

# THE EFFECT OF GRAMMAR CORRECTION ON STUDENTS' WRITING

ILHAM QOSAYERE\*

# THE EFFECT OF GRAMMAR CORRECTION ON STUDENTS' WRITING

**ABSTRACT\_** *The main objective in this research was to examine the extent to which grammar correction is (in) effective on students writing, this was based on assumption that this accounts for only the surface appearance of grammar and not for the way language develops. In other words, it endeavored to investigate whether the grammar correction has a positive or negative effect on the development of writing skills.*

*To carry out this study, the research design adopted was qualitative. The focus group was administered to first cycle students, and an interview was administered to the teachers.*

*The results suggest that that both students and teachers are aware of the importance of grammar correction on students writing development. There was a positive attitude towards teacher's feedback and its strategies. In other words, grammar correction is effective on students writing skills.*

**KEYWORDS:** *grammar correction, EFL (English as a Foreign Language), Writing.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

In the last four decades, there has been an increasing interest in second language acquisition. Specialists as well as practitioners have become increasingly sensitive to the importance of taking into account learner's needs and processes in acquiring a language. One major focus has been concerned with feedback in writing, it has been noted that the grammar correction in writing classes is ineffective and unhelpful in facilitating improvement in student writing. As the little shows, this will be the effect of grammar correction in writing classes.

## II. Statement of the problem

It is commonly held that the scientific value of any research starts with identifying the problematic framework that compels researchers to adopt a methodological approach in their debatable topic. In this regard, the researcher has opted for one most challenging issue, that is the effect of grammar correction in EFL second language writing classes.

On this basis, grammar correction in L2 writing classes has no place in writing skill, and it should be abandoned. The notion of grammar correction is a key term, it means correction of grammatical errors in writing classes for the purpose of improving a student's ability to write accurately [1].

This issue has been the center of debate from researchers and practitioners alike. In this regard, the present research project attempts to investigate whether grammar correction in L2 writing has a positive or negative effect on the development of learners' writing skills. This research project addresses one question:

What effect does grammar correction have on Moroccan EFL student writing?

Rationale

As previously stated, this paper will attempt to shed light on the issue of grammar correction in L2 writing. The rationale behind investigating this topic stems first from the importance given to this skill in the language-curriculum; and second, the difficulties learners encounter while writing in English. These difficulties concern different aspects of the language including grammar vocabulary a language structure. The present investigation will deal with grammatical mistakes in writing and the effect of correcting these mistakes on improving learners' writing skills.

## III. HYPOTHESIS

Grammar correction has more negative than positive effect on Moroccan EFL student writing.

Scope and limitations of the study

There is no denying that the endeavor to know and to describe that concerns the individual in relation to his learning. The present research seeks to indicate certain problems that students encounter in learning English in teacher's feedback, especially in grammar correction in writing classes. However, it does not pretend to be exhaustive in its content or flawless in its design. What is important is to follow a suitable methodology which is a descriptive and analytic method. It permits to describe and analyze the problematic by using a suitable tools which are focus group and interview. They permit to collect a data of research.

## IV. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This chapter is inspired by research conducted on grammar correction in second language writing classes. In the initial position, it sets a general definition of key terms namely: grammar, grammar correction, and writing. It also presents the general debates concerning the major trends about the grammar corrections in L2 writing classes.

1- Definition of key terms :

1.1 Grammar:

The etymology of the word grammar «is derived from greek (grammatikétechné) which means 'art of letters, from (gramma), letter', itself from (graphein), "to draw, to write". (The free dictionary)

Linguistically speaking, grammar is "the set of structural rules that govern the composition of sentences, phrases, and words in any given nature language". (The free dictionary)

In broad sense, grammar is the study of rules that govern linguistics field, namely: morphology, syntax, phonology, semantic, lexicon, and phonology.

