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Correction of Frequent English Writing Errors by Using Coded Indirect Corrective Feedback and Error Treatment: The Case of *Reading and Writing English for Academic Purposes II*

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***Abstract*—**The purposes of this study are 1) to study the frequent English writing errors of students registering the course: Reading and Writing English for Academic Purposes II, and 2) to find out the results of writing error correction by using coded indirect corrective feedback and writing error treatments. Samples include 28 2nd year English Major students, Faculty of Education, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Tool for experimental study includes the lesson plan of the course; Reading and Writing English for Academic Purposes II, and tool for data collection includes 4 writing tests of short texts. The research findings disclose that frequent English writing errors found in this course comprise 7 types of grammatical errors, namely Fragment sentence, Subject-verb agreement, Wrong form of verb tense, Singular or plural noun endings, Run-ons sentence, Wrong form of verb pattern and Lack of parallel structure. Moreover, it is found that the results of writing error correction by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment reveal the overall reduction of the frequent English writing errors and the increase of students' achievement in the writing of short texts with the significance at .05.

***Keywords*—**Coded indirect corrective feedback, error correction, and error treatment.

I. Introduction

THE teaching of English in the past mainly focused on grammar and translation from English to L1 of learners and vice versa [1]. However, various teaching methodologies have been improved to enable learners to use English as a tool for communication as well as for future career, and one of the most efficient teaching pedagogies employed by English language teachers around the globe is "Communicative Language Teaching" [2]. Based on this approach, learners of English have been exposed to the use of language in various situations of social contexts using appropriate language functions for different register, and the integration of 4 language skills has been employed in curriculum development and classroom instruction [3]. However, in the so-called English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context, writing has been considered as one of the most challenging skills both for students and teachers, especially Nonnative English speaking teachers [4]. That is because a good short text should comprise not only well organized idea but also grammatically correct sentences with correct mechanical elements. Unlike speaking which focuses on fluency more than accuracy, writing emphasizes the accuracy of language. That is one reason why speaking ability is more common and practical to develop in classroom instruction and non-formal education. In Thailand some *tuk tuk drivers* and those in many other careers can use English to communicate with foreign tourists even though they do not know how to write in English. Moreover, EFL writing instruction has been limited to sentences and paragraph writing exercises. To develop learners' writing skills especially writing short texts, or compositions requires lots of practice in linguistic elements including grammars, word usages, punctuation, and spelling. Practice in organizing ideas including outlining, drafting, editing, revising is, also, necessary.

In the teaching of writing, there is tension generated by different views of what writing should focus on though so far these views have major implication on methodology. The main division can be around product, process, and genre approach. In many EFL classrooms, the main approach to writing is still very clearly product oriented, in which the focus is placed on models and some controlled language forms, with little if any thought of the way in which texts function in society. However, only in university level, the process approach with its focus on the cognitive process of writing, on generating ideas, drafting, feedback from peers and revising and the genre approach with is focus on language in use and an understanding of why texts are produced in the way that they are employed in classroom instructions [5]. The second major issue concerning the teaching of writing is feedback on learners' written production. Since writing skills are challenging tasks for EFL learners, the teachers of writing classes continue to be overwhelmed by the amount of feedback they need to provide. Although some groups of researchers oppose to error correction and corrective feedback, some findings of researchers and educators indicate its efficiency and what is at best about skepticism about its efficacy [6]. Thus, in the reality of writing classroom contexts, some teachers believe they have to provide comprehensive feedback on all errors found in a student's text while some choose to provide feedback on errors relating to the target language or content [7]. Moreover, this is paralleled by some researches with a strong focus on feedback on linguistic categories, rather than on respond to content. It is, therefore,

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found that in EFL contexts most feedback on learner writing avoids responding to content [8].

In the context of the course; Reading and Writing English for Academic Purposes II, designed for English major students, Faculty of Education, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University, Bangkok, Thailand; the teaching of writing focuses on the so called 'process approach' with partial genre approach in terms of the provision of some language in use. However, due to the large amount of writing errors found in students' texts, and the students' low proficiency in English, the correction of students' texts and the provision of corrective feedback to the students cause such problems as time consumption, stressful work for teacher and students, and the inefficiency of classroom instruction. The problems of this course can be shown as in Fig. 1.

