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**The Effectiveness of Using Corrective Feedback in Writing**

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## RESUMEN

El presente estudio analiza la efectividad de la retroalimentación correctiva escrita dentro del contexto de *English as a Foreign Language (EFL)* y *English as a Second Language (ESL)*. Para cumplir con este propósito, la metodología de investigación aplicada consiste en una revisión de la literatura existente al respecto, abordando dos preguntas de investigación: a) ¿Qué tan efectiva es la retroalimentación correctiva para mejorar las habilidades de escritura de los estudiantes de EFL-ESL? y b) ¿La retroalimentación correctiva disminuye los errores gramaticales de los estudiantes?

En relación con la primera pregunta, los hallazgos muestran que la retroalimentación correctiva escrita es un método eficaz para mejorar las habilidades gramaticales. Dicha mejora radica en una mayor precisión de los estudiantes para corregir y rectificar las estructuras gramaticales. Por otra parte, en respuesta a la segunda pregunta, se pudo identificar un efecto significativo en la disminución de errores gramaticales, particularmente en la escritura de nuevos textos, en los que los métodos más relevantes para la retroalimentación correctiva son el directo con explicación metalingüística y el método de refundición.

**Palabras clave:** Retroalimentación correctiva. Escritura de inglés. Errores gramaticales.



## ABSTRACT

This study analyzes the effectiveness of corrective written feedback within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL). For this purpose, the research methodology applied consists of an exploratory bibliographic research, addressing two research questions: a) How effective is corrective feedback to improve the writing skill of EFL-ESL students? and b) Does corrective feedback decrease grammar errors of EFL/ESL students?

In relation to the first question, findings show that written corrective feedback is an effective method to improve grammar skills. Such improvement consists of the students' accuracy to correct and rectify grammar structures. On the other hand, in response to the second question, a significant effect in the reduction of grammar errors was identified, particularly in the writing of new texts, where the most relevant methods of corrective feedback are the direct method with metalinguistic explanation and the recast method.

**Keywords:** Corrective feedback. English writing. Grammatical errors.



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## **DEDICATION**

This project is dedicated to my dear children, Angela and Mathias, whose unconditional support and patience during my university studies has been essential for the achievement of my proposed goal.

I also dedicate this work to my dear husband, Angel, who has supported me during my college career: Thank you Angel for strengthening my dream with words and actions of encouragement. I will never forget all you have done for me and how much you have understood me.



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## INTRODUCTION

Cortez, Espinoza, and Soto (2015) consider that English is a language that predominates in almost all fields of knowledge, but there are also certain limitations that do not allow its proper learning. In relation to this, learning English is a challenge that involves the ability of writing pieces of literature using both appropriate vocabulary and, most importantly, proper grammar structures.

In this respect, corrective feedback is a process in which students receive information, advice, or criticism regarding their performance and use it to improve the quality of their work (Blanchard & Parsloe, 2017). In this regard, the following research questions arise:

- a) How effective is corrective feedback to improve the writing skill of EFL/ESL students?
- b) Does corrective feedback decrease grammar errors of EFL/ESL students?

In this context, this study shows significant theoretical concepts and positions on the use and effectiveness of corrective feedback as an approach when learning to write in a foreign language or practicing this skill in EFL/ESL environments. In addition, this study analyzes if the application of this technique helps students reduce their grammatical errors in both of the previously mentioned learning environments.

This research synthesis has analyzed the existing literature which shows the use of corrective feedback and how it can improve the students' writing skill as a fundamental element in the English language learning process. This crucial source of input information helps students learn from their mistakes and avoid making them again. This technique tells students what they are not doing well and where they need to improve (Ellis, 2006).



Accordingly, several studies show how corrective feedback strategies have different ways of application and the effects in the students when they get feedback. For instance, in a study conducted by Tamayo and Cajas (2017), they discovered that the application of corrective strategies contributes to students repairing more errors compared to not applying any feedback at all. Likewise, Sheen (2010) has identified that written corrective feedback aims at a single linguistic characteristic to improve student's accuracy.

The results found during the development of this research synthesis has led us to conclude that corrective feedback directly influences the improvement of students' writing skill, specifically the accuracy for correcting texts without affecting their quality. This evidence shows the effectiveness of corrective feedback, mainly when applying the direct method with metalinguistic explanation and recast techniques.

In this regard, it is relevant to understand the concepts of the methods and techniques used in corrective feedback. According to Hassan and Mohammed (2017), "Direct Feedback is a strategy that helps students correct their errors by providing the correct linguistic form" (p. 168).

On the other hand, in relation to metalinguistic feedback in EFL / ESL classrooms, Thi Hanh and Xuan Tho (2018) claim that "It is the method the teacher uses to offer comments, information, or questions, about the rules of grammar in the utterance, without an explicit provision of the correct form" (p. 41); on the other hand, "recast describes the teacher's reformulations of all or part of the student's erroneous response, which is repeated with change or with both change and emphasis" (p. 41).

This work has been organized in 6 chapters, which are discussed as follows.



## CHAPTER I

### DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH

#### 1.1 Background

There is a lot of research that refers to teachers' corrective comments on students' writings in the first language, as well as a variety of studies that analyze how this corrective process takes place in second and foreign language learning environments. These studies have been conducted from different perspectives, such as students' preferences, reactions to teacher's feedback, teachers' response practices, and the effects of how this feedback is given by teachers (Ashwell, 2000). From all these perspectives, it is imperative to note that this research synthesis mainly focuses on the positive effects of using corrective feedback in the process of teaching and learning English, more specifically in writing and grammar use.

