrective feedback, as well as one open-ended question. Some of the questionnaire items were adopted by the researcher from other studies (Evans et al.; Ferris, 2011; Ko, 2010; Lee, 2003). Part 2 consists of statements that are graded on a four-point Likert agreement scale as previously described. Finally, as mentioned above, part three contains two open-ended questions. The reliability coefficient (Chronbach Alpha) of the survey is 0.63. The survey was confidential but not anonymous, so that the researcher would be able to contact the participants for a follow-up interview in the case of finding differences between the actual and reported practices.

The feedback samples were collected from 13 teachers and the corrective feedback was compared to the responses obtained from the survey. After making this comparison, the researcher conducted the follow-up interviews with seven teachers to get a better understanding of the reasons for the differences or discrepancies that emerged between what the teachers reported and practiced.

The interviews were conducted with the seven participants, with the interview semi-structured and carried out on a one-to-one basis, where it was recorded and transcribed. The questions were developed individually depending on the results obtained from the comparison between the teacher's survey and the feedback samples. Each interview lasted about 10-15 minutes. The teachers were asked about the reasons for the differences found between their self-reported and actual practices in the feedback samples they provided.

3.2 Data Collection Procedures

The questionnaire was designed by the researcher through Google documents and was administered online. It was sent to all the instructors who teach General English courses in the SCE. Out of 152 teachers, 65 teachers participated in the study, (44% of the total number of teachers) with 50 responding to the online questionnaire and 15 filling out hard copies, which were distributed by the researcher in order to get a larger number of responses from those who did not respond to the online version. The feedback samples were collected from 13 teachers who were teaching the pre-intermediate, intermediate, and upper-intermediate levels. They were collected from the teachers who were interested to volunteer to provide the researcher with feedback samples after taking permissions from their students. The researcher obtained feedback samples from four upper-intermediate teachers, two intermediate teachers, and five pre-intermediate teachers. Each of these teachers provided from three to five feedback samples to be analyzed and compared with the teachers' responses to the questionnaire.

After collecting the required data, the researcher began analyzing the data and comparing the actual practices with the reported ones. Finally, interviews were carried out with the teachers who provided different corrective feedback strategies than what they had reported in the survey.

3.3 Data Analysis Procedures

The categories of error correction strategies/techniques used in this study are shown in Figure 1. In the first level, the chart describes whether or not teachers provide corrective feedback on grammatical errors in students' writings (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999; Truscott, 1996, 2007; Zamel 1985). If teachers do provide corrective feedback, the second level of the chart describes whether the feedback is selective or comprehensive (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch 2009a, 2009b; Bitchener, Young, & Cameron, 2005; Ellis et al., 2008; Kepner, 1991; Lee, 1997, 2004; Sheen, 2007; Sheppard, 1992). In the third level, it describes whether the practice of error correction, both selectively and comprehensively, is direct or indirect (Abedi, Latifi & Moinzadeh, 2010; Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1997, 2001, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Lalande, 1982; Lee, 1997, 2004; Robb et al., 1986; Semke, 1984). In the last level, the chart describes whether teachers providing indirect feedback prefer coded or un-coded correction (Ferris, 2006; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb et al., 1986). The chart below shows how the feedback strategies are categorized in this study.

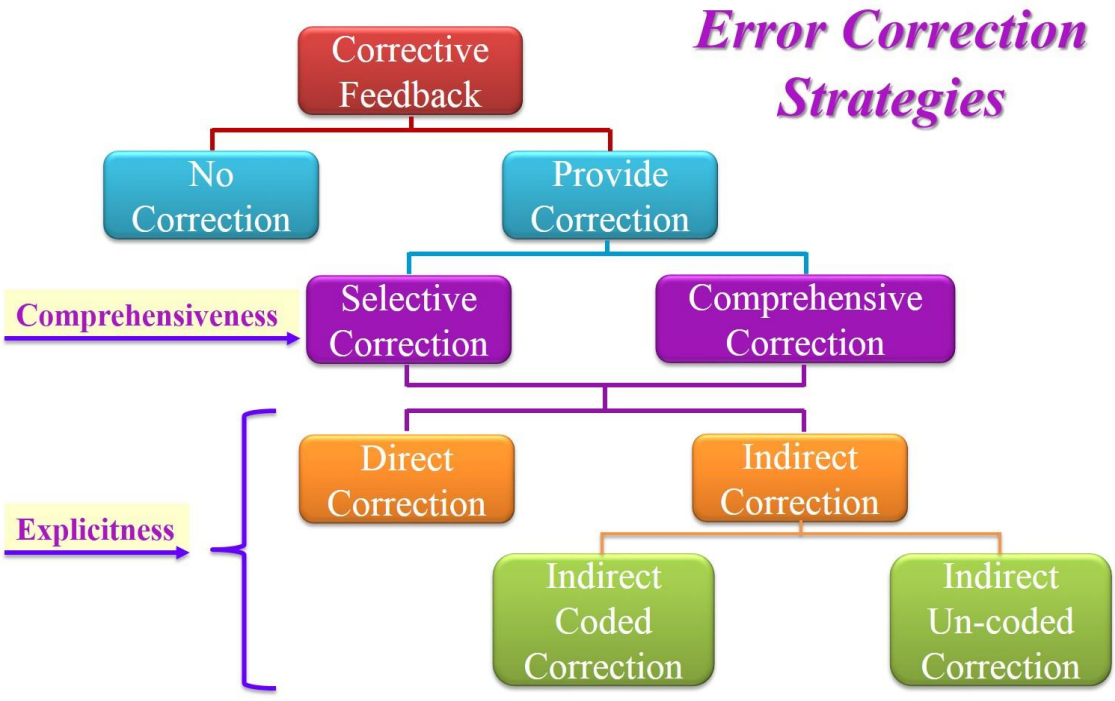

Figure 1: Categories of Error Correction Strategies

The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data obtained from the closed items of the questionnaire, content analysis for the data gathered from the feedback samples, and verbal analysis for the data collected from the open-ended questions, in the questionnaire, and the follow-up interviews. The responses to the multiple-choice and the Likert scale items were coded and analyzed using Excel, it is "presented in some type of summarized form (e.g., tables of descriptive statistics)" (Perry, p. 161); where the percentages were calculated. However, "The analyses of verbal data are not quite as straight forward as analyzing numerical data," "where the researcher engages the data, reflects, makes notes, re-engages the data, organizes codes, reduces the data, looks for relationships and themes, makes checks on the credibility of the emerging systems, and eventually draws conclusions" (Perry, p. 161). As for the open-ended questions, the researcher read over the collected data several times to identify patterns and themes. She tried to identify when and why teachers chose comprehensive and/or selective correction and also when and why they provided error correction directly, indirectly, or both. Regarding the interviews, the researcher looked mainly for the reasons of the differences between what the teachers reported and what they actually practiced. With respect to the feedback samples, the researcher recruited three coders to enhance reliability by norming. The coders, in addition to the researcher, used the rubric below (Figure 2) for coding and analyzing the samples.

Coder's name	Teacher's name	Sample No.	Error Feedback Strategies							
			No error correction	Comprehensive	Selective	Direct	Indirect		Marginal comment	End note comment
							Coded	Un-coded		

Figure 2: Categories of Error Feedback

As for the coding procedures, first, several samples were coded for the piloting process, where the same samples were coded by each coder to ensure reliability. The results showed that there were some discrepancies between the coding of each coder, as well as the researcher's herself. To solve this problem, the coders and the researcher met to discuss the coding variations. After they agreed upon the coding to be used, the rest of the feedback samples were distributed among them for coding. Next, the researcher compared the coded feedback (the actual feedback practices) with the reported practices of these teachers, between which contained many differences.

Finally, interviews were conducted with seven teachers who had differences between their actual and reported practices. This was done to investigate the reason behind such differences. The interpretations of the interviews were done verbally.

Chapter 4

Data Analysis and Results

The purpose of this study is to compare the teachers' actual error correction practices with their reported ones. It also investigated the strategies most frequently used by the SCE teachers in providing grammatical corrective feedback to their students' writing. This chapter discusses the study's findings with regard to the data needed to answer the research questions. It presents the results of all the data gathered from the questionnaire, writing samples, and interviews. The first part describes the teachers' rationales about practicing error correction in general and their own practices in particular. Regarding the second part, the researcher reported the results of the study in relation to the research questions.

4.1 Teachers' Self-Reported Error Correction Practices and Rationales

This section reports the participants' responses to closed items in the survey about their own rationales or beliefs regarding the effectiveness of error correction, where the responses were analyzed using Excel. The majority of the teachers believe that providing their students with corrective feedback is effective. However, a small numbers of participants were not in favor of correcting their students' grammatical errors. Moreover, about half of the teachers (56%), whether providing error correction or not, said that responding to student writing is exhausting and time-consuming.

Most of the teachers (91%) stated that they provide their students with feedback on their grammatical errors in writing and 93% agreed that error correction is effective in improving the students' language use and that their students benefit from it. In addition, all the teachers but one stated that the practice of error correction is effective in improving the overall accuracy of the students' writing.

On the other hand, a very small number of teachers (5%) said they do not provide feedback on grammatical errors because of the workload, and 11% stated that feedback on grammatical errors is harmful. Furthermore, about half of the teachers (45%) mentioned that when students revise according to their corrections, their main interest is getting a better grade and not improving their writing.

Generally, the majority of the teachers mentioned that they explain their approaches to providing error correction in advance and that they check to see whether the students understood the guidelines. Moreover, 94% of the participants stated that their error correction practices have changed over time; however, their feedback techniques/strategies presented in the following section are related to their current practices.

Table 3. Teachers' rationales regarding error correction.

Teachers' rationales regarding error correction	% of agreement
Grammar error correction is effective in improving the students' language use.	93%
Responding to student writing is exhausting and time-consuming.	56%
I always provide feedback on grammatical errors in students' writing.	91%
My students effectively benefit from the error correction I provide.	93%
The practice of error correction is effective in improving the overall accuracy of students' writing.	98%
I do not provide feedback on grammatical errors because of the workload.	5%
Providing students with feedback on grammatical errors is harmful.	11%
When students revise according to my correction, their main interest is in getting a better grade, not improving their writing.	45%
I explain my approach to providing grammar error correction in advance.	84%
I check to see whether the students understood the guidelines.	93%
My error correction practices have changed over time.	94%

4.2 Research Question (1): Teachers' Self-Reported Practices

In each of the following sections, the researcher reported the results related to the teachers' self-reported practices according to their survey responses (open and close-ended questions).

4.2.1 Reported error correction practices.

This section reports the findings relevant to research question (1): *What types of error correction strategies do teachers report practicing?*

4.2.1.1 Comprehensiveness of error correction.

The number of teachers who participated in the survey was 65. The results showed that 79% of the teachers reported using comprehensive correction, while 84% claimed using selective correction. This means that the majority of the teachers use both techniques: comprehensive and selective. Those who reported that they never use one of them are very few: 13% said that they do not use comprehensive correction and 9% stated that they do not use selective correction. When the teachers who use selective correction were asked on what basis they select the errors, one-third said that it depends on the students' proficiency level, one-quarter stated that it depends on the grammar lesson taught in class, and one-quarter mentioned that it is related on the type of error. Moreover, a very small number said that it depends on the policy used by the department, the time of the semester, and students' preferences.