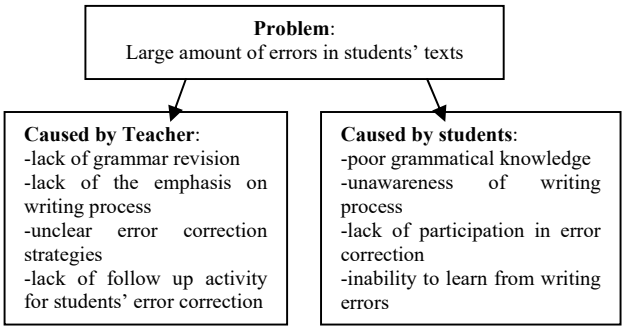


Fig. 1 Causes and Problems found in Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes II

Fig. 1 shows the problem and its causes found in the course; Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes II. The problem is large amount of errors in students' texts, most of which are repeated grammatical errors. This problem is caused by the teacher and the students. Based on the teacher, the causes include lack of grammar revision and the emphasis on writing process, unclear error correction strategy, and the lack of follow up activities for students' error correction. Based on the students, the causes include their poor grammatical knowledge, their unawareness of writing process, the lack of participation in error correction and their inability to learn from writing errors. The solution to this problem can be placed on the teacher's corrective feedback strategy and the students' involvement in writing error treatment activities. This research is, therefore, conducted with the purposes of studying 1) the frequent writing errors found in the students' texts in the course; Reading and Writing English for Academic Purposes II and, 2) the results of correction of the frequent writing errors using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment; a case of English major students registering the course; Reading and Writing English for Academic Purposes II.

II. Theoretical Background

Theoretical background relating to this research includes A. Writing process, B. Corrective feedback, and C. Error treatment.

A. Writing Process

In terms of process approach of writing, cognitive process of writing should be prepared for the students in a writing class. That is to say preparation for students before their writing task is necessary because before writing students should know the purpose of writing so that they can plan, and think of what ideas they would like to express, and to what extent they need to elaborate their ideas. This kind of process is called writing process. Writing process can be concluded into 5 steps as shown in Table I.

TABLE I
Writing Process

Step	Activity	Outcome
1. Prewriting	- Gather ideas by identifying points of discussion - Classify and prioritize ideas	Outline
2. Drafting	- Write roughly based on the outline - Write the main idea sentence and add details or examples - Use simple words and structure to construct complete sentences.	1st draft
3. Revising	- Reread the 1st draft by yourself or by peer to find out if the ideas presented in the text are understood clearly and if there are grammatical and mechanical errors.	1st draft with corrective feedback
4. Editing	- Edit the 1st draft based on feedback provided in the revising step	1st draft with error correction
5. Writing final draft	- Rewrite 1st draft - Proof read	Final draft

Table I represents writing process, which includes 5 steps; prewriting, drafting, revising, editing, and writing final draft [9].

However, Jeremy Harmer [10] points out that the traditional writing process above has 2 limitations. Firstly, the time consumed for each step in writing process above may vary, and secondly the order of steps can be switched. Since in reality a student who starts writing by prewriting, outlining, revising, editing and writing final draft may change his mind while writing his final draft. In this case, he may change his plan by starting writing 1st draft again, then revising, editing and writing his final draft. In some other cases, a student may start writing without planning in the form of outlining. He may has plan in his mind and start writing 1st draft expressing the flow of his ideas, and later on he may revise his plan, and edit his 1st draft bit by bit until he accomplishes his final draft.

From the examples of writing process above, the traditional 5-step writing process; planning, drafting, revising, editing, and writing final draft; seems to be unpractical. Jeremy Harmer proposes an alternative to prepare students for writing a short text in the form of "The Process Wheel" of writing as shown in Fig. 2 [10].

Fig. 2 "The Process Wheel" of writing shows that writing process is flexible depending on the purposes of writing, text types, and the length of texts. It is, therefore, suggested that the length of time spent in each step of writing may vary. Moreover, the starting point may be at different step. A student may start at planning in mind and write 1st draft, then think of planning or outlining and then editing or revising and

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writing final version. However, writing a well-organized text requires careful planning, but the step of writing may vary depending on the writer's experience in writing.