According to Guo and Yang (2018), many studies of corrective feedback in the area of second language acquisition have been conducted in the past three decades. In the process of learning a second language, students always make errors, and many researchers have presented different points of view of what those errors mean in the learning process. Some have considered that they interfere with the development of second language learning and should be completely avoided (Bitchener, 2008). Others suggest that correcting mistakes enhances the learning process as students can learn from them (Ellis, 2008).

Furthermore, other approaches, such as Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis, the Krashen's Monitor Model, and the Behavioral Theory have focused on the treatment of errors and corrective feedback for second language learning and acquisition. Several studies have been developed to determine the effectiveness of corrective feedback in second/foreign



language classes. Researchers have realized that formal instruction, interaction, or corrective feedback should not alter the natural order of teaching but they should rather favor the students' progress.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

Learning a new language involves developing the four skills: writing, listening, speaking, and reading. Without a doubt, the ability to write correctly in a foreign/second language is a great challenge to achieve, since grammar plays a determining role. Students can progress in this skill with adequate feedback from their teachers. Therefore, feedback is essential in the process of learning a foreign language, since it allows learners to make corrections and achieve their goals systematically.

Students in Ecuador learn English as a foreign language. Currently, English learning is not limited to the classroom, as technology allows access to virtual classes from anywhere in the world. However, the limited resources of most Ecuadorian students do not allow them to access paid English courses where they can improve their skills. As a result, they must continue taking courses in institutions with crowded classrooms where the teacher is limited to the requirements of the traditionally structured program that includes both subjects and schedules. Hence, students have little exposure to corrective comments from teachers.

Consequently, in our context, neither students are accustomed to receiving corrective comments nor do teachers' pay the necessary attention and caution to give adequate comments to their students' writing errors. This fact can be seen in this research synthesis, as it shows the lack of empirical evidence in the Ecuadorian educational context. With this in mind, the importance of presenting the benefits and outcomes of using corrective feedback on writing errors during second language learning is immense, and also a turning point in the English teaching-learning process.



### **1.3 Justification**

The effectiveness of corrective feedback given by teachers to their students is recognized in many countries around the world. Unfortunately, in Ecuador, it is not a common practice, as teachers are not used to giving corrective feedback to their students. Corrective feedback in our country is not widely used, so it requires an interest in exploring the possible role CF can play in improving the writing skill of Ecuadorian students of English as a foreign language. Consequently, the aim of this document is to synthesize the results of the effectiveness of corrective feedback studies to provide Ecuadorian English teachers with a deeper understanding of the effectiveness of this strategy in the following aspects: (1) to improve the writing skill of EFL students and (2) to decrease the grammatical errors of EFL students.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The aim of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of corrective feedback in writing as a daily teachers' strategy for improving EFL/ESL students' writing skill. In order to show the effectiveness of this technique, the present research has posed the following research questions:

- a) How effective is corrective feedback to improve the writing skill of EFL/ESL students?
- b) Does corrective feedback decrease grammar errors of EFL/ESL students?



## CHAPTER II

### THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This section seeks to present the concepts and theoretical perspectives on the use and effectiveness of Corrective Feedback (CF) as a method used by teachers for teaching the English language. Based on this, approaches such as Contrastive Analysis, Error Analysis, and the Krashen's Monitor Model focus on the treatment of learning errors and its influence in the process of learning English.

As mentioned before, Contrastive Analysis (CA), Error Analysis (EA), and the Krashen's Monitor Model have tackled the issues regarding the role of errors and CF in EFL/ESL environments. Firstly, CA lays its theoretical foundations on behaviorism, which states that all behaviors are acquired through conditioning, from the interaction with the environment. Hence, learning is the formation of new behaviors and mistakes are impediments to the learning process, which happen because of the influence of L1 (Watson, 1913).

On the other hand, EA arises from the disenchantment of the capacity of contrastive analysis to predict the real errors of students. This theory states that most errors are internal to students; that is to say, from the developmental processes of human beings (Chen, Lin, & Jiang, 2016), contradicting the idea that errors are just the result of L1 transferring.

Finally, the Krashen's Monitor Model (1983) recognizes the importance of the correction process and admits that CF could help in the learning process; since this model was developed, several studies have debated on the effectiveness of this methodology. In this sense, Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) consider CF as an instrument that allows





students to learn from their mistakes and advance in their learning process, as well as it facilitates the process of acquiring the language-writing skill.

## 2.1 Defining Corrective Feedback

Lightbown and Spada (1999) define CF as an indicator to students of their incorrect use of language. The purpose is to correct students when they make mistakes in writing. For instance, when a student says:

“He *go* to school every day,” the corrective feedback can be explicit, like for example, ‘No, you should say *goes*, not *go*’ or implicit ‘Yes, he *goes* to school every day.’

Corrective feedback may or may not include metalinguistic information; for example, ‘Don’t forget to make the verb agree with the subject.’ Implicit correction includes, but is not limited to, confirmation checks, repetitions, recasts, clarification requests, silence, and even facial expressions that express confusion. (Lightbown & Spada, 1999, p. 141)

Ellis (2008) points out that feedback is present in theories of learning a second language and pedagogical language, as well as in behavioral and cognitive assumptions focused on teaching English. It is also considered an instrument that promotes learning, motivation, and linguistic assurance in the structural and communicative part. For that reason, it is important to understand how efficient this work can be in classroom environments and what types of CF are appropriate to use.

## 2.2 Types of Corrective Feedback

In relation to the types of CF, Lyster and Ranta (1997) have classified the six methods of CF into two groups: reformulations and indications, as detailed below:

- **Reformulation:** It consists of explicit and recast corrections, which allow students to restate their mistakes, considering that teachers' clues are signs for students to repair themselves.