In the open-ended questions, the teachers were asked about the situations in which they use comprehensive correction. The highest category (14%) was the teachers who claimed correcting everything in the students' essays: grammar, mechanics, structure, spelling, punctuation, vocabulary, development and the originality of ideas, presenting and supporting arguments, as well as critical thinking. One of them also said, *"I use a rubric that*

covers all language and mechanics' aspects when correcting any piece of writing." The next category (9%) mentioned that they provide comprehensive correction in TOEFL or IELTS classes. Some teachers stated that after providing comprehensive feedback, they collect the common/all errors made by the whole class on a Word document, Power Point presentation, or on the board. They then discuss these errors with the students by eliciting the correct answers. Moreover, a few teachers claimed using comprehensive correction in the following situations: When the focus of the lesson is on writing skills; they do not have time to provide individual feedback; the errors impede comprehension or hinder expression and the flow of ideas; only at the beginning of the semester; or if the students were in a specific level, elementary, intermediate, or advanced (different preferences for teachers). Other teachers had different reasons – learners appreciate all their errors being corrected, it is their job as a teacher to correct all students' errors, or simply to help their students avoid these errors in the future. On the other hand, few teachers stated that they do not correct errors comprehensively because it is time consuming and ineffective.

Furthermore, in the open-ended questions, some responses were related to the selective correction, with some teachers stating that they prefer using it in order not to overwhelm and frustrate their students with a big number of grammatical errors. Others mentioned that instead of correcting each grammatical error, focusing on specific types of errors is more effective for students and saves time for teachers. Furthermore, some teachers claimed using selective correction according to the lessons taught in class or in previous levels. They believe that it is unfair to judge students on grammatical errors that depend on lessons not covered in class. A teacher said, *"I practice selective error correction when I see there are some recurrent grammatical errors which students should be aware of at their level."* A few teachers prefer using comprehensive correction at the beginning of the semester

and selective correction later during the semester, like the teacher who mentioned the reason as follows:

> In the beginning of each semester, I tend to use "comprehensive correction" since it gives the students holistic feedback and insight into their actual proficiency levels and the recurrent mistakes/errors that they frequently make. On the other hand, "targeted correction" becomes perfect after the beginning period of the semester since it sheds light on a specific type of mistake/error and consequently, the students pay strong attention to the mistake in focus and look forward towards more accuracy in this aspect.

4.2.1.2 Explicitness of error correction.

A teacher can use more than one technique when providing corrective feedback to the students. The results showed that the most frequently used technique, as reported by the teachers, was the indirect coded correction, with the least being the indirect un-coded correction. Techniques/strategies used by the teachers are provided below (Table 4).

Table 4. Error correction techniques used by the participants.

Techniques	Teachers (n = 65)	Percentage
Direct correction	27	20%
Indirect coded correction	38	28%
Indirect un-coded correction	18	13%
Comment in the margin	22	16%
Summary in the end note	27	20%
Other	5	4%

In the open-ended section of the survey, the teachers were asked to describe their reasons for practicing the strategy/strategies they mentioned when correcting students' errors. The results are presented according to the three main categories reported by the teachers: (1) Direct correction only, (2) Indirect correction only, and (3) Direct and indirect correction.

(1) *Direct correction only:* The results showed that 27 out the 65 participants, reported using direct correction, but only eight said that they provide direct feedback only. Some teachers gave more than one reason for using only this strategy. The reasons for using just this strategy are (See Figure 3): (1) Two teachers claimed that they practice it for autonomy purposes – the first teacher corrects one of each type of errors and asks the student to go through the whole thing, find the other errors, and correct them. The other teachers' reason was the ability to self-correct afterwards. (2) Two teachers mentioned that this is to avoid these errors in the future. (3) The teacher teaches lower levels. (4) It is effective in highlighting the common errors. (5) It improves writing techniques. (6) Own expectations based on students' levels. (7) Students have misconception of some grammar areas or some embedded mistakes.

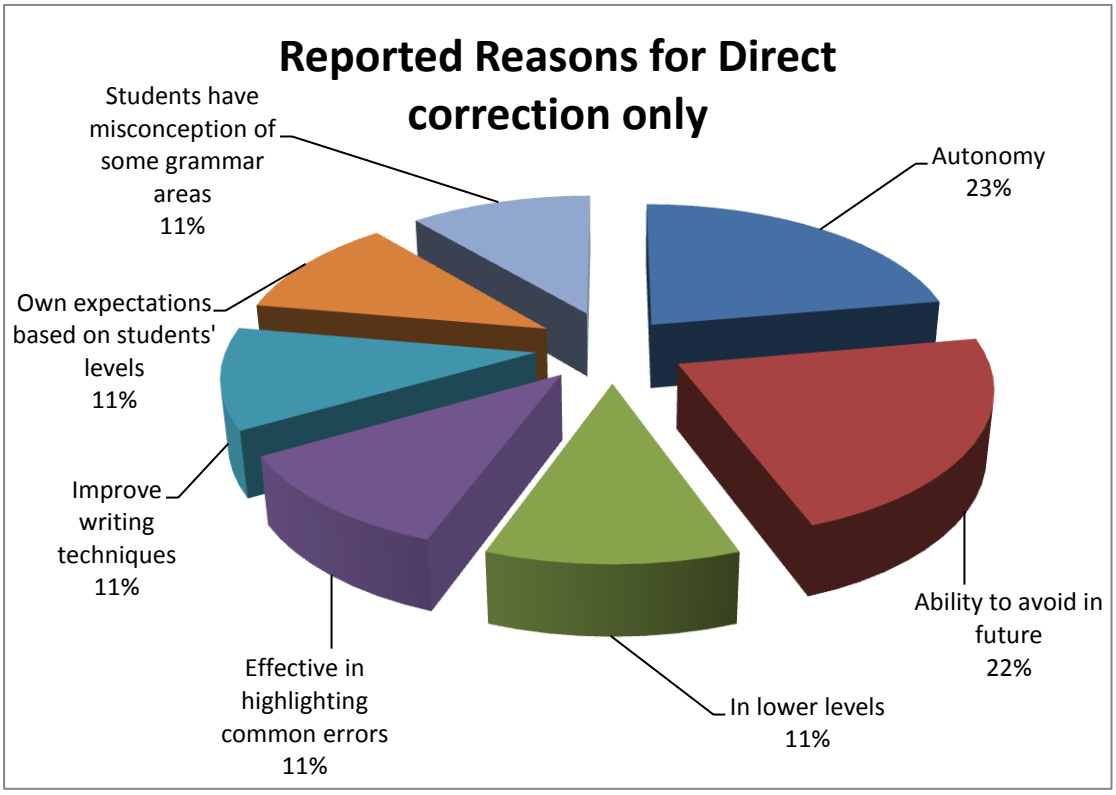

Figure 3: Reported reasons for direct correction only

(2) *Indirect correction only:* The results showed that 56 participants reported using indirect correction, with 22 teachers using only indirect correction. There are three

sub-categories related to indirect correction: indirect coded only (n = 11), indirect un-coded only (n = 5), and indirect coded and un-coded (n=3). The reasons are presented in table 5 (The N in the table below refers to the number of times this reason was mentioned and not the number of teachers; i.e. a teacher could mention more than one reason, while some teachers did not give any reasons).

Table 5. Reported reasons for indirect correction only.

Indirect only					
Indirect coded only	***N***	**Indirect un-coded only**	***N***	**Indirect coded and un-coded**	***N***
Autonomy	7	Autonomy	3	Autonomy	3
Fossilization (error will stick in their minds)	2	Own expectations based on lessons taught before and students' levels	1	Draws students' attention to common errors and how to avoid them through practice	1
Own expectations based on lessons taught before	2	Time saving	1		
Time saving	2	Helps week students	1		
Effective	1				
Improves writing skills	1				
Correcting their work is a learning experience	1				
Students know they will correct their mistakes, so they will be more careful when writing	1				

As for "Autonomy", the participants mentioned several issues, such as *"think and self-correct", "stimulates critical thinking", "self-confidence", "find their errors and correct them", "learn from their mistakes", and "self-correction is most effective to enhance writing skills".*

(3) *Direct and indirect correction:* The results showed that 17 participants reported using both, direct and indirect correction. Some teachers did not give any reasons, while

others did: (1) Two teachers claimed using direct correction with beginners, while practicing indirect correction with advanced students; (2) Autonomy (self-learning and self-correction); (3) Improve writing skills; (4) Repetition to avoid these errors in the future, and (5) *"It is my job to correct in any possible way to reach learning targets"*.

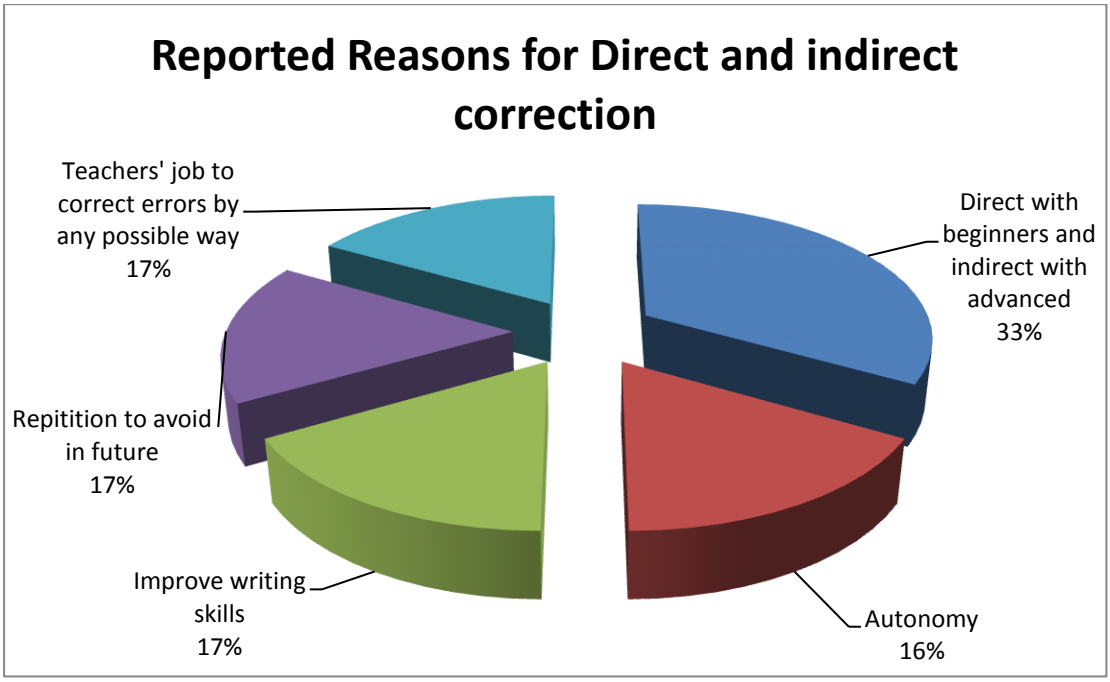

Figure 4: Reported reasons for direct and indirect correction

4.2.2 Reported error correction practices as related to different contexts.

This section reports the findings relevant to research sub-question (1-a) *Do the reported error correction strategies differ from one context to another? How?*

Teachers' use of a specific error correction technique certainly varies from one context to another – students' proficiency levels, the submitted draft, the grammar lesson taught, the time of the semester, or students' preferences. For example, a teacher may use direct correction with low-proficiency students but indirect correction with more advanced ones. Similarly, direct correction may be used in first drafts but indirect correction in second drafts. The results of this study showed that the majority of the teachers reported that they

decide on the techniques to be used depending on the students' proficiency levels as well as the submitted drafts (Table 6). In addition, about half of the participants believe that error correction is most useful with more advanced levels, while others think it is useful across all levels.

Table 6. Different contexts for different feedback strategies (closed-ended questions).

Contexts	Agree		Disagree	
	n=65	%	n=65	%
Proficiency level	46	75%	15	25%
Submitted draft	40	65%	21	35%
Grammar lesson taught	28	46%	33	54%
Time of semester	9	15%	52	85%
Student's preferences	8	13%	53	87%

In the open-ended section of the survey, the teachers were asked to explain how their practices differ from one context to another. Their responses are presented in the table below (Table 7):

Table 7. Different contexts for different feedback strategies (open-ended questions).