1.2: grammar correction:

Grammar is a specific course in the sense that it is

particularly oriented to satisfy the needs of specific learners. What it is meant by grammar correction is, although evaluating a course of a given curriculum yield to an educational necessity, the correction of grammatical errors to achieve better results. But for present paper, grammar correction in L2 writing classes has little significance in student writing ability. It made no difference how many mistakes were corrected, what type of these mistakes and so on. [1].

### 1.3: EFL (English as a Foreign Language):

"English learned by people from a community where English is not normally used. Thus, an Italian, a Russian, an Argentinean, or a German learning English would be learning it as a foreign language". [2] Foreign Language is "a language which is not the NATIVE LANGUAGE of large numbers of people in a particular country or region, is not used as a medium of instruction in schools, and is not widely used as a medium of communication in government, media, etc. Foreign Languages are typically taught as school subjects for the purpose of communicating with foreigners or for reading printed materials in the language". (Longman Dictionary

## 2: Writing and related concepts

### 2.1: Writing

What is known about writing as a general definition is "the representation of language in a textual medium through the use of a set of signs or symbols" (known as writing system). More importantly, writing is a mental activity in which there is the use of language and its manifestation within a concrete and an organised channel which is writing.

According to Safer, "writing is visual speech symbolism" (1921,1920).

Conversely, Bloom field claims that writing is not language, but merely a way of recording language by visible marks (1933 ;21)

### 2.2: Writing as category:

Writing more particularly, refers to two things: writing as a noun, the thing that is written, and writing as a verb, which designates the activity of writing. It refers to the inscription of characters on a medium, thereby forming larger units of language, known as texts. It refers to the generation of meaning and the information thereby generated. A person who composes a message or story in the form of text is generally known as a writer or an author.

### 2.3: Academic Writing

Studying writing in a school or university or any other scientific institution is called academic writing. According to the research conducted by Thais and others [3], academic writing refers to "any writing that fulfils a purpose of education in a college or university in the United States". It implies student writing in response to an academic assignment, or professional writing that trained "academic" - teachers and researchers -do for publications

read and conferences attended by other academics.

A broad definition of academic writing is structured writing processes because it has its procedures and strategies. It is any writing done to fulfil a requirement of a college or university. It is used for publications that are read by teachers and researcher or presented at conferences. It could include any writing assignment given in an academic setting.

Academic writing's objectives is information within a review. The presentation of new aspect or (topic), and also set the author's new views of the topic.

### 3: Previous researches

Grammar correction is a debatable issue; there are some researches who defences on the effectiveness of grammar correction in students writing classes, and there are others who claim the opposite. The concern of this part is to introduce the most important studies carried out on this topic.

A- A Critical study of English grammar instruction at the Moroccan tertiary level education:

the main concern of Barhaoua's research (2002) is to evaluate the first year grammar course Moroccan EFL students receive at university level in order to examine its effectiveness. The tool adopted is the questionnaire, it was administered to university first cycle students. The results suggest that though first cycle students are aware of the importance of grammar in language learning.

B- Teaching writing for Moroccan EFL students: General features and students' attitudes and perceptions about the writing course.

Ben Ibrahim (2002) tried to investigate the general features which seem to characterize the teaching of writing in the Moroccan university; and to examine the attitudes and perceptions of Moroccan EFL students concerning the writing course. The instrument of her research is a questionnaire and essay writing. The results shed light on same deficiencies in the use of the course activities as well as in the role of teachers and students in selecting and using the course input.

E- Study of John Truscott [1].

He claims that grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned, because of some researchers show that grammar correction is ineffective; grammar correction has significant harmful effects.

F- Study of AndréiaSchurtRanber and Gloria Gil

This study presents the analysis of feedback on grammatical mistakes in two

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classrooms and how learners view this

kind of correction. The data are drawn from transcripts of audio-recordings

of ten classes of two pre-intermediate groups, totaling 7.5 hours of observation in each group. The two groups were taught by the same teacher, and a questionnaire was given to the learners in order to investigate their feelings about

the teacher's feedback procedure. The analysis was carried out through a sociocultural perspective and reveals that (1) explicit correction is the most frequent type of feedback on grammar mistakes, and (2) learners appreciate and consider the teacher's correction highly important for the development of their language skills.