- **Indications:** They include all other CF methods that force students to correct themselves: clarification, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition (Ellis, 2009).

The first type of CF is *explicit* and, according to Ellis (2009), it occurs when a student makes a mistake and the teacher provides the correct form. For instance, if a student says, “*The dog runs fastly,*” the teacher would respond by saying “*The word fastly does not exist. Fast does not take -ly. Instead, you should say “quickly.”*”

The second type of CF is *recast correction*, which means reformulation: the teacher repeats all or just a part of a student's expression, but does not reiterate the error made by the student. When a student says, “*Why you don't like Marc?*,” the teacher would respond by saying the correct form “*Why don't you like Marc?*”

The third type of CF is *request for clarification*. In this method, when a student makes a mistake, the teacher uses phrases such as “Excuse me?” or “I don't understand”; in this way, the student knows that he has made a mistake and that the teacher is asking for repetition or reformulation. For example, if a student says, “*He go my class,*” the teacher would respond with “Excuse me?” and the student will realize his mistake and say “*He goes to his class.*”

*Metalinguistic correction* is the fourth type of CF that uses extra information or comments from the teacher related to the student's expression without explicitly providing the correct form. For example, if a student says “*She like to eat macaroni,*” the teacher encourages the student to correct his/her error by calling attention to their mistake; for example, “*Do we say ‘she like’?*”

The fifth type of CF is *elicitation*, which allows students to produce the correct form by completing the teacher's expression, asking how they should say something, or repeating words in a reformulated version. For example, the teacher obtains the completion of his own statement by making a strategic pause to allow young people fill in the blank: “*Her boyfriend*



\_ (is) \_". After that, the teacher uses questions to elicit the correct forms. Finally, the teacher occasionally asks students to reformulate their utterances.

*Repetition* is the sixth type of CF and it refers to how the teacher repeats, in isolation, the student's wrong statements. In most cases, the teacher adjusts his intonation to highlight the error (Lightbown & Spada, 1999). For example: T: *What's your favorite dish?* S: *My favorite dish macaroni and cheese.* T: *Your favorite dish? macaroni and cheese? Your favorite dish macaroni and cheese?* S: *My favorite dish IS macaroni and cheese.*

In contrast to the classification of the types of CF exposed by Lyster and Ranta (1997), another typology based on Ellis (2008) was identified. It includes the following types of corrective feedback: direct CF, indirect CF, metalinguistic CF, focused/unfocused CF, electronic CF, and reformulation CF. In order to understand this classification, the following table is presented:

**Table 1**  
**Types of teacher's written CF**

<b>Type of CF</b>	<b>Description</b>
Direct CF	The teacher provides the student with the correct form.
Indirect CF	The teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction.
Indicating + locating the error	This takes the form of underlining and use of cursors to show omissions in the student's text.
Indication only	This takes the form of an indication in the margin that an error or errors have taken place in a line of text.
Metalinguistic CF	The teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error.
Use of error code	Teacher writes codes in the margin (e.g. ww ¼ wrong word; art ¼ article).
Brief grammatical descriptions	Teacher numbers errors in text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text.
The focus of the feedback	This concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the students' errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correct. This distinction can be applied to each of the above options.



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Unfocused CF	Unfocused CF is extensive.
Focused CF	Focused CF is intensive.
Electronic feedback	The teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to a concordance file that provides examples of correct usage.
Reformulation	This consists of a native speaker's reworking of the students' entire text to make the language seem as native-like as possible while keeping the content of the original intact.

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Source: (Ellis, 2008, p. 98)

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## 2.3 Modes

According to Long and Porter (1985), teachers provide two ways of correction, written or oral. The difference between these two CF modes basically lies on the fact that the feedback is given by the teacher. In the case of written feedback, the process demands more time from teachers, as they need to collect and analyze all students' written pieces to give feedback. On the other hand, the technique of addressing oral feedback gives teachers the option to immediately correct the mistake after it has been made.

### 2.3.1 Written feedback

This form of CF is provided once students make the mistake in a written text and, subsequently, the teacher provides the correct form of writing. Ashwell (2000) affirms that the teacher's CF is an effective support for correcting grammar mistakes in written compositions.

### 2.3.2 Oral feedback

This form of correction should be generally applied by teachers once the students have finished their participation, and the teacher has taken notes of all the mistakes that students have made. This technique gives students the opportunity to correct their mistakes



themselves. The correction may be implicit or explicit. For example, when the teacher requests the immediate correction of an error, it is implicit, but when the teacher corrects the student and provides a metalinguistic explanation of the error, it is explicit (Ellis, 2006).

After knowing the main forms of correction used by teachers, it is imperative to identify the mistakes made by students during the English learning process, as it is explained below.

## 2.4 Errors

Nobody likes to make mistakes, but it is imperative to understand that they are part of any learning process. To support this idea, Bitchener and Storch (2016) state that errors are the result of the lack of knowledge of a particular aspect. In this regard, Brown (2007) has indicated that during the learning process language mistakes are made and it is impossible for someone to learn without making them. In effect, Crystal (1999) considers that error analysis in the teaching and learning of foreign languages is the study of unacceptable forms produced by the student along or throughout the learning process.

## 2.5 Types of errors

As noted previously, Hewings and Hewings (2005) have also mentioned that students make mistakes during the learning process and these are inevitable; moreover, making mistakes helps them to get better in the acquisition/learning process. In relation to writing, the main errors are mainly evident in the appropriate use of grammar.