Teachers' responses	Number of responses
Proficiency level	20
Grammar lesson taught in class	12
Outcome/objectives of the course taught (General English/Academic English/ESL/TOEFL or IELTS)	8
Backgrounds	4
My expectations	3
Institute's policy	2
All errors are corrected directly, no difference in context	2

Moreover, further participants provided other responses; each was mentioned once, such as age, aim of the writing task, experience, learners' preferences, learning styles,

motivation, rubric, the size of the class, the time needed related to the number of essays, and the time of the semester.

When comparing the results of the closed-ended and open-ended questions, the results showed that the majority of the participants reported that their practices mainly depend on their students' proficiency levels. However, the second greater number of the teachers, in the closed-ended questions, were those who claimed that they decide on their practices according to the submitted draft, followed by those who decide upon the grammar lesson taught in class. On the other hand, in the open-ended question, the second greater number of teachers were those who mentioned that their practices are based on the grammar lesson taught in class, followed by those who decide upon the outcomes/objectives of the course taught.

4.3 Research Question (2): Teachers' Actual Vs. Reported Practices

This section presents the results related to the teachers' actual practices, according to their feedback samples, as compared to their self-reported practices in the survey. The researcher received feedback samples from 13 teachers. The results showed that there were various parallel practices as well as differences between the teachers' reported and actual practices. Accordingly, the researcher categorized the differences into three categories: over-reported practices, under-reported practices, and contrasting reported practices. The findings are reported in relevance to research question (2): *What types of error correction strategies do teachers actually practice as compared to their self-reported practices?*

4.3.1 Comprehensiveness of error correction.

When comparing the reported responses of the comprehensiveness of error correction with the feedback samples, the results showed that nine teachers had over-reported practices, two had parallel practices, one had under-reported practices, and one had contrasting practices (See Table 8). The majority of the teachers reported using both comprehensive and

selective correction (nine teachers), but they actually practiced only one strategy (six teachers practiced comprehensive correction, and three teachers used selective correction). Furthermore, as shown in Table 8, most of the teachers tended to correct errors comprehensively.

In Table 9, the results demonstrated that about half of the teachers (48%) reported using comprehensive correction; however, about two-thirds (60%) actually practiced comprehensive error correction. This could be because some teachers think or believe they should correct students' errors selectively in order not to confuse or overwhelm them, but when they start providing feedback, they cannot prevent themselves from correcting every error because, as claimed by some of them, they feel it is their job to let the students know all their errors.

Table 8. Comprehensiveness actual vs. self-reported practices.

No. of teachers	Comprehensiveness (Comprehensive/Selective)		
	Reported practices	Actual practices	Differences
6	Comp & Sel	Comp	Over-reported
3	Comp & Sel	Sel	Over-reported
1	Comp & Sel	Comp & Sel	Parallel
1	Comp	Comp	Parallel
1	Sel	Comp & Sel	Under-reported
1	No feedback	Sel	Contrasting reported

Comp = Comprehensive
Sel = Selective

Table 9. Self-reported vs. actual feedback practices of each strategy (comprehensiveness).

Comprehensiveness				
Error correction strategy	Reported practices		Actual practices	
	n=23	%	n=15	%
Comprehensive	11	48%	9	60%
Selective	11	48%	6	40%
No feedback	1	4%	0	0%

Table 10 shows the teachers' differences regarding comprehensiveness as related to their years of experiences, academic background, and training, where no relation can be noticed between them.

4.3.2 Explicitness of error correction.

When comparing the reported responses of the explicitness of error correction with the feedback samples, the results showed that seven teachers had under-reported practices, five had contrasting practices, one had over-reported practices, and one had parallel practices (See Table 11). In explicitness of error correction practices, no one over-reported his/her practices. Moreover, all the teachers but one corrected errors directly, whether reported or not.

In addition, as shown in Table 12, the results shows that about half of the teachers (52%) reported practicing indirect coded correction and about one-third (35%) mentioned that they use direct correction. On the other hand, the actual practices showed the opposite: about half of the teachers (46.5%) used direct correction and one-third (30%) used indirect coded correction. The reason for this could be that some teachers believe or know that it is more effective to make the students figure out their errors and correct them in order not to repeat them in the future. However, while they are providing feedback, they correct the errors directly for several reasons (as stated by some of them): (1) Students are not aware of the codes; (2) Students' levels are not high enough to be able to self-correct their errors; or (3)

Teachers do not have time to correct second drafts after students have self-corrected their errors. Moreover, the results in Table 12 showed that a very small number of teachers (6%) reported using indirect un-coded correction; however, their actual practices indicated that about quarter of the teachers (21.5%) used that strategy.

Table 10. Experience, academic background, and training (comprehensiveness).

Years of Exp.	Academic background	Training	Comprehensiveness practices
+20	TESOL Political Science	Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Contrasting reported
+20	TESOL Applied Linguistics English Language Literature	Graduate / undergraduate course Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Over-reported
+20	TESOL	Graduate / undergraduate course	Under-reported
11-20	Linguistics / Syntax and Discourse Analysis	Professional conference	Parallel
11-20	TESOL Applied Linguistics Translation Arts	Graduate / undergraduate course Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Over-reported
11-20	TESOL	Professional conference	Over-reported
11-20	TESOL Applied Linguistics	Graduate / undergraduate course	Over-reported
11-20	TESOL Composition / Rhetoric	Graduate / undergraduate course Pre-service or in-service training	Over-reported
6-10	Education	Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Over-reported
6-10	TESOL	Graduate / undergraduate course Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Over-reported
6-10	Education Applied Linguistics	Graduate / undergraduate course Professional conference	Over-reported
3-5	CELTA	Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Over-reported
3-5	CELTA	Graduate / undergraduate course	Parallel

Regarding comprehensiveness, the majority of the teachers over-reported their practices, while only one teacher under-reported them. On the contrary, with respect to

explicitness, most of the teachers under-reported their practices, while merely one teacher over-reported them.

Table 11. Explicitness actual vs. self-reported practices.

No. of teachers	Explicitness (D/IC/IU)		
	Reported practices	Actual practices	Differences
2	D	D & IC	Under-reported
2	IC	D, IC & IU	Under-reported
2	IC	D & IC	Under-reported
1	IC	IC & IU	Under-reported
2	D & IC	D & IU	Contrasting reported
1	D & IC *	D	Contrasting reported
1	IC & IU	D & IC	Contrasting reported
1	No feedback	D & IU	Contrasting reported
1	D	D	Parallel

Direct = D
Indirect coded = IC
Indirect un-coded = IU

* T6 reported in the survey that he uses direct and indirect coded correction, but in the interview, he reported that he also uses indirect un-coded correction. However, in the feedback samples he only corrected the errors directly.

Table 12. Self-reported vs. actual feedback practices of each strategy(explicitness).

Explicitness				
Error correction strategy	Reported practices		Actual practices	
	n=17	%	n=28	%
Direct	6	35%	13	47%
Indirect coded	9	52%	9	32%
Indirect un-coded	1	6%	6	21.50%
No feedback	1	6%	0	0%

Table 13 presents the teachers' differences regarding explicitness with respect to their years of experiences, academic background, and training, where no relation can be found between them.

Table 13. Experience, academic background, and training (explicitness).

Years of Exp.	Academic background	Training	Explicitness practices
+20	TESOL Political Science	Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Contrasting reported
+20	TESOL Applied Linguistics English Language Literature	Graduate / undergraduate course Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Under-reported
+20	TESOL	Graduate / undergraduate course	Under-reported
11-20	Linguistics / Syntax and Discourse Analysis	Professional conference	Under-reported
11-20	TESOL Applied Linguistics Translation Arts	Graduate / undergraduate course Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Contrasting reported
11-20	TESOL	Professional conference	Contrasting reported
11-20	TESOL Applied Linguistics	Graduate / undergraduate course	Under-reported
11-20	TESOL Composition / Rhetoric	Graduate / undergraduate course Pre-service or in-service training	Contrasting reported
6-10	Education	Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Under-reported
6-10	TESOL	Graduate / undergraduate course Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Under-reported
6-10	Education Applied Linguistics	Graduate / undergraduate course Professional conference	Parallel
3-5	CELTA	Pre-service or in-service training Professional conference	Contrasting reported
3-5	CELTA	Graduate / undergraduate course	Under-reported

4.4 Research question (3): Reasons for the differences

This section shows the results related to the reasons of the differences between the teachers' self-reported and actual practices, according to the interviews. The findings are

reported in relevance to research question (3): *What are some possible reasons for differences between teachers' self-reported and actual practices?*

Thirteen teachers provided the researcher with feedback samples, three to five from each teacher, where 55 samples were analyzed. When the researcher compared their self-reported and actual practices, she found that there were some differences (over-reported, under-reported, or contrasting reported). The investigator conducted on-phone interviews with seven participants for an in-depth investigation of the reasons behind such discrepancies. The interviews were transcribed (See Appendix C); the data interpreted is mainly related to the differences between the interviewees' self-reported and actual practices. The researcher did not refer to what actually matched their reported practices, what they said about their beliefs, or their procedures for providing feedback. The interviewees are referred to as T1, T2… where T stands for teacher.

T1, who provided five feedback samples, claimed in the survey that she uses indirect un-coded correction; however, she actually practiced direct, indirect coded and un-coded correction in the feedback samples. In the interview, she said that she misunderstood the term "indirect un-coded correction", and she thought it was meant to be coded correction. In addition, when she was asked why she used direct correction even though she did not report it in the survey, she said, "When I actually imagine using the codes will be quite confusing at this point, I directly correct the error. I believe sometimes the codes are not 100% perfect because sometimes they might be confusing even for me explaining what they are." She added that 95% of her feedback is coded.

T2, who provided five feedback samples, reported that she practices both comprehensive and selective feedback, as well as indirect coded correction; however, her feedback samples showed that she actually only uses comprehensive feedback, in addition to direct and indirect coded correction. Regarding comprehensiveness, she said in the interview

that it depends on the students' levels. She mentioned that she only used comprehensive correction in the provided samples because they were upper-intermediate students and that she supposed that they should be aware, by that time, of many grammar aspects, and that is why she corrected each grammatical error. However, if the students were beginners, she would have used selective correction. According to explicitness, she indicated that it depends on the number of errors and if she has time for providing coded correction. She said, *"Generally, when there are a few mistakes, I correct them directly, but if there are many mistakes, I provide codes. However, I use codes only with higher levels."* When she was asked why she reported in the survey that she only provides the students with indirect coded correction, she said, *"Maybe according to the level … I usually depend on the level when I am correcting writing."*

T3, who provided five feedback samples, reported that she does not provide her writing students with error correction; however, the results showed that she selectively corrected grammar errors in her feedback samples, using direct and indirect un-coded correction. When she was asked about this issue, she stated, *"In general English I provide holistic feedback, not like academic English … sentence by sentence, the detailed feedback, I do not do."* Moreover, she added that she does not pay attention to every error because there is no time to do so in the six-week semester, but she cares about having a good introduction and conclusion, as well as the flow of the paragraph itself. Furthermore, when she was asked about not reporting these practices in the survey she said, *"I meant that I do not provide detailed feedback, and I am more concerned about the content, the flow of ideas, and the organization. That is what I want."*

T4, who provided five feedback samples, reported that she practices both comprehensive and selective feedback, as well as indirect coded and un-coded correction; however, her actual practices showed that she only uses selective feedback, in addition to

direct and indirect coded correction. She was not very selective as she corrected the majority of error types and ignored a few. Additionally, she mainly used direct correction with minimal indirect coded correction. With respect to comprehensiveness, she mentioned the following in the same order:

- *I do not use comprehensive correction in writing, but maybe while I am doing the oral in class.*
- *It also depends on the students and what I need from them, depending on the lesson. I select errors related to this lesson in order not to confuse them.*
- *But, in the samples I gave you, I corrected all errors.*

  Me: *No, there were other errors that you ignored.*
- *Generally, I correct every single mistake in the paper because I need them to understand why this is wrong.*
- *These students are still lower levels students; they will not understand everything I say. However, if the students were in higher levels, I would be very comprehensive.*

She first mentioned that she does not correct writing comprehensively. After that, she said that she selects errors related to the lesson taught, although the coder found that she actually corrected many other types of errors. Next, she indicated that she corrects every mistake. Regarding explicitness, she claimed that she did not use indirect un-coded correction in the samples provided because she normally uses that strategy with more advanced students. When she was asked why she used direct correction despite not reporting it in the survey, she said, *"Maybe I did not get it, or I just passed it; or maybe I was talking about high levels. Take care, in the survey you did not mention which levels you are talking about."* However, all the questions in the survey dealt with the teachers' practices in general. On one hand, she said that she based her responses on higher levels; and on the other hand, she contradicted herself by saying that she responded according to the level she was teaching at that time (pre-

intermediate) because the researcher asked her for feedback samples for that level. However, the researcher started asking for the samples after the teachers had already filled out the survey.