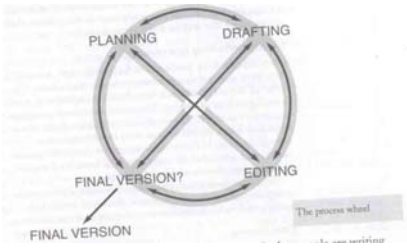


Fig. 2 The Process Wheel

B. Corrective Feedback

The traditional method of marking students' writing texts is using red ink pen to underline or cross out grammatical errors found in the students' texts. This may discourage some students so much that they hate learning writing especially when teachers give feedback to them because red ink signifies negative results [11]. Giving feedback to students can be done in both speaking and writing skills instruction. In writing class it can be termed as written corrective feedback [12]. Although there are still controversial issues over the benefit of various types of written corrective feedback on students' short term and long term improvement, some teachers and some students in EFL writing classes prefer grammar correction using various types of corrective feedback strategies [13]. Written corrective feedback can be classified into 3 types; Reformulation, Direct corrective feedback, and Indirect corrective feedback.

1. Reformulation is a type of written corrective feedback, in which teacher corrects all errors in a student's text using grammatically correct words and structure. In this way the student can see his text rewritten by the teacher, and the corrected texts with grammatically correct language like that used by native speakers of English but the content of the text will still be his idea [14].
2. Direct corrective feedback is a type of written corrective feedback, in which a teacher marks a student's text by identifying errors in the text focusing on the target language and makes correction by writing the correct words or phrases over the incorrect ones. Correction is done only at the errors relating to the target language [13].
3. Indirect corrective feedback is a type of written corrective feedback, in which a teacher identifies errors which are the target language in a student's text by underlining or circling the incorrect words but he neither points out error types nor corrects them. Later when the student gets his text from the teacher, the student is supposed to think of error types of the identified words or phrases and try to correct his own errors. To identify errors in the student's text, the teacher may put an X mark in the margin on the line where there is a grammatical error.

Indirect corrective feedback, however, can be called 'coded indirect corrective feedback' when a teacher identifies errors in a student's text by providing 'error marking keys' (WF meaning Wrong form, S/V meaning Subject-verb agreement) over the incorrect words. These keys will enable the student to recognize type of errors and he can correct his own errors by applying the correct grammatical rules [6].

There are also many ways to provide coded indirect corrective feedback in the students' texts. First as mentioned above, the teachers can write error marking keys over the incorrect words or phrases or write them in the margin on the line where the errors lie. Moreover, some teachers may write number over the incorrect words and later at the bottom of the page he will provide the marking keys after each number to indirectly remind the students of the errors [15].

C. Error Treatment

Error treatment is the activity organized after the teacher marked the students' texts and the students receive their texts with coded indirect corrective feedback from the teacher. This activity, which can be held in a 5-hour classroom instruction and outside class, aims at involving students in such activities as error correction, grammar review, and problem solving. Writing error treatment can be divided into 5 continuing steps as follows;

1. Revision OF Grammar AND Writing Process

This step is like a lead in to prepare students for self and peer error correction of their own texts. The teacher may point out example sentences with frequent writing errors and coded indirect corrective feedback, then motivate the students to think of error types using the keys provided in the text. Then the teacher helps the students correct the errors. Sometimes mini lecture on grammar rules may be required. In some cases, good example sentences showing well-organized idea may be presented at this step as a revision of writing process. The duration of this step is about 15 minutes.

2. Self and Peer Correction

In this step each student is required to correct his own errors and later join a group of 5 to help one another to correct their errors. This activity is aimed at exposing students to problem solving using collaboration from peers. The discussion about grammar rules will enable the students to correct their errors, and this will enrich their writing in the future [16]. The duration of this step is about 20-30 minutes.

3. 10-Minute-Student-Teacher Private Conference

In this step, a group of 5 students will have private discussion about the results of self and peer correction. It is supposed to be a follow up activity to see whether the students can successfully correct their own errors. If there is any problem, the explanation from the teachers or students will be required. The students will then learn of the correct forms of language with the relevant grammar rules [13]. The duration of this step may vary.