With regard to the above, Akbary (2017) thinks grammar is important, as it constitutes a complete system in which syntax, morphology, pragmatics, and semantics allow learners or students to understand and create a text without difficulty.

In the context of grammatical errors, an example can be verb choice: “*Most of the times we often appear there quite late in the evening [...]*” In this example, the student has chosen the word ‘appear’ instead of the correct verb ‘go’ (Feltsen, 2009).



Furthermore, Abushihab (2014) explains that the most common grammatical errors are more visible in tenses, prepositions, articles, active and passive voice, and morphology, as shown in Table 2.

**Table 2**  
**Grammatical errors**

<b>Tense</b>	<b>Preposition</b>	<b>Article</b>	<b>Active and passive voice</b>	<b>Morphological error</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present progressive instead of present simple.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omission of preposition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omission of <i>the</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Passive auxiliary <i>be</i> omission.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omission of plural ending “s”.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Present simple instead of present perfect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Addition of preposition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Omission of <i>a/an</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Passive with intransitive verb <i>be</i> addition.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Misuse and addition of the plural ending “s”.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Simple past instead of present perfect.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Misuse of preposition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Misuse of articles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Misuse of passive voice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Misuse of possessive “’s”.</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Simple past instead of simple present.</li> </ul>				<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Incorrect use of comparative adjectives.</li> </ul>

Source: (Abushihab, 2014)  
Made by: Maritza Gordillo

On the other hand, with respect to the category of mechanical errors, Amoakohene (2017) states that these errors are related to the wrong use of spelling and capital letters and misuse of punctuation marks. Under this context, according to Yuliah, Widiastuti, and Resta (2019), mechanical errors are different from grammatical errors, since grammar constitutes written or spoken language, while mechanics refers to the rules of language in relation to capitalization, punctuation, and spelling.

The previous theoretical review contributes to the present study by clarifying the main definitions, types, and modes of corrective feedback used by teachers in the English



teaching/learning process. Additionally, we have also reviewed the types of errors students make when using grammar and the most common mistakes they make in the learning process. Fortunately, these errors can be reduced with the appropriate application of corrective feedback.



## CHAPTER III

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Historically, Truscott (1996) has argued that CF was insufficient and ineffective in improving the writing skill of second language (L2) students. Since then, several studies on the subject have stood out, demonstrating the progress of L2 students in the field of grammar after they have received some kind of feedback. In this sense, the majority of studies coincide with the results that students who have received metalinguistic feedback on their mistakes have improved and outperformed their learning capacity. This fact is reflected along the studies analyzed in this section, which recommend CF as a technique of instruction to enhance the students' writing competence.

These studies present the main results obtained, as well as the methodology used when applying CF. They have been organized based on their effectiveness, the students' improvement in writing, and their correct use of grammar.

#### **3.1 Effectiveness and Benefits of Corrective Feedback**

Bitchener (2008) analyzed the effectiveness of CF over a period of 2 months with a sample of 75 students in New Zealand. The aim of this study was to analyze the effectiveness of CF focused on student writing in the context of ESL and to see whether there is a differential effect on accuracy when using different CF strategies. The results of the research showed that the application of corrective comments on students' writings improved and enhanced the accuracy of new writing pieces.

Guo and Yang (2018) conducted a study in China with the objective of testing the effectiveness of *recasts* and *indications* on the acquisition of the singular form in third person in English verbs and the mediating role of cognitive style in the effects of feedback. For this purpose, they worked with a sample of 175 EFL university students in four classes. After the





application of CF through the Indication Method, it was observed that students obtained significantly higher scores in the subsequent written test compared to those who only received the Recast Method.

Regarding the benefits of CF methods, Ahangari and Amirzadeh (2011) conducted a study in Zabankadeye Mellie, Iran, with the aim of analyzing various types of feedback in a sample of 60 trainees. The findings showed that the recast method is the type of CF most widely used in the teaching of L2, because teachers have the conception that this method, compared to other corrective comments, does not interrupt the flow of communication in the classroom. Yet they should be aware that recasts are not usually noticed by learners, particularly by low proficient ones.

Likewise, Caceres (2015) conducted a study in a private university in the eighth region of Chile, with the purpose of exploring the perception of EFL teachers in relation to the impact of oral CF techniques. This study had a sample of 28 Professors in the English teachers' area; the method they used was the application of a survey to a focus group. The results showed that language-teaching professionals believe that students have a negative response to correction in public and they prefer to be assisted in private to avoid feelings of anxiety or shame. Nevertheless, in the learning classrooms, a positive attitude of the schoolchildren prevails regarding the provision of these corrective strategies as part of the evaluation process.

Havranek (2002) executed a detailed study based on a sample of 1,700 cases corresponding to 207 students of EFL in Germany, with the purpose of analyzing grammatical, lexical, and pronunciation errors in a series of cases that received CF. The study showed that those who were assisted improved by 50% in performance tests. However, it is necessary to highlight that the results vary according to contextual and linguistic factors, such



as the personal contribution of the student in the correction sequence, the communicative approach of the statement, and the type of error committed.

Rassaei (2015) conducted a study with a sample of 101 EFL students in a major private language-teaching institute in Iran, with the purpose of analyzing the degree to which learners with high and low levels of anxiety benefited from the types of CF applied in class. The findings allowed the researcher to determine that metalinguistic and recast methods are effective in developing knowledge of a second language properly, although this effectiveness was influenced by the degree of students' anxiety since those with a low-level benefited largely from the metalinguistic correction, while students with high levels of anxiety benefited from the recast method.