T5, who provided three feedback samples, reported that she merely uses direct correction; however, her feedback samples showed that she actually uses direct and indirect coded correction. She stated that maybe she had just forgotten to report this in the survey. She claimed in the interview that she uses codes with lower levels, but with higher levels the students can correct their errors after she circles them. However, the results showed that the provided feedback samples were coded although the students were higher-level learners. When the researcher asked her about the reason for the difference, she said, *"Maybe I was not fully aware that you need all the techniques or maybe I was doing that quickly."*

T6, who provided five feedback samples, reported that he practices direct and indirect coded correction; however, the feedback samples showed that he actually uses direct correction. He mentioned in the interview that he uses both: Directly (just correct the error) and indirectly (write a code or highlight the error). This means that he also uses indirect un-coded correction, which was not reported in the survey. When she was asked about the reason for the difference, he said, *"I did not do it indirectly for that one, but I did not send you all the papers. In the ones I gave you, I used direct correction, so it depends on my class, the level, and what we are focusing on at that time."*

T7, who provided five feedback samples, reported that she uses both comprehensive and selective feedback, as well as direct and indirect coded correction; however, in the feedback samples she provided, the results showed that she only uses selective feedback, in addition to direct and indirect un-coded correction. She mentioned that she was selective in correcting the errors related only to the lessons taught. When the researcher asked why she had reported using comprehensive correction as well, she said, *"I am not sure why I did this, maybe*

because I was not sure of the term." Regarding explicitness, she claimed that she does not use indirect correction because students are not used to codes at all, but she did not remember why she reported this in the survey and said that she could use this strategy in the future because it is more professional. Furthermore, when the researcher asked her about providing indirect un-coded correction while not reporting this in the survey, she said, *"Again, I did not understand the term. Maybe I would recommend that you provide a definition for each."* When the researcher told her that she provided definitions with examples, she said, *"You did? Probably I filled out the survey too quickly or did not have time … I am not sure."*

4.5 Conclusion

Regarding comprehensiveness, the majority of the teachers reported using comprehensive and selective correction. With respect to explicitness, about half of the teachers mentioned that they correct errors indirectly, with one-third of them using indirect coded correction. They also claimed that choosing a particular strategy depends on several contexts, where students' proficiency levels and lessons taught in class are the highest two contexts that teachers consider when providing feedback. When the researcher compared the teachers' reported practices with their actual practices, she found that most of the teachers over-reported the comprehensiveness of error correction and under-reported the explicitness of error correction. The results also showed that the most used techniques/strategies were the comprehensive and direct corrections. As the results showed differences between what the teachers reported and what they actually practiced, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with seven teachers to ask about the reasons for the differences found. The interviewees reported that their practices depend on the students' levels or whether or not the lesson was taught. Others mentioned that they misunderstood the terms or were in a hurry while filling out the survey.

Consequently, some potential reasons for the over-reported practices could be the assignments of the particular samples collected or the particular group of learners at the time of collection (their levels or preferences). On the other hand, reasons for the under-reported practices could be the respondents not being careful about completing the survey or unaware of the terms. Another possible reason for any difference could be that teachers were unaware of how their actual practices should have matched their self-reported practices.

Chapter 5

Discussion and Implications

5.1 Summary of Results

The results showed that there were various differences between the teachers' self-reported and actual practices. Most of the teachers reported using both comprehensive and selective correction, while they actually used comprehensive correction, which means they over-reported their practices. In addition, about half of the teachers reported practicing indirect correction, while all but one corrected errors directly. Moreover, the majority reported using only one strategy, but they actually practiced two or three, which means that they under-reported their practices. There were also some teachers who had contrasting reported practices. When some teachers were asked about the reasons for the differences between their actual and reported practices, most of them said that it depends on the students' proficiency levels as well as on the lesson taught in class. Lee (2009) argued that "it is not certain whether these are real explanations for the mismatches or mere excuses that teachers use to justify their practices" (p. 19).

Some teachers tried to convince the researcher that there were not any differences between their reported and actual practices and gave any reasons that would seem logical for their practices. In addition, other teachers claimed the researcher did not provide definitions for the terms used or for not specifying the level upon which the questions were based. However, the researcher did provide definitions and examples for the terms used, and the questions dealt with their general practices and not a specific course or level. It is also possible that these teachers could have lack of experience with research, which makes them not fully aware of how to contribute in a study.

5.2 Findings and Discussions

This study showed that the teachers' actual practices differed from their self-reported ones, as well as those recommended or advised in other studies to be more effective, which is similar to the findings of Lee's (2009) study. In her study, she argued that teachers' feedback practices do not seem to be in line or congruent with their beliefs. With respect to comprehensiveness, "many error correction advocates have advised against comprehensive error feedback because of the risk of exhausting teachers and overwhelming students" (as cited in Lee, 2004, p. 302). When teachers correct errors comprehensively, "there is a tendency to over-mark errors" (Lee, 2004, p. 302). This leads to over-burdening and confusing the students, as well as preventing them from being able to make self-corrections. Consequently, students will not be able to cope with their teachers' corrections, and by then, error correction will be ineffective in improving their writing accuracy. In addition, Ferris (2002) claims that error correction could be very effective "when it focuses on patterns of error, allowing teachers and students to attend to, say, two or three major error types at a time, rather than dozens of disparate errors" (p. 50), which means the practice of selective error correction. Although teachers cast doubt about comprehensive correction, they still tend to practice it. In this study, the teachers reported, in the closed items of the survey, that they use both comprehensive and selective correction. Furthermore, in the open-ended questions, they said that they prefer practicing selective correction because it is more effective in helping students self-correct their errors (autonomy). However, their actual practices in the feedback samples showed that they tended to correct the grammatical errors comprehensively. Consequently, teachers know that selective error correction is more effective, but they may not be aware of how to implement it. The researcher suggests that the teachers could link their error correction practices with grammar instruction.

Similarly, regarding explicitness, the teachers reported that indirect correction is more effective for autonomy purposes, even though, they tended to correct errors directly. Ferris and Roberts (2001) stated that "language acquisition theorists and ESL writing specialists alike argue that indirect feedback is preferable for most student writers because it engages them in guided learning and problem solving" (p. 163). A teacher claims in the interview that although she thinks that students are not quite familiar with codes, she believe that she should implement this strategy in her class because it is more professional and effective. Teachers believe that "error codes provide the opportunities for students to think about the error types and do self-correction, which is beneficial to their learning" (Lee, 2009, p. 16). From the researcher's point of view, by repeating the process of students correcting their own errors, this will help them avoid making these errors in the future, and therefore improve their writing accuracy, as well as fluency when rewriting their corrected essays. On the other hand, when students are provided with direct correction, they may, or may not, have a look on the errors being corrected for them, without making any effort that would help them improve their writing accuracy. Lee (2009) stated that "all they have to do is just to rewrite the essay" and "do not even have to think because correct answers have been given by the teachers" (p. 17). When teachers correct errors directly, "students are not provided with opportunities to develop responsibility for learning" (Lee, 2009, p. 17). Agreeing with Ferris and Roberts (2001) who mentioned that many researchers (Ferris et al., 2000; Ferris & Helt, 2000; Lalande, 1982) who have examined the effectiveness of these two strategies "have reported that indirect feedback helps students to make progress in accuracy over time more than direct feedback does" (p. 164).

The study suggests that indirect un-coded correction could be used with advanced students, where they are required to determine the types of errors and correct them. As for direct correction, it can be practiced with low proficiency levels or "for errors that are not

amenable to self-correction (e.g., vocabulary and syntax errors)" (Lee, 2004, p. 302). With respect to indirect coded correction, Lee (2004) argued that in order for this correction strategy to be effective, teachers should consider several issues. First, selective error correction should be practiced based on grammar instruction to "help students reinforce their learning" (p. 302). However, if the teachers provided their students with comprehensive feedback using codes, their essays would be full of coded errors, which would be difficult and overwhelming for the students to understand and correct. Therefore, being selective (correction linked to lessons taught) and reducing the number of codes will help the students cope with their teachers' error correction. Thus, in order to interpret the practice of indirect coded correction successfully, "teachers have to handle correction codes with a great deal of care"; and "if teachers adopt these strategies, error codes could be less problematic for students, and students may also benefit more from the use of codes" (Lee, 2004, p. 303).

Consequently, if teachers understood and considered these strategies, and were able to adopt them, the differences between their reported and actual practices would be reduced because by then, they would be able to report what they actually do based on better awareness of error correction practices, which could be best achieved through teacher training programs.

5.3 Implications of the Study

From the researcher's point of view, the differences that occurred between the teachers' self-reported and actual practices are a result of a lack of their self-awareness and the need to better apply their beliefs to practice. If the teachers believe that particular strategies are more effective than others in improving students' writing accuracy, as they reported, such strategies should be applied and practiced when providing their students with feedback. Ferris (1999) claims that "poorly done error correction will not help student writers

and may even mislead them" (p. 4). Therefore, teachers need to be trained on how to be more aware of their feedback practices. "Teacher education programs, both pre-service and in-service, have to pay more attention to this aspect of writing instruction assessment" (Lee, 2003, p. 231). Pre-service and in-service training programs as well as professional development sessions should emphasize how teachers could better provide their students with effective feedback, which will help them be more aware of their practices as compared to their beliefs. Continuous professional development is essential "to develop in teachers a vision about what they want to achieve through feedback and to equip them with effective feedback strategies" (Lee, 2008, p. 82).

Last but not least, it is recommended that teachers arrange critical friendship meetings to discuss each other's experiences in order to come up with suggestions of practical and effective feedback practices on grammatical errors in writing. When teachers think aloud and share opinions and experiences, this will "contribute to more productive feedback practices" in terms of "better student motivation, more effective learning, and even improvement in student writing" (Lee, 2008, p. 82).

5.4 Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

This study was made using convenience sampling, which means that it is not a representative sample of the whole population; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to all ESL classes in Egypt.

Additionally, the researcher collected feedback samples from 13 teachers, where each teacher provided samples of only one level (the level taught at that time). This did not show each teacher's practices across more than one proficiency level (pre-intermediate, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced). For future research, it is recommended to collect feedback samples of more than one level for each teacher, which would allow a

comparison of teachers' practices across several levels. Moreover, the natures of the writing samples in this study were not consistent; therefore, it is recommended in future studies to collect samples that are similar in their nature of writing, for example, narratives, five-paragraph essays, letters, etc. Also, more research could explore teachers' practices in relation to the assignment type.