#### V. THE RESEARCH DESIGN

The research paradigm of this project can be put under the heading of an exploratory qualitative research study ; That is, a research that seeks to understand a problematic from the perspectives of the local population it involves. Qualitative research is especially effective in obtaining culturally specific information about the values, opinions, behaviors, social contexts of particular populations. The context of this study focuses on the writing course in the Moroccan university. To handle this topic, I opted for qualitative research design, through the use of an interview and focus group as methodological tools. The respondents were therefore requested to answer the questions, be- it, in the form of interview or focus group. The data yield by these two instruments were analyzed and interpreted separately and according to the purposes of the present paper.

#### VI. THE RESEARCH POPULATION

The data base for the research comes from teachers of writing/ composition classes, and also from students who have been exposed to English for a period of more than two semesters. These are students belonging to the English department at Mohamed V University, Rabat. The sample consists of four teachers and eight students. Although the population is small in size, it is still representative of the opinions and attitudes of the targeted group, in this case EFL university student. The variable of gender has been taken into consideration. I made sure that the sample would not be based on one sex group.

##### The Research Instruments

The choice of the research instruments represented the point of departure of this research project. The major concern is, using suitable instruments that would yield the expected results and that would go in line with the research objectives. Two research instruments have been, therefore, opted for:

##### 1: The Interview:

The interview is a qualitative tool that is used in human / social science. It seeks to describe and achieves the meaning of central themes in a given subject. "Interviews are particularly useful for getting the story behind a participant's experiences. The interviewer can pursue in – depth information around the topic". [4]

The interview will focus on the teachers'opinions and attitudes towards the problematic of this research which is: to what extent does grammar correction has an effect on EFL students writing.

##### 2: Focus group.

A Focus group is a form of qualitative research in which

group of people are asked about their opinion , belief , and attitudes towards a product ,service concept, advertisement ,idea ,or packaging . Questions are asked in an interactive group setting where participants are free to talk other group members''. (Wikipedia), the free encyclopedia.This tool. Will hold up– somehow – the credibility of the interview's findings and the research will be rich at the methodological level. This instrument will be applied on students that have taken the writing course at Mohamed V University, Rabat.

#### VII. THE RESULTS

This research paper was an attempt to describe and clarify to what extent grammar correction has an effect on students' writing courses. The literature basis of this research was the postulate that claims that grammar correction has no effect on students' writing courses; among scholars that adopt this postulate is John Truscott. He claims in his article "The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes" that grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned. His research evidence shows that grammar correction is ineffective. But the findings of this research show the opposite; both of the research tools used in this study (focus group and interview) demonstrated that teachers' feedback and grammar correction have a positive effect on students' writing improvement. So, the research' hypothesis is not confirmed, and implicitly, this research finding goes to the opposite claim of Truscott which is the claim that believe that teachers' feedback and grammar correction has a positive effect on student's writing development. Ferris [5] found students very serious about learning from feedback, and grammar correction. They regard teachers' written feedback as crucial to their writing improvement.

The results of data analysis revealed three major categories:

A- The students and teachers attitudes towards feedback in general and grammar correction in specific.

B- The students' views on teachers feedback strategies.

C- Types of feedback the teachers emphasized.

The teachers and students show the importance of feedback and grammar correction. They seemed to be aware that such correction was desirable.

#### REFERENCE

- [1] Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. National Tsing Hua University.
- [2] Tomlinson 1984:87 English as foreign language. Unpublished
- [3] Hyland k. E Hyland. (eds) (2006) Feedback in Second Language Writing: Contexts and Issues. New York: Cambridge University Press.

[4] McNamara 1999. English for specific purposes, volume 18, Issue 3.

[5] Ferris, D. (1999). The case for grammar correction in L2 writing classes: A response to Truscott. *A Journal of Second writing*.