Finally, Shirkhani and Tajeddin (2016) conducted a research in a university in Iran, with the purpose of getting to know which linguistic mistakes have taken place in the classroom and the types of CF provided by the teachers. The sample was represented by 45 EFL teachers (intermediate level) working in four different language institutes. The teachers' classes were recorded during two sessions. However, in the course of the study, five teaching professionals were excluded since they felt uncomfortable with the methodology applied, which is why they worked with 40 participants. Finally, after the evaluation of the data obtained, it was concluded that explicit feedback is the technique with the highest frequency (48.5%) of all types of CF, followed by recasting with a frequency of 29.5%.

### **3.2 Corrective Feedback to Improve Writing and Grammar Knowledge**

Ashwell (2000) reviewed comments on the grammatical, lexical, and mechanical errors found in the essays of a sample of 50 EFL students in Japan, in order to determine which CF technique improves the content of the drafts prepared by the group under study. The teachers provided different correction patterns focused on the improvement of foreign



language teaching. The findings showed that the content-centered corrective method is effective in overcoming and minimizing the grammar mistakes made by students.

Chandler (2003) conducted a study with a sample of 67 EFL students from a public high school in Astara, Iran. This research aimed at analyzing how the identification of grammatical and lexical errors reduced the flaws in the structure of future written compositions. Chandler (2003) evaluated various experimental and control groups, noting that the direct method in CF is better for producing accurate reviews, and students preferred this method because it was the fastest and easiest way for them. In summary, participants considered that self-correction and simple underlining were the most effective instruments because they allowed them to learn from their own mistakes.

Hitherto, this literary review has made known to us that the application of corrective measures through written feedback constitutes a method that favors self-correction of grammatical mistakes that arise in the learning of a second language. In this context, Bitchener and Knoch (2008) confirmed the results through a study conducted with 144 international and migrant ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand. They examined the degree to which corrective assistance options helped the group under study in the proper use of articles for writing in English. The results showed that the techniques employed by teachers, mainly associated to the direct method and written and oral metalinguistic explanations, led to a significant improvement in the use of articles within a grammatical structure.

Similarly, in a study conducted by Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005) in New Zealand, which aimed at analyzing the effects of different types of feedback, among which direct written feedback and conference sessions were included, to determine the precision performance of three categories of linguistic errors in new writings. To fulfill this purpose, the study evaluated a sample of 53 adult ESL students over a period of 12 weeks. The results



showed a significant association in the combination of the methods used to enhance accuracy in the writing of literary pieces.

Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006), in their study on the effects of implicit and explicit CF types carried out in New Zealand, reported the results obtained. The research was applied to a representative sample of 34 ESL students. In fact, the findings allowed them to identify that explicit feedback given through metalinguistic explanation was more effective than the implicit technique and led students to optimal language learning.

Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) compared focused and unfocused written accuracy feedback with a sample of 49 EFL students in Japan. This study indicated that written feedback can be effective for promoting greater grammatical accuracy both in an error correction test and in subsequent writing exercises. The authors concluded that these types of strategies help students develop greater control when dealing with grammatical structures. However, written CF may be ineffective in more complex grammar structures. Finally, the findings showed that there was no significant difference between the focused and non-focused CF groups; both were equally effective.

Likewise, Ferris and Roberts (2001) conducted a study in an educational institution in the United States, with the aim of analyzing the impact of different types of conditions to correct students. These are: 1) errors marked with codes of five-error categories 2) errors in the same categories but not marked or otherwise labeled, and 3) no comments at all. The sample consisted of 72 ESL students in an experimental approach study, in which the participants were evaluated through prior and subsequent tests. The results demonstrated that the group that received feedback comments had significantly better results compared to the group that did not receive comments in the desktop publishing tasks.

Finally, an experimental study was performed by Zareil and Rahnama (2013) in Iran, with the objective of exploring the effect of CF on the accuracy of grammatical and lexical



writing. The study with 164 EFL participants showed that the group that received direct CF had better performance compared to other groups that did not receive any assistance. The results revealed that students preferred to receive corrective comments in writing in order to identify their mistakes and repair them, so that they were able to improve their level of accuracy in grammar writing.

This chapter has examined previous research in the field of written CF within the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) and English as a Second Language (ESL). To do this, 15 primary studies that described the effectiveness and improvements in writing and the use of grammar were included. A review of existing literature has allowed the researcher to identify the importance of CF strategies, since it is a noteworthy topic studied in various countries of the world. The results derived from this review attempt to answer the research questions that guide this synthesis: a) How effective is corrective feedback to improve the writing skill of EFL / ESL students? and b) Does corrective feedback decrease grammar errors of EFL / ESL students? The findings have shown that CF is effective for improving the students' writing skill and use of grammar.



## CHAPTER IV

### METHODOLOGY

This study analyzes the literature related to the effectiveness of using CF in writing within the context of learning English as a second and foreign language. Also, this research aims at analyzing the theoretical review foundation and research done on corrective techniques as an effective method to improve the students' writing skill.

In this regard, the research methodology used in this work consists of an exploratory systemic review, through the analysis of data and information related to the subject of study found in books, academic articles, indexed journals, etc. This research was carried out through specialized search engines (Google Scholar and Elsevier) in order to guarantee the veracity of data.

The selection of the studies presented in this synthesis was carried out by applying some inclusion criteria like the year of publication, how current the studies were, the results obtained on the use of CF in each research, and the benefits CF had on the writing skill in ESL and EFL environments. It is also imperative to mention that some key words and phrases were used to accelerate the research process. These were *effectiveness of CF*, *writing skill*, and *grammar mistakes*.