Furthermore, although the researcher provided definitions and examples of the terms in the survey (see Appendix A, item number 14), the teachers kept giving excuses of not being aware of them. When making similar studies, it is preferable not to use any terms; instead, a one-sentence explanation associated with an example could be provided, such as the definitions and examples provided in the survey (Appendix A, item number 14), but without mentioning the terms.

Moreover, many studies focused on the students' preferences regarding feedback practices (Alamis, 2010; Arndt, 1993; Cohen, 1987; Ferris, 1995b; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; 1996; Lee, 2004, 2008b; Leki, 1991; Zhang, 1995; Zhu, 2010); in this study, however, a minimal number of teachers reported that they consider their students' preferences while providing feedback. Consequently, more research may be needed to investigate how students' preferences match with teachers' actual practices in an Egyptian context. In addition, research should move away from self-reported data and focus more on classroom observations. Written feedback is perceived as an out-of-class activity, so we need to look at the class dynamics to see how teachers actually provide students with corrective feedback in real classroom contexts and how students react to this feedback in class.

5.5 Conclusion

The researcher conducted this study to investigate to what extent the teachers' self-reported practices match their actual practices. The participants of this study are teachers

working in the SCE at AUC. After using a survey, feedback samples, and follow-up interviews, the results showed that there are various differences between what they reported and what they actually practiced. This implied that to make training programs or professional development sessions are recommended for teachers to be aware of their own error correction practices as well as the most effective feedback strategies.

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APPENDIX A

Survey on Grammatical Error correction in L2 Students' Writing

This survey aims at finding out how you address grammar errors in students' writing and your strategies for providing feedback. It should only take about 10 to 15 minutes to finish it. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary and is highly appreciated. The study is being conducted by *Lidya Magdy Ibrahim*, a graduate student at The American University in Cairo. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a teacher of English as a foreign language at The School of Continuing Education at The American University in Cairo. All your answers will be treated confidentially. A **raffle** will be made for those who will kindly participate in the study where three participants will win gifts. The gift is an interesting book that would help you with your teaching.

Name: _____

Part 1: Please mark the answer(s) that is/are more applicable to you.

1. What is your highest completed level of education?
   - ☐ Bachelor's Degree
   - ☐ Master's Degree
   - ☐ Doctoral Degree
   - ☐ Other _____

2. Academic background (Select all that apply).
   - ☐ TESOL
   - ☐ Education
   - ☐ Applied Linguistics
   - ☐ Composition/Rhetoric
   - ☐ Translation
   - ☐ Other _____

3. Have you ever received any formal training in responding to students' error correction in writing? (Select all that apply).
   - ☐ Yes, as part of a course (graduate, undergraduate)
   - ☐ Yes, as part of pre-service or in-service training for a current or former job
   - ☐ Yes, at a professional conference
   - ☐ No, I have never received any formal training on responding to student writing

4. On average, how often do you teach writing?
   - ☐ Every semester
   - ☐ Twice a year
   - ☐ Once a year
   - ☐ Other _____

5. Total years of ESL language teaching (round to nearest year).
   - 1-2 years
   - 3-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11-20 years
   - +20 years

6. Total years of teaching ESL writing (round to nearest year).
   - 1-2 years
   - 3-5 years
   - 6-10 years
   - 11-20 years
   - +20 years

7. Which levels do you teach? (Select all that apply)
   - Elementary (ENG 111, 211, 212 or 213)
   - Pre-intermediate (ENG 311, 312, 313 or 314)
   - Intermediate (ENG 411, 412,413 or 414)
   - High-Intermediate (ENG 511, 512, 513 or 514)

8. What courses are you teaching this semester?

   _____

9. Do you provide your writing students with at least some error correction?
   - Yes
   - No

If your answer to question 9 is "YES", please continue answering the survey.

10. I use comprehensive correction when I provide feedback on students' writing (addressing all grammar errors that students make).
    - Never
    - Rarely
    - Sometimes
    - Often
    - Always

11. Mention a situation in which you used comprehensive correction.

    _____

    _____

    _____

12. I use selective correction when I provide feedback on students' writing (addressing only a few significant grammar errors).
    - Never
    - Rarely
    - Sometimes
    - Often
    - Always

13. If you use selective error correction, on what basis do you select the errors? (Select all that apply).
    - Grammar lessons taught in class
    - Type of error
    - Students' proficiency level
    - Students' needs
    - Policy used in the department
    - Time of the semester
    - I don't use selective feedback, I only use comprehensive correction
    - Other _____

14. What kind of error correction do you provide? (Select all that apply).
    - I use direct correction (you provide the correction, ex: has went – writing the correction: has gone)
    - I use indirect coded correction (you underline/circle the error, provide its code and expect the student to make the correction, ex: has went – writing the code (T), which means verb tense)
    - I use indirect uncoded correction (you underline/circle the error only, ask the student to make the correction, ex: has went – underlining "went")
    - I write a comment in the margin of the page and ask the student to indicate and correct the errors
    - I write a summary comment(s) about language (grammar) issues in the end note and ask the student to indicate and correct the errors
    - Other _____

Part 2: This part asks about your degree of agreement with various statements about grammar error correction. Please indicate your opinion after each statement by marking a choice that best indicates the extent to which you agree or disagree with the statement.

	Items	**Strongly Agree 5**	**Agree 4**	**Disagree 2**	**Strongly Disagree 1**
15.	As an ESL teacher, I always provide feedback on grammatical errors in students' writing.				
16.	I do not provide feedback on grammatical errors because of workload.				
17.	Providing students with feedback on grammatical errors is harmful.				

18.	Grammar error correction is effective in improving the students' language use.				
19.	Responding to student writing is exhausting and time-consuming.				
20.	My students effectively benefit from the error correction I provide.				
21.	The practice of error correction is effective in improving the overall accuracy of students' writing.				
22.	I explain my approach to providing grammar error correction in advance.				
23.	I check to see whether the students understood the guidelines.				
24.	When students revise according to my correction, their main interest is in getting a better grade, not improving their writing.				
25.	My error correction practices have changed over time.				
26.	Error correction is most useful at more advanced proficiency levels.				
27.	The type of error correction I practice depends on whether the grammar lesson was taught in class or not.				
28.	The type of error correction I practice depends on the time of the semester.				
29.	The type of error correction I practice depends on the submitted draft.				
30.	The type of error correction I practice depends on the student's preferences.				
31.	The type of error correction I practice depends on my own expectations from the student (based on their level).				

Part 3: Open ended questions.

32. Describe why you practice the feedback strategy/strategies you mentioned in item 14 when correcting grammar errors.

33. Please explain how your practices in items 27 to 31 differ from one context to another.

_____

_____

_____

As a follow-up to this survey, I would like to conduct interviews with interested teachers to explore these topics in more depth. This interview would last 15 minutes and be arranged at a time and place convenient to you. If you would like to volunteer to be an interview participant, please provide your contact information below to express your interest. Your comments & opinions will be kept anonymous in all analyses and reports on this research. Another **raffle** will be made to the interviewees, and the gift will be a very interesting book that would help you with your teaching. Thanks a lot.

Email Address: _____
Telephone Number(s): _____

Please include your email if you are interested in receiving a summary of this survey's findings.

_____

Thank you for completing this survey, your help I highly appreciated.

APPENDIX B

Transcripts of Interviews

Teacher 1 (T1)

Me: Sometimes you provided direct feedback and sometimes indirect coded feedback, although in the survey you reported that you only use indirect un-coded feedback. Why is this difference?

T1: This is what I do with my students at the level that I teach, I don't give them direct feedback, I give them coded feedback, provided that of course I orient my students into the codes and what they actually mean, and then I follow up when conferencing with them, I do actually stress the fact that SP stands for spelling, what is the spelling mistake here? 95% of my feedback is coded.

Me: Yeah, I saw that in the samples, the majority of the feedback was coded, but I mean that when you filled out the survey, you reported that you use indirect un-coded correction; however, I found that in the samples that indirect coded was the highest technique used.

T1: Indirect un-coded, no basically, I use the correction symbols mostly, but what do you actually mean by indirect un-coded?

Me: Indirect un-coded means that you underline the error without providing the correction or even codes to make the students figure out what is the problem with this word and correct it.

T1: Ah, no, I normally use indirect coded, I never use indirect un-coded, it must have been a mistake, I always use codes.

Me: So, you just misunderstood the term "indirect un-coded", right?

T1: Probably.

Me: Ok, but in some cases I found you giving the correction directly, maybe two times only, was there a specific reason for that?

T1: The reason was when I actually imagine using the codes will be quite confusing at this point, I directly correct the error. I believe sometimes the codes are not 100% perfect because sometimes they might be quite confusing, even for me explaining what they are actually.

Teacher 2 (T2)

Me: You have mentioned in the survey that you use both comprehensive and selective correction; however, in all the samples you gave me, you used comprehensive correction only. Why is this difference?

T2: Yes, it's according to their levels, I think I gave you 314, which is upper intermediate, so I supposed that they are now aware of many grammar aspects, spelling…., so I correct them comprehensively because I suppose that they know already the grammar rules, sentence structures, punctuation, so that's why I correct every single mistake.

Me: But you said that sometimes you use selective correction, when do you use it?

T2: Yes, sometimes with beginner levels, I only select the errors related to the lesson I taught them.

Me: You said that you always use indirect coded; however, in the writing simples you corrected them directly, why?

T2: Yes, according to the number of mistakes. I read the writing essay, and I find a lot of mistakes: spelling, grammar, so I can underline the mistakes and give them to students to

search, and then they give them back with the correct answers; or if I find like two or three mistakes (a few mistakes), I could correct them directly.

Me: But you said in the survey that you only provide them with indirect coded.

T2: May be according to the level. Ah, yeah, mmm. I usually depend on the level when I'm correcting writing, because sometimes when I provide codes and tell them to go and search the internet, they don't know how to do it because they are beginners, but with upper-intermediate and advanced students, they can search the internet and go to the libraries. It depends on the level.

Me: So with upper levels, you use codes, but with lower levels, you don't?

T2: Generally, when there are a few mistakes I correct them directly without codes. Actually, it's according to the time also. So sometimes, I give them writing assignments to do it inside class, because when I give it to them as at home assignment they neglect it and ignore it. So depending on the time, I either give them codes or correct them directly in class. If I have time, I give them codes, in the following class, we correct them together, and this is mainly with higher levels. Otherwise, I make a sheet with all their errors, punctuation … and then we solve activities and exercises, so it's a kind of practice; and in this case, they are provided with direct correction.

Teacher 3 (T3)

Me: You reported in the survey that you don't provide written feedback, but in the samples you gave me, you did? Why is this difference?

T3: No I do, like I did with the papers. In general English, it's holistic feedback, not like the academic- sentence by sentence, grammar… The detailed feedback, I don't do. I may correct the tense, for example, but not each sentence structure. What I really care about

in the paragraph, is that they have a good introduction, a good conclusion and the flow of the paragraph.

Me: I found that in the samples, you provided direct feedback; I mean you correct the grammatical errors.

T3: Yes, but most of the time I focus on the paragraph itself introduction, conclusion …, but for the grammar, most of them do it right, the mistakes they usually make is that they think in Arabic. But I don't focus on every error because in our 6 weeks semester we don't have time.

Me: So why did you mention in the survey that you don't correct grammar errors in writing?

T3: No, I do correct. When I wrote this in the survey, I mean I don't correct everything like the academic writing.

Me: I just wanted to know the reason of why you reported in the survey that you don't provide feedback, however in the samples you did.

T3: I meant that I don't provide detailed feedback, and I am more concerned about the content, the flow of ideas, the organization, that's what I want.