4. Search / Study / Share

In this step, students are assigned to search grammar rules with exercises and answer keys from various learning resources, and they are supposed to study them. After that they

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will copy them and be prepared to make mini presentation in class and post them on the course homepage for further practice. The aim of this step is to encourage students to learn more independently outside classroom, and to teach others through their presentation. Moreover, the use of course homepage will enable other students to learn and practice by themselves anytime they like [17].

5. Web-Board Posting

In this step students are encouraged to share their stories on the course web-board by posting their corrected texts on the course web-board with the purpose of motivating students to read other texts and give opinions.

III. Research Design

In this study, an action research is conducted with samples including 28 second year English Major Students, Faculty of Education, Suan Sunandha Rajabhat University. Research tools comprise 1) Lesson Plan of the course and 2) 4 writing tests. Here are details of research tools.

1. Lesson Plan. Since this research focuses on writing skills, the selected contents for writing and error correction are in 4 units, each of which consists of two consecutive 5-hour class weeks. In this research, the total 8 weeks are scheduled for the experiment in the lesson plan. After learning reading and writing in each unit, samples are asked to write a short text expressing their opinion towards the article read. The coded indirect corrective feedback is used for correcting the students' texts followed by error treatment activities as shown in Table II below:

TABLE II
A Cycle of Error Correction Activities

W	Step	Instructional Activities	Duration
2,5, 11,14	1	Learning how to write: - Review writing process - Review target language - Practice writing in pairs or group	3 hrs
	2	Writing short texts (Test)	1 hr
	3	Evaluating and providing coded indirect corrective feedback in the texts of students	(Outside class)
3, 6, 12, 15	4	Providing error treatment - Returning the marked texts to the students - Revision of grammar and writing process - Self and peer correction - 10 minute-student-teacher private conference	5 hrs
		- Search-study-share	(Independent)
		- Web-board posting	(Independent)

Table II shows a cycle of a 4-step error correction strategy employed in the lesson plan of the course. This cycle is designed to conduct in 2 consecutive 5-hour class weeks, and in this study 4 cycles are conducted in 8 weeks; week 2-3, 5-6, 11-12 and 14-15. The cycle of a 4-step error correction activity as follows;

a. The teacher teaches how to write.
b. Each student writes a short text of not less than 150 words giving opinions towards what he has read.
c. The teacher corrects the students' texts using coded indirect corrective feedback and scores them based on modified version of the Analytic Scoring Rubric Checklist adopted from Roebuck [18].
d. The students involve in error treatment activities.

2. The four writing tests aimed at evaluating the students' ability in writing short texts with well-organized idea and correct grammatical structure are scored. Test 1 is a pretest of the 1st cycle of error correction activities while test 2 is a posttest. Test 2 is a pretest of the 2nd cycle while test 3 is a posttest. Test 3 is a pretest of the 3rd cycle while test 4 is a posttest.
3. The results of the experiment and data collection are as follows;

a. The frequent writing error types and examples found in the students' texts are recorded and analyzed to find out the frequent English writing errors.
b. The comparison of pre and posttest results taken from the 1st – 4th cycles is analyzed to find out the improvement of the students' writing ability by using t-test to compare the mean scores and S.D. of the tests in each cycle. Moreover, the numbers of writing errors found in the tests are collected and analyzed to find out the reduction of the numbers of each error type.

IV. Results

The results of correction of frequent English writing errors by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment in the contexts of the course; Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes 2 based on the research purposes are as follows;

1. The frequent English writing errors found in the students' 4 texts are recorded and analyzed to find out the frequent English writing errors as shown in Table III.