#### 4.1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Once the inclusion criteria were established, 31 articles were selected according to the parameters of the previously mentioned search engines. Considering 16 articles were similar, only 15 were used. Table 3 reflects the treatment of the selected files, which constitute the study sample.



**Table 3**  
**Articles located through search on digital portals**

Database / search portals	Google Scholar				Scielo				Total
	Corrective feedback	English writing	Language skills in learning English	Positive effects	Corrective feedback	English writing	Language skills in learning English	Positive effects	
Items found	20.000	2.000	1.000	2.000	10	20	8	2	25.040
Articles identified according to the inclusion criteria	5.000	500	200	150	2	8	10	1	5.871
Articles related to the subject	5	8	5	7	1	2	2	1	31
Repeated articles in search portals	2	3	4	5	0	1	1	0	16
Sample									<b>15</b>

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On the other hand, Table 4 shows the classification of the studies with respect to the number of participants, the research method, and the learning context -EFL or ESL.

**Table 4**  
**Primary corrective feedback studies**



No.	Authors of studies	Participants		Method	Context	
		Students	Teachers		EFL	ESL
1	Ahangari and Amirzadeh	60		Descriptive	Iran	
2	Ashwell		50	Experimental	Japan	
3	Bitchener	75		Experimental		New Zealand
4	Bitchener and Knoch	144		Experimental		New Zealand
5	Bitchener, Young, and Cameron	53		Experimental		New Zealand
6	Caceres	28		Mix-method	Chile	
7	Chandler	31		experimental	Hong Kong	
8	Ellis, Loewen and Erlam	34		Experimental		New Zealand
9	Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima	49		Mix-method	Japan	
10	Ferris and Roberts	72		Experimental	USA	
11	Guo and Yang	175		Experimental	China	
12	Havranek	207		Explorative	Germany	
13	Rassaei	101		Experimental	Iran	
14	Shirkhani and Tajeddin		40	Descriptive	Iran	
15	Zareil and Rahnama	164		Experimental	Iran	

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In summary, it can be observed that the majority of studies focused on the evaluation of students through the application of the experimental method, while others applied the descriptive method, the mix-method, or the explorative method. It should also be noted that the majority of the studies carried out in the context of EFL or ESL are in countries outside the Latin American region, including Iran, Japan, New Zealand, Hong Kong, China, and Germany, while only one was carried out in Chile and another one in the United States.

The methodological framework used in this research synthesis includes the identification of the studies in EFL and ESL contexts as one of the most important aspects of the methodology used. The type of study carried out, the procedure for collecting information





from recognized academic search engines, as well as the inclusion and exclusion criteria are also detailed, with the purpose of including the data related to the research questions.

Additionally, a table with the database of the identified studies is described. We worked with a sample that included 15 studies.



## CHAPTER V

### ANALYSIS

#### 5.1 Effect of Corrective Feedback on Improving the Writing Skill

The first research question sought to identify the effectiveness of CF for improving the writing skill of EFL-ESL students. For this purpose, we observed the results of seven academic articles that helped us answer this question. Table 5 contains a summary of the identified findings.

**Table 5**

**How effective is corrective feedback to improve the writing skill of EFL students?**

Author	Search engine	Type of study	Main results	Conclusions
Havranek (2002)	Google Scholar	Comprehensive case study and evidence.	The study showed that those who are corrected benefit from the correction in approximately 50% of all cases.	The test results of the corrected students vary according to contextual and linguistic factors, such as the student's contribution to the correction sequence, the communicative approach of the deviated statement, and the type of error corrected.
John Bitchener (2008)	Google Scholar	Field	The accuracy of the students who received corrective written feedback in the immediate post-test exceeded those of the control group; this level of performance was maintained 2 months later.	Corrective comments aimed at correcting ESL student' writings result in greater accuracy in new writing pieces.
Ahangari and Amirzadeh (2011)	Elsevier	Classroom observation	The results revealed that recast was the type of CF mostly used by teachers in all three levels of proficiency.	1. Recast was the most commonly used type of corrective feedback that teachers provided to their students at various levels of proficiency. 2. In general, self-correction techniques were not considered, but seemed to be preferred by students that are more competent.



Cáceres (2015)	Google Scholar	Surveys and focus group	Teachers believe that students prefer to be corrected privately throughout the lesson to avoid feelings of anxiety or shame.	A positive attitude of students was evidenced regarding the provision of CF as part of the teacher evaluation procedure.
Rassaei (2015)	Elsevier	Field	Explicit correction is the most frequent type of CF, representing 48.5% of all types of correction provided.	Teachers prefer explicit corrective strategies to implicit ones, and correction techniques are used by teachers mainly to correct pronunciation errors.
Shirkhani and Tajeddin (2016)	Google Scholar	Field	Explicit correction is the most frequent type of CF, representing 48.5% of all types of correction provided.	Teachers prefer explicit corrective strategies to implicit ones, and correction techniques are used by teachers mainly to correct pronunciation errors.
Guo and Yang (2018)	Google Scholar	Field	Feedback facilitates language learning, as it is a pedagogical strategy in second language classrooms.	The instruction notice group defeated the instruction recast group and the control group in the immediate subsequent test; the punctual group also achieved significantly higher scores in the delayed subsequent test and in the written test.

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According to the analysis of the reviewed studies, it was identified that, when learning a foreign language, it is inherent that students make errors as an indispensable part of the learning process. In this regard, the above mentioned authors state that CF is a very useful instrument for teachers to prevent students from being delayed in learning another language, which allows them to advance in the learning of an L2.