Teacher 4 (T4)

Me: You have mentioned in the survey that you use both comprehensive and selective correction; however, in all the samples you gave me, you used selective correction only. Why is this difference?

T4: Comprehensive not in the writing, but maybe while I'm doing the oral in class. And it also depends on the students I'm teaching and what I need from them. Depending on the

lessons of the course, I select errors of these lessons only. This is what I need them to learn, I don't want to confuse them.

Me: So when do you use comprehensive correction in grammar?

T4: Comprehensive correction is like … mmm, what do you mean by comprehensive?

Me: Comprehensive correction means that you correct every single error you find in the writing.

T4: But, in the samples I gave you, I corrected all errors (grammar, punctuation…)

Me: No, there were other errors that you ignored.

T4: Generally, I correct every single mistake in the paper because I need them to understand. Why this is wrong and why this is right, but sometimes when they write… mmm, this was a specific writing; I wanted it for a specific purpose, that's why maybe I was selective. I wanted them to use the present and to write facts about the city, but in general, I choose the common mistakes in class, and I give them feedback about everything. Still they are in elementary level; they won't understand everything I say. That's why I was selective, but if the students were in higher levels than this, I would be very comprehensive.

Me: I don't have any problem with the selective correction; the thing is that in the survey you said that you use both, so this means that because they are lower levels? But with higher levels you use comprehensive correction? Right?

T4: Yes, actually with higher levels, I have two colors of correction: the red means that this is a core error related to the syllabus, but pink or orange, means that it's something not related, but they should understand that this is wrong, for example with punctuation errors, I give them correction, but with red, I give them codes (symbols) to know that this is wrong.

Me: You used indirect coded & direct correction; however, in the survey you said that you use indirect coded & un-coded, why?

T4: Un-coded with higher levels, I write a question mark or an arrow or underline it.

Me: I found that in all the samples you gave me, you used direct correction; however, you didn't report this in the survey, why?

T4: Maybe I didn't get it or I just passed it; or maybe I was talking about high levels. Take care, in the survey, you didn't mention which levels you are talking about. That's why maybe I neglected this.

Me: No, in the survey, I was asking about your strategies in general.

Teacher 5 (T5)

Me: In the survey, you reported that you use direct and comprehensive correction; however, I found in the writing samples that you used both: direct correction & coded indirect correction.

T5: Yes, I do that.

Me: But you didn't report that in the survey, is there a specific reason?

T5: Maybe I just forgot to do that. Sometimes I give them some codes on the board concerning grammatical mistakes, punctuation, and vocabulary.

Me: So why do you think you didn't report this in the survey?

T5: To be honest, I use such codes with lower levels, maybe because the samples were for level seven where they know the mistake just once I circle it, but you know when you work with lower levels, so they come and ask you, why is this a grammar mistake? But with higher levels, the moment they see the red circle, they understand.

Me: What about direct correction?

T5: I use it all the time; I get crazy when I find tenses errors for example.

Me: Why do you think there is difference, between your survey and what you actually did?

T5: Maybe I was not fully aware that you need all the techniques or maybe I was doing that quickly.

Teacher 6 (T6)

Me: Do you use direct or indirect coded correction?

T6: I do both, but it depends on the students, with direct, I must correct it; with indirect, sometimes I write a code, and sometimes just highlight it to make them figure out the problem, and then we can sit and discuss on how they could correct it.

Me: But the writing samples showed that you used direct correction only, why?

T6: In those samples, my objective was … mmm. I mean I didn't do it indirectly for that one, but I didn't send you all the papers, the ones that I gave you, I used direct, I corrected it, so it depends on my class, on the level, and what we are focusing on at that time. I don't use all these strategies at the same time or in the same paper.

Teacher 7 (T7)

Me: You have mentioned in the survey that you use both comprehensive and selective correction; however, in all the samples you gave me, you used selective correction only. Why is this difference?

T7: Comprehensive feedback means providing feedback on the whole paper?

Me: No, it means providing corrective feedback on every grammatical error you find in the students' writing.

T7: I was selective because I can't give feedback on everything because of their proficiency levels and for instance, if we are concentrating on certain issues in grammar in this semester then I 'll only tackle those errors.

Me: But do you sometimes use comprehensive feedback (other than the samples you gave me)?

T7: No

Me: So why did you mention in the survey that you sometimes do?

T7: I'm not sure why I did this maybe because I wasn't sure of the term.

Me: Again, in the survey you said that you use direct and indirect coded correction, but you actually used direct and indirect un-coded correction, why?

T7: Actually, they are not used to the codes at all this semester I tried to tell them about codes, but usually I don't do this, but I recommend I could do that in the future. I think the students prefer to have their things corrected. I think that's what they want, because they would come to you later telling you, "I don't, understand why this is wrong". So, to avoid this I would just correct it.

Me: So why do you think you wrote in the survey that you use codes, but actually, you didn't?

T7: Sorry, I can't remember why I did this maybe because I think it should be done sometimes like an agreement with the students, because I think it's more professional to do it this way. I'm not doing it yet, but I should start doing so. And on the first day of this semester, I told them that I might start doing this.

Me: I found in the samples that sometimes you provided indirect un-coded feedback; however, you didn't write this in the survey, what do you think the reason is?

T7: Again, I did not understand the term "indirect un-coded". Maybe I would recommend that you provide a definition for each.

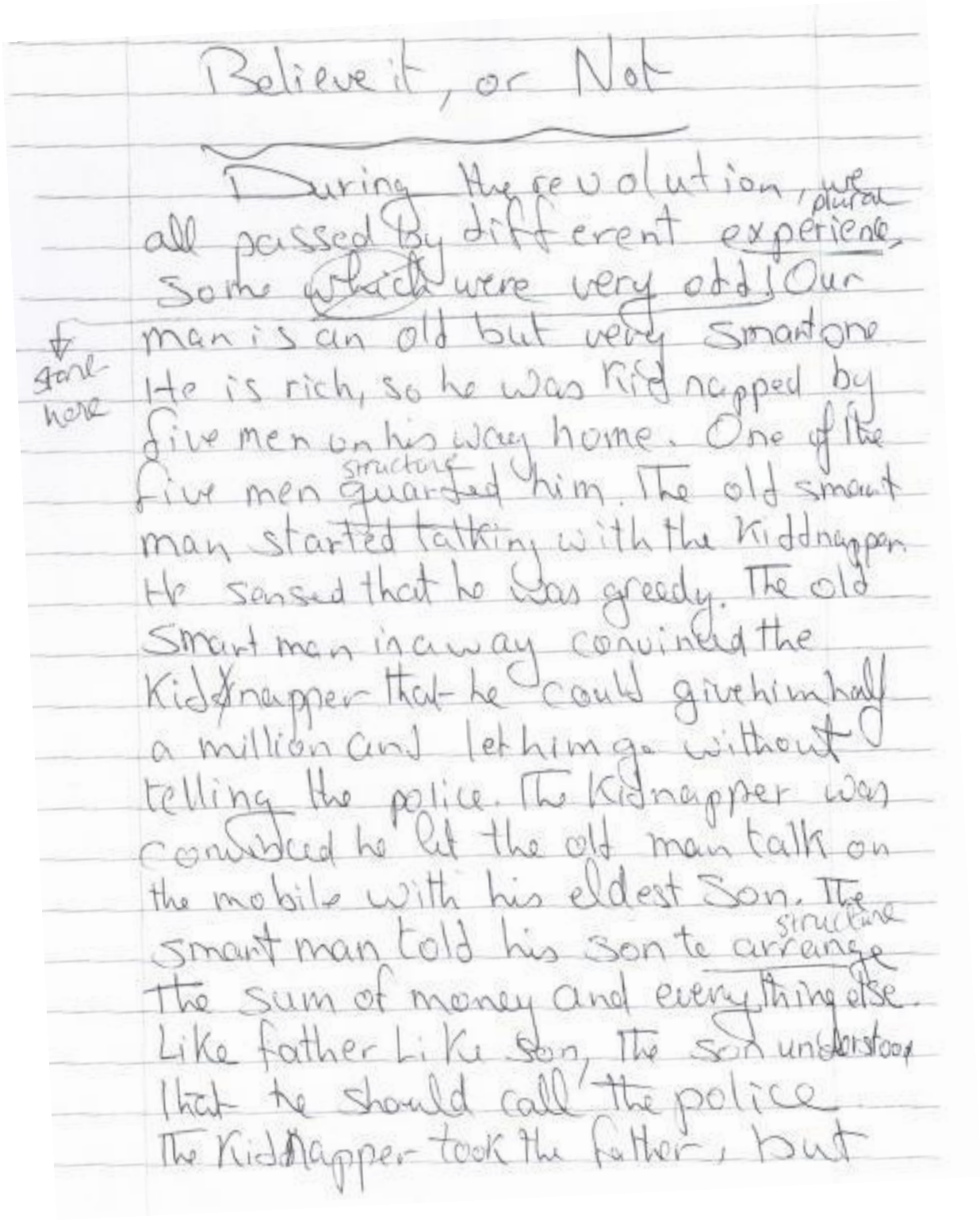
Me: Yes, I did. I provided a definition and an example for each strategy.

T7: You did? Probably I filled the survey so quickly or I didn't have time, I'm not sure.

APPENDIX C

Feedback Samples

Teacher 1 (T1)



Believe it, or Not

During the revolution, we all passed by different experiene, Some which were very odd! Our plural

start here

man is an old but very smart one He is rich, so he was kidnapped by five men on his way home. One of the five men guarded him. The old smart man started talking with the kiddnapper He sensed that he was greedy. The old Smart man in a way convinced the Kidnapper that he could give him half a million and let him go without telling the police. The Kidnapper was convinced he let the old man talk on the mobile with his eldest Son. The Smart man told his Son te arrange the sum of money and every thing else. Like father Like Son, The Son understood that he should call the police The Kiddnapper took the father, but

structure

structure

unfortunately, the police caught him and the other four.

v. good
I was
but start with
the mysterious part (as shown)
of the story to
keep reader in suspense

Teacher 2 (T2)

London N22 9DT

9/6/07

Hello Hello, Ucral

How are you? I'm in my new flat now, and I'm really enjoying it.

I'm going to have a housewarming party on Friday 7th July, starting about 8 p.m. Can you come? A lot of our friends will be here (I hope that!) and I'm going to cook something very special. (It's a secret!)