TABLE III
Frequent English Writing Errors

No.	Error Types	Test 1	Test 2	Test 3	Test 4	Total (Sentence)
1.	Sentence fragment	44	34	25	23	126
2.	Subject-verb agreement	28	17	12	17	74
3.	Wrong form of verb tense	18	16	14	15	63
4.	Run-ons sentence	16	14	11	9	50
5.	Singular/plural noun endings	20	11	10	4	45
6.	Wrong form of verb pattern	22	10	8	6	46
7.	Lack of parallel structure	12	9	6	4	31
8.	Wrong word	3	-	2	-	5
9.	Dangling modifier	1	-	-	1	2
	Total	164	111	88	79	442

Based on Table III, it is found that frequent English writing errors found the course; Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes II; comprise 7 types of grammatical errors, namely Sentence fragment, Subject-verb agreement, Wrong form of verb tense, Run-ons sentence, with Singular or plural endings and Wrong form of verb pattern (with equal frequency), and Lack of parallel structure.

However, in terms of the reduction of writing errors found in the texts the students produced after receiving error correction using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment, it discloses the overall reduction of the grammatical errors.

2. The results of correction of frequent English writing errors by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment are collected and analyzed from the comparison of the students' writing ability shown in the pre and posttests in the 1st – 4th cycles of error correction strategy. The findings disclose the students' writing ability is higher significantly at .05 as shown in Table IV.

TABLE IV
THE RESULTS OF COMPARING THE STUDENTS' ABILITY IN WRITING PRE AND POST EXPERIMENT IN 1ST – 4TH CYCLES OF ERROR CORRECTION

Cycle	Test	N	Total Scores	Mean	S.D.	t	Sig
1	1 (pre)	28	10	4,32	1,42	4,45	0,05
2	2 (post)	28	10	5,36	1,28		
	2 (pre)	28	10	5,36	1,28	5,91	0,05
3	3 (post)	28	10	6,54	1,35		
	3 (pre)	28	10	6,54	1,53	5,87	0,05
4	4 (post)	28	10	7,21	1,52		

Table IV shows the results of comparing the students' ability in writing short texts pre and post experiment in the 1st to 4th cycles of error treatment.

In the 1st cycle of error correction, the total scores of test 1 which is pretest are 10 with mean scores at 4.32 and S.D. at 1.42 while the mean scores of test 2 which is posttest are higher at 5.36 with S.D. at 1.28. In comparing the results of test 1 with those of test 2 by using t-test, it is found that the students' writing ability after the experiment is higher with significant difference at 0.05.

In the 2nd cycle of error correction, the total scores of test 2 which is pretest are 10 with mean scores at 5.36 and S.D. at 1.28 while the mean scores of test 3 which is posttest are higher at 6.54 with S.D. at 1.53. In comparing the results of test 2 with those of test 3 by using t-test, it is found that the students' writing ability after the experiment is higher with significant difference at 0.05.

In the 3rd cycle of error correction, the total scores of test 3 which is pretest are 10 with mean scores at 6.54 and S.D. at 1.53 while the mean scores of test 4 which is posttest are higher at 7.21 with S.D. at 1.52. In comparing the results of test 3 with those of test 4 by using t-test, it is found that the students' writing ability after the experiment is higher with significant difference at 0.05.

It can, therefore, be concluded that the results of correction of frequent English writing errors by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment disclose the higher writing ability of students with significantly difference at 0.05.

V. FINDINGS AND LIMITATION

The research findings disclose 2 main points; 1) the frequent English writing errors found in the students' writing texts and 2) the results of correction of frequent English writing errors by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment.

A. The Frequent English Writing Errors Found in the Students Writing Texts

It is found that there are 7 types or grammatical errors ranging from Sentence fragment, Subject-verb agreement, Wrong form of verb tense, Run-ons sentence, Singular or plural endings, Wrong form of verb pattern, to Lack of parallel structure. These types of errors are treatable and the students are supposed to correct their own errors [19]. These findings require the teachers of writing not only to review the form and usage of these grammatical rules but also to raise the students' awareness of the cause of the misuse of the rules, such as the inflection of L1 and the overgeneralization of the rules. Moreover, the application of the rules in their new pieces of writing to avoid repeated mistakes should, also, be emphasized. These findings are in line with the suggestion of Dana R. Ferris [17] stating that the major process of the development of the students' writing skills is not placed on only the steps of teaching writing focusing on the students' products, but it should, also, be placed on common errors found in the students' writing. The teachers are, then, required to be prepared for the identification of errors in the students' texts and the efficient error correction strategies enabling students to avoid making repeated grammatical errors.