Under this premise, the debate on the benefits of written CF for EFL-ESL students is extensive. The addressed articles sought to provide information on the effectiveness of the strategies implemented, in most cases, by teachers in English classrooms. Tests were administered in the majority of experimental studies before and after the implementation of various grammatical and lexical correction methods. In this way, the results presented in Table 5 indicate that CF is generally an effective method for learning a second language in



both environments, allowing students to self-correct their mistakes and learn from them while significantly improving their writing process of new pieces.

By comparing these studies, the effectiveness of the different correction methods and techniques were identified. Thus, Guo and Yang (2018) showed that *indications* are more effective than *recasts* in the development of grammatical structures in the classroom context. On the other hand, the results found by Ahangari and Amirzadeh (2011) show that *recast* is the CF type most widely used by teachers to start the student learning process. However, as the student becomes more competent, teachers usually incorporate other self-correction techniques. The reason for the high frequency of recast used in the classroom compared to other error correction techniques is the teachers' criteria that this method, unlike any other CF, does not interrupt the fluidity of communication in the classroom. However, a negative aspect is that students do not notice the changes, especially poor students.

The findings of Caceres (2015) show that students have a positive attitude towards correction shortly after making mistakes. However, most teachers do not agree with this idea, considering that it is better to intervene at the end of their reports or lessons as an efficient way to correct mistakes and avoid less communicative practice in the classroom.

Compared to the majority of previous studies that report the effectiveness of CF, Havranek (2002) measured its effectiveness at a 50% level in subsequent performance tests where the success of this instrument is associated with situational and linguistic factors. For its part, Rassaei (2015) show that one of the variables that also affects the type of CF is the degree of anxiety students have, so the findings determine that students with a low level of anxiety obtain greater benefit from metalinguistic correction. To corroborate the effectiveness of the instruments, Shirkhani and Tajeddin (2016) indicate that explicit correction is used by 48.5% of the cases, followed by recast with a percentage of 29.5%.



## 5.2 Effect of Corrective Feedback on Decreasing Grammar Mistakes

**Table 6**

**Does corrective feedback decrease grammar mistakes of EFL students?**

Author	Search Engine	Type of study	Main results	Conclusions
Ashwell (2000)	Google Scholar	Posttest analysis.	The recommended pattern in a writing approach is content-centered feedback.	Corrective teacher feedback is an effective support for correcting grammatical errors in written compositions of foreign language students.
Ferris and Roberts (2001)	Elsevier	Quasi-experimental design	The groups that received feedback comments substantially outperformed the group without comments on the self-publishing task.	It is concluded that less explicit feedback helps students correct their mistakes, as does the method of corrections coded by the type of error committed.
Chandler (2003)	Google Scholar	Qualitative/quantitative.	Direct correction is better for producing accurate reviews, and students prefer it because it is the fastest.	Teachers believe that direct correction is the most effective way to comment on several drafts.
Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005)	Google Scholar	Experimental design: Test	The type of feedback provided had a significant effect on the accuracy with which participants used the separate language categories in new writing pieces.	The study shows that indirect feedback helps students improve their writing skill and the oral and written comments that teachers provide them allow students to learn and analyze their linguistic errors.
Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006)	Google Scholar	Experimental design: Test	The results indicate that metalinguistic explanation benefited both implicit and explicit knowledge.	This study demonstrates that explicit feedback through metalinguistic information is more effective than implicit feedback through the recast method.
Bitchener and Knoch (2008)	Google Scholar	Descriptive study	Students who received direct CF, written, and oral metalinguistic explanation had a better level of written accuracy.	Students who received all three types of corrective written feedback significantly improved accuracy in the use of specific functions of the English article system.



Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008)	Google Scholar	Quasi-experimental design	Written feedback promotes greater grammatical accuracy in proofreading and new writing.	Correction directed repeatedly to a very specific grammatical problem may have a greater effect.
Zareil and Rahnama (2013)	Google Scholar	Experimental design: Test	The results reflect that the group that received direct CF had better performance compared to other groups.	Students prefer to receive corrective comments in writing to identify their mistakes and improve their grammatical writing accuracy.

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The results presented in Table 6 indicate that there was a significant reduction in the mistakes made by students once they received CF in the writing of grammar pieces. An aspect that could be evidenced was an increased accuracy in the writing of the experimental groups, as synthesized below.

A study by Chandler (2003) used data from experimental and control groups in order to show that correcting grammatical errors from learners is reduced in subsequent writings without affecting fluency or quality. The results showed that direct correction is the most effective way to provide feedback based on teachers' perceptions. Consequently, from the students' point of view, self-correction and underlining mistakes allow them to learn from the mistakes they have made.

The data from a study by Bitchener and Knoch (2008), in which it is specified that the students who had received the three options of written CF (direct, written, and oral metalinguistic explanation), exceeded the groups that did not receive this assistance. Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006) state that explicit feedback in the form of metalinguistic information is more effective than the implicit method through recasts. This contributes to the learning system of an L2.

Ferris and Roberts (2001) have demonstrated the effectiveness of receiving comments to minimize errors in a group of students. The most common grammatical mistakes are visible in verbs, sentence structure, word choice, and noun endings. In this same line of



research, Zareil and Rahnama (2013) have reflected on the grammatical precision when writing texts in English, and they have realized that the direct method greatly helps to improve the participants' performance.