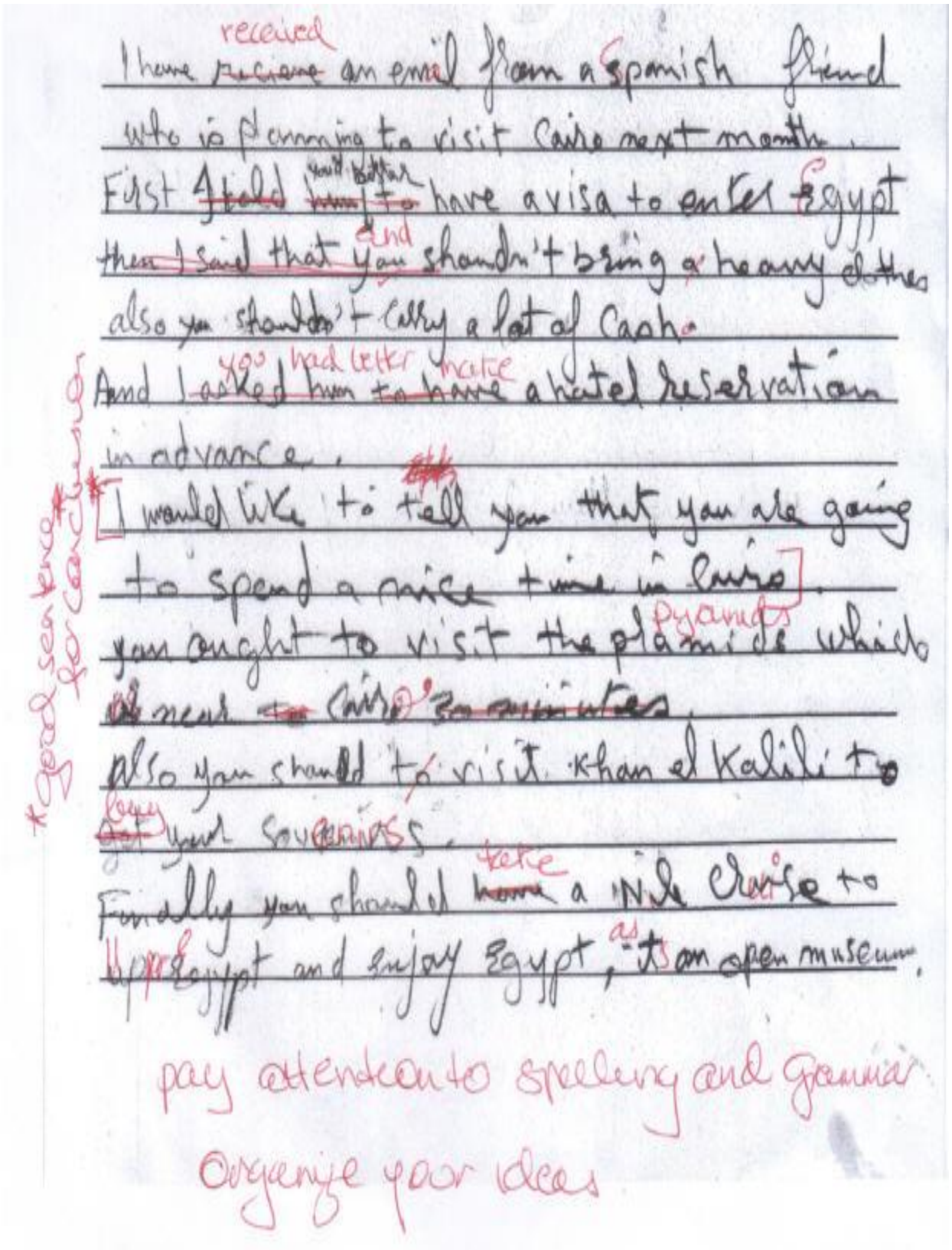
my new address is above. It's really easy to get here. Take the bus stop to Wood Green station. You can walk from there. When you come out of the railway station, turn right then you are on my road. Go straight on for about 400 metres. The building is on the left. Hope to see you on Friday 7th.

Best wishes.

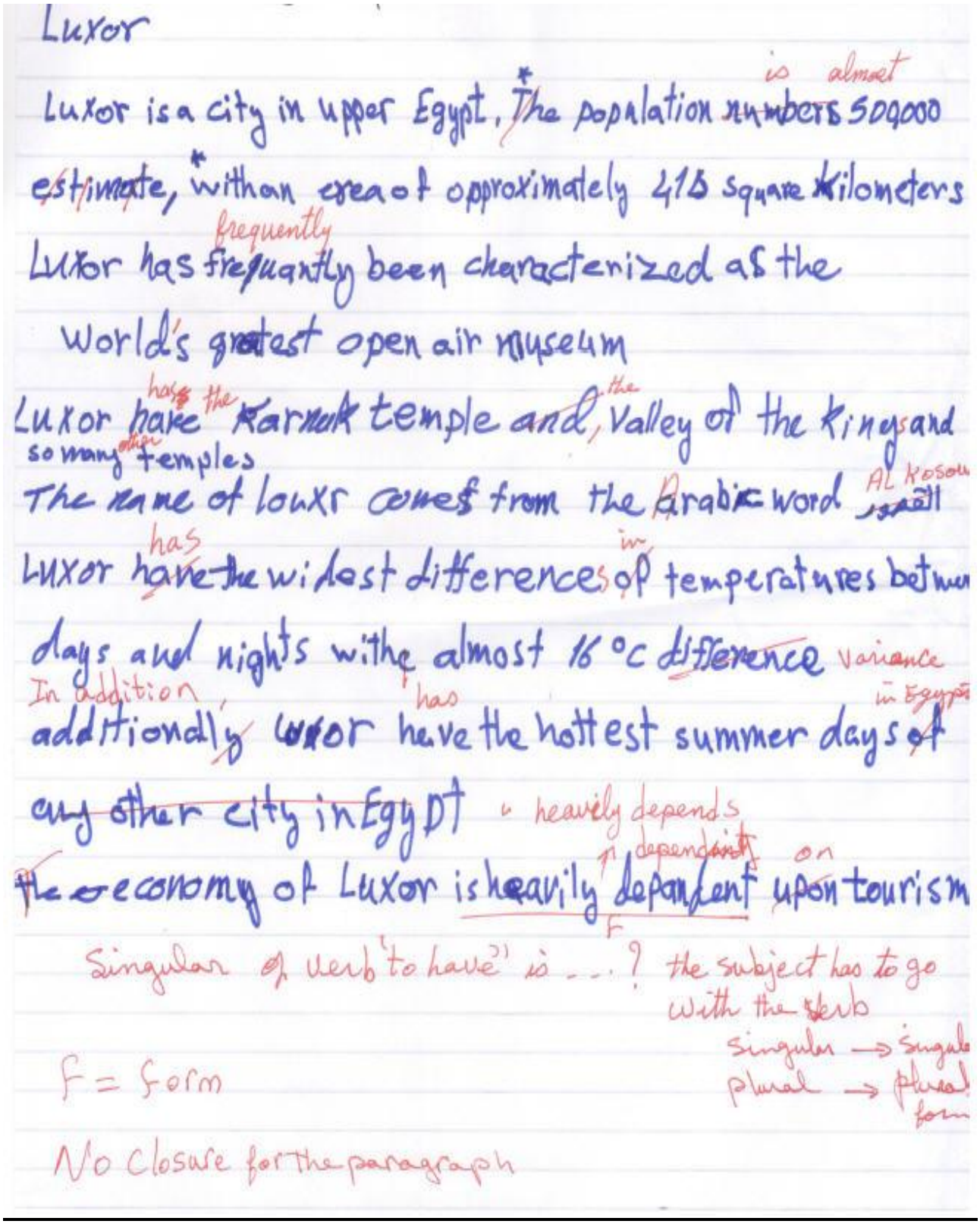
Yasmin

My new phone number is 07[illegible].

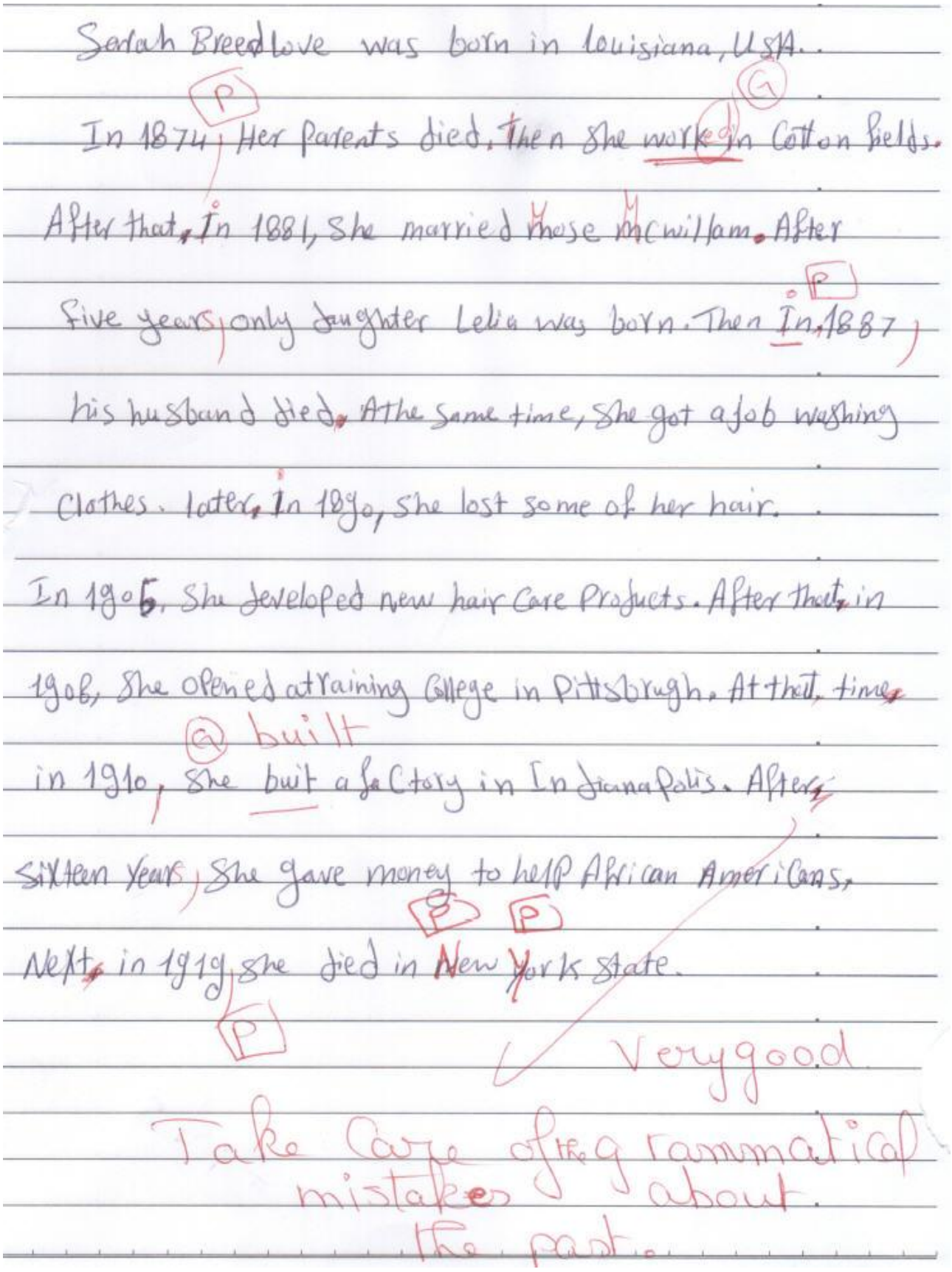
Teacher 3 (T3)


I have received an email from a Spanish friend who is planning to visit Cairo next month.
First I told him that you should have a visa to enter Egypt and I said that you shouldn't bring a heavy clothes also you shouldn't carry a lot of cash.
And I asked him to have a hotel reservation in advance.
I would like to tell you that you are going to spend a nice time in Cairo.
you ought to visit the pyramids which near Cairo
also you should to visit Khan el Kalili to buy your souvenirs.
Finally you should have a Nile cruise to Egypt and enjoy Egypt, as an open museum.
* Good sentence for concluding
pay attention to spelling and grammar
Organize your ideas