B. The Results of Correction of Frequent English Writing Errors by Using Coded Indirect Corrective Feedback and Error Treatment

Based on the research results, it is found that the students' writing ability after receiving the correction of frequent English writing errors by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment are higher with significantly difference at 0.05. These findings prove that error correction with coded indirect corrective feedback and corrective treatment are beneficial for improving students' writing accuracy and their overall writing ability. These findings are in line with the findings of [20], [21].

There are many reasons why these error treatment activities are efficient.

a. The use of coded indirect corrective feedback in identifying errors in the students' texts helps the students rethink of the grammar rules and challenge them to correct their own errors. In case the students can successfully correct their own errors, this cognitive process of thinking will enrich their grammar knowledge so that it retain in the long run. Since effective written communication is the main goal of many L2 and EFL courses and is a key to achievement in academic

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purposes, drawing the students' attention to mismatches between the target language writing structures and their own output would be of great importance [22].

b. Self and peer correction is one of the activities adopted in error treatment. It involves the students in a problem-solving task, a type of task which provokes cognitive conflict and might promote grammar acquisition in the long-run [2]. In this way the students will not make the repeated grammatical errors in their new pieces of writing and this leads to the reduction of grammatical errors. This is in line with the findings of Atai [16].
c. A 10-minute-student-teacher private conference is, also, one of the activities adopted in error treatment. This kind of corrective feedback strategy is carried out after self and peer correction with the purposes of following up the result of such correction, and providing an opportunity for clarification, instruction and negotiation in small group [19].
d. Search / Study / Share activity is a group assignment requiring the students to search for grammar rules they need to review with examples and exercises, and to study by themselves, then share them in class and post them on the course web-board so that other students can get quick reference of the grammar points. This activity promotes independent study and the use of ICT in language learning.

The limitation of this research is, however, about the contents, the duration of the study, and the text types assigned for students to write. The limitation of contents and the duration of the study are due to the course content and duration focusing on both reading and writing skills. That is the reason why there are only 4 units and 8 inconsecutive weeks in this study. Moreover, in terms of the limitation of text types, this research focuses on the students' ability to write short texts with not less than 150 words expressing their idea about the materials they've read. That is because it's too difficult for the students to write an argumentation composition or a descriptive story.

VI. Conclusion

In order to contribute to the need for further research on the value of providing written corrective feedback to EFL learners in writing classes, the present study investigates the frequent English writing errors found in the course; Reading and Writing for Academic Purposes II, and the results of correction of frequent English writing errors by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment. It is found that the frequent English writing errors found in the study include 7 grammatical errors; Fragment sentence, Subject-verb agreement, Wrong form of verb tense, Run-ons sentence, Singular or plural noun endings, Wrong form of verb pattern, and Lack of parallel structure. These types of errors are treatable since the causes of these errors are from the students' misuse of grammar rules or overgeneralization of the rules. In this case, it is advisable for teachers not to correct these errors for students in their texts, but to indirectly identify the errors in the students' texts and leave the task of error correction to the students and their peers.

Moreover, it is also found that the results of correction of frequent English writing errors by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment disclose the improvement of the students' writing ability and the reduction of the amount of writing errors in their new pieces of writing. These findings prove that error correction by using coded indirect corrective feedback and error treatment is beneficial for the development of the students' writing ability in the long-run.

It is advisable that teachers can adopt this kind of error correction strategy especially coded indirect corrective feedback in other courses focusing on writing reports or script for presentation. That is because providing error correction codes in the students' texts leads to the students' cognitive inflection of the errors identified indirectly by the teachers. Moreover, error treatment activities, such as self and peer correction and a 10-minute student-teacher conference are kinds of active learning, in which learners involve in problem solving activity and discussion group. These kinds of activities can, therefore, promote learning and the long term effect on the students' retention.

Finally, it is believed that the teaching of writing not only focuses on the steps of teaching methodology, but much more attention should also be placed on efficient strategies to provide feedback on the students' production as well as error treatment. Since these kinds of strategies help promote learners cognitive refection and active involvement in learning, it's worth for teachers and researchers find out the best and most efficient way to develop the students' writing ability.

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