### 5.3 Discussion

Regarding the first research question, "How effective is CF to improve the writing skill of EFL-ESL students?", a unification of authors' criteria was found through the affirmation of such question. In addition, both Bitchener (2008) and Guo and Yang (2018) agree that corrective comments in the form of indications help students improve their grammatical accuracy. In contrast, Ahangari and Amirzadeh (2011) differ from these results because they have noticed that CF, in the form of recasts, is the most commonly used method by English teachers.

The results presented above correspond to the findings of Havranek (2002), who has demonstrated the effect of written CF and how it facilitates the learning of a second language. He identified that the trainees improved their mistakes by 50%. As Rassaei (2015) mentions, the degree of anxiety in participants is a factor that influences the application of the appropriate method, indicating that recast is effective in those people whose anxiety level is high. This fact supports the idea that some authors have about recast as one of the most commonly used corrective method by teachers.

In contrast, Shirkhani and Tajeddin (2016) have demonstrated that explicit correction has better results compared to the recast method, since the latter improves the student's grammar accuracy and performance. This improvement influences the high degree of students' ability to have adequate knowledge of grammar in EFL and ESL environments.

In relation to the second question, "Does CF reduce the grammatical errors of EFL-ESL students?," the findings of the present study show that this method has a significant effect on the reduction of grammatical mistakes made by students both on self-correction of



texts and in the writing of new pieces. In this sense, Ashwell (2000) indicates that CF techniques improve the content of the drafts, allowing students to reduce and overcome the identified errors. On the same line, a study by Chandler (2003) helps us get to know that, through direct correction, students make an average of two errors for every 100 words in a task that addresses a wide content of text.

Similar results are presented by Bitchener and Knoch (2008), who point out that direct correction is significantly better for producing accurate learning in a quick and easy way. Also, this study fully supports the findings of Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005), who state that direct techniques have a significant effect on accuracy and performance in the pieces written. These findings partially corroborate those of Ellis, Loewen, and Erlam (2006), since explicit feedback with metalinguistic explanation mostly favors students over implicit techniques in the form of recasting.

On the other hand, Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) have found no significant differences between the different ways of CF since the effects of focused written CF were compared on the precision to which students used indefinite and definite articles in English. The results showed that in both groups CF was equally effective in promoting better grammatical accuracy in proofreading and new writing. In contrast, Ferris and Roberts (2001) have found substantial and significant differences in the results of less explicit feedback groups. This strategy was effective for students to self-edit their texts. The progress of the student groups was examined in written precision over time and encouraging data were seen. However, Zareil, and Rahnama (2013) believe that a direct method has greater effectiveness in the grammatical performance of students and contributes to improve the students' writing ability.

This chapter has focused on the analysis of the key findings reported in the 15 primary research studies selected for the development of this synthesis. The information has been





organized and illustrated in Tables according to the research question, author, search site, type of study, main results, and conclusions. Subsequently, the results found in the studies reviewed were compared and positive results were identified in most studies. One limitation found during the development of this study was the lack of awareness of the benefits Latin American students have if CF techniques are applied, considering the fact that most articles have been written in countries such as Iran, Japan, New Zealand, China, among others, and there is only one reference from Chile.



## CHAPTER VI

### CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 6.1 Conclusions

The findings set in the previous chapters suggest that teachers should be more aware of the need to use Corrective Feedback (CF) methods during English language teaching-learning. It needs to be mentioned that teachers should consider several factors that influence the effectiveness of CF, like for example the students' level of learning and skills.

Having this in mind and in relation to the first research question, it is concluded that CF plays a very important role in improving the students' writing skill in an EFL/ESL context, specifically in the accuracy to correct texts without affecting their quality. It was observed that in the teaching of the English language, CF is a technique that helps students to reflect on the language and its correct use for the individual correction of written errors. Therefore, the results found through the bibliographic exploratory research have shown that CF is an effective instrument for learning a foreign language.

With respect to the second research question, this study identified a significant effect of the application of CF, particularly on the accuracy of writing without making grammar mistakes. Thus, the results identified and analyzed in this study confirm the effectiveness of the analyzed method and suggest that this instrument helps students mitigate the errors diagnosed in writing new texts, a trend that coincides with the findings of several researchers. In this sense, the findings show that any type of strategy applied to the correction of errors in the learning of a foreign language is effective for teaching grammatical skills. However, the



method with the best results regarding the accurate use of grammar is direct feedback with metalinguistic explanation and recast techniques.

## 6.2 Recommendations

Based on the conclusions set before, some recommendations are given below. Firstly, the reviewed studies have confirmed that CF is an effective technique to improve and correct students' grammar in an EFL/ESL context. Therefore, this background allows us to suggest the application of CF as part of the school methodology. However, you should work on a curriculum adapted to each level of learning, since the research findings have shown that there are methods that benefit certain groups of students to a greater extent.

The results of the studies suggest that the direct method with metalinguistic information has a better impact on students than any other type of CF. Therefore, a potential area for future research is the incidence of these feedback methods to rectify the mistakes made by students who are learning English as a foreign language in Ecuadorian schools.

Among the outstanding benefits of the application of CF is the reduction of grammatical errors. For this reason, it is also suggested that, for future research, an evaluation study could be carried out in local educational institutions, with the aim of getting quantitative data about the effectiveness of CF methods, particularly the methods which promote grammatical accuracy and the most effective techniques to mitigate writing errors.

Finally, it has been identified that the lack of motivation of some schools to improve the teaching-learning process causes a lack of interest of students in learning. Consequently, it could be mandatory to encourage both teachers and students to be open to use the different types of CF and experience all the benefits this strategy offers, not only for achieving academic but also personal and professional goals.



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## APPENDIX

### LIST OF PRIMARY STUDIES FOR ANALYSIS

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