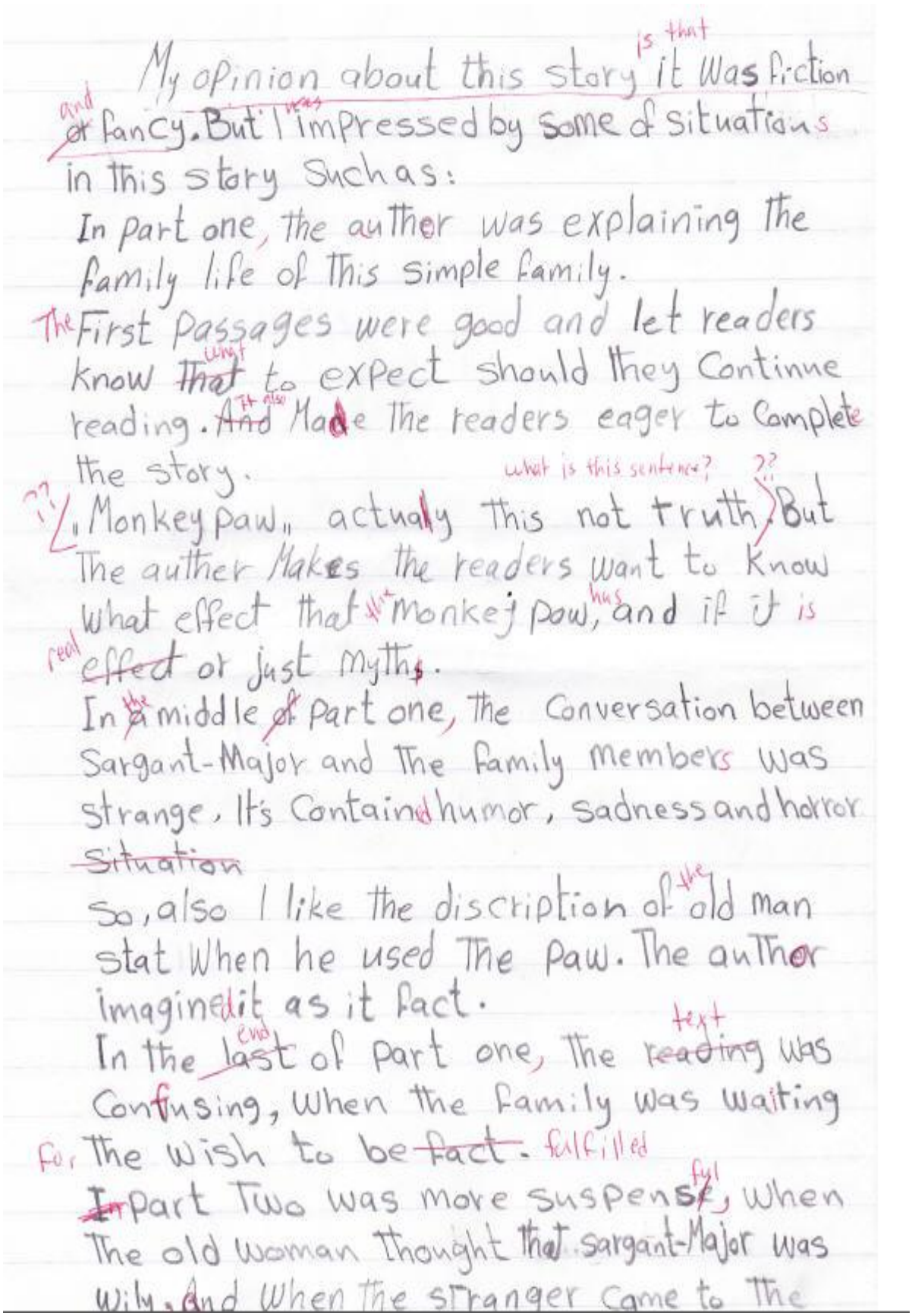
Teacher 4 (T4)


Luxor
Luxor is a city in upper Egypt. The population is almost 500000 estimate, with an area of approximately 415 square kilometers
Luxor has frequently been characterized as the world's greatest open air museum
Luxor has the Karnak temple and the Valley of the Kings and so many other temples
The name of louxr comes from the Arabic word Al Kosou
Luxor has the widest differences in temperatures between days and nights with almost 16 °c difference
In addition, Luxor has the hottest summer days in Egypt
the economy of Luxor is heavily dependent on tourism
Singular of verb 'to have' is ...? the subject has to go with the verb
singular → singular form
plural → plural form
F = form
No closure for the paragraph

Teacher 5 (T5)


Sarah Breedlove was born in louisiana, USA.
In 1874, Her parents died. then she worked in Cotton fields.
After that, In 1881, She married Mose McWilliam. After
five years, only daughter Lelia was born. Then In 1887,
his husband died. At the same time, She got a job washing
clothes. later, In 1890, she lost some of her hair.
In 1905, She developed new hair Care Projects. After that, in
1908, She opened a training College in Pittsburgh. At that time,
in 1910, she built a factory in Indianapolis. After
sixteen years, She gave money to help African Americans.
Next, in 1919, she died in New York State.
Very good
Take care of the grammatical mistakes about the past.

Teacher 6 (T6)



My opinion about this story is that it was fiction and fancy. But I was impressed by some of situations in this story such as:

In part one, the author was explaining the family life of this simple family.

The First passages were good and let readers know what to expect should they continue reading. It also Made the readers eager to complete the story.

"Monkey paw" actualy This not truth. But what is this sentence? The author Makes the readers want to know what effect that Monkey paw has, and if it is real effect or just myths.

In the middle of part one, the Conversation between Sargant-Major and the family members was strange, It's Contained humor, sadness and horror ~~Situation~~

So, also I like the discription of the old man stat When he used The paw. The author imagine it as it fact.

In the end of part one, the text was Confusing, When the family was waiting for the wish to be fulfilled.

In part Two was more suspense ful, when The old woman thought that sargant-Major was wily. And When the stranger came to the

the sad news about (Herpert), their son and linked it by the two handred Pound (the wish).

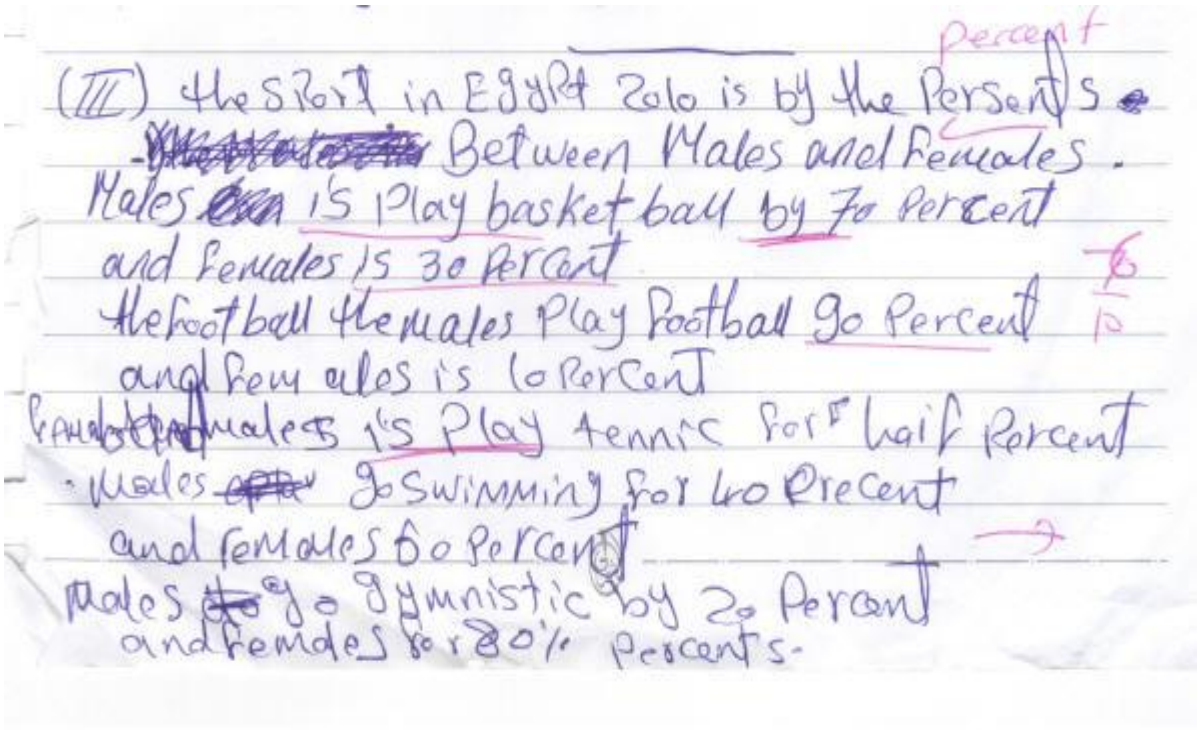
The frist of part three was influential when The old man and woman came back from ~~landfills~~ cemetery after the burial of their son.

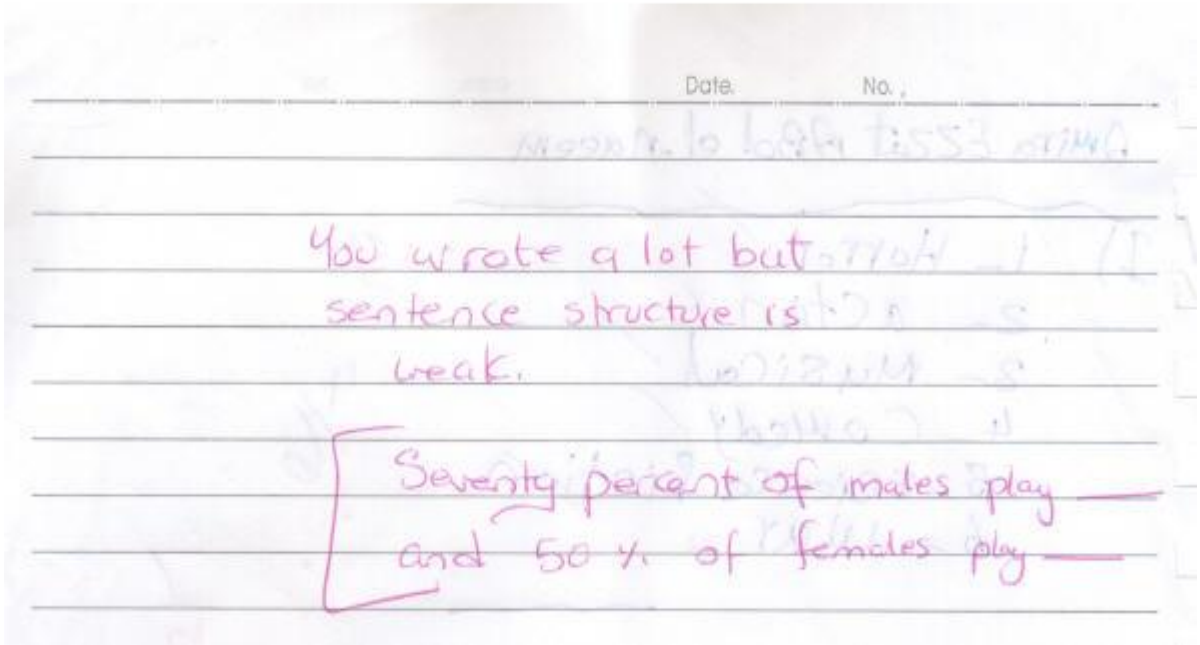
After that the author ~~Makes us Confusing again~~ confuses us again. When The old woman remembered and hang on the wish by the Monky paw, She said to her huspand to go and wish to bring him back.

I was more hurt ~~to~~ for Mrs White when She heard the Knock on the door and when She went and did not find any Thing.

The last wish was ~~Confused from~~ confusing in my opinion. He wished that his son would vanish if he was ~~in~~ outside door. ~~that~~ probably because he became a Zombi.

Teacher 7 (T7)


(III) the Sport in Egypt Zolo is by the Persents
Between Males and Females.
Males is Play basket ball by 70 Percent
and Females is 30 Percent
the foot ball the males Play Footbal 90 Percent
and Females is 10 Percent
Females is Play tennis for half Percent
Males go swimming for 40 Precent
and females 60 Percent
Males go gymnistic by 20 Percant
and femdes for 80% Percents.


Date No.

You wrote a lot but
sentence structure is
weak.

Seventy percent of males play
and 50 % of females play