Correction Techniques for Learners' Written Errors in English
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Abstract

Errors are part of the learning process and teaching foreign languages is not an easy mission even for the experienced teacher. For instance, teachers of English do explain the rules of using the language accurately, but still the majority of students keep making certain errors over and over again. The questions to be asked here are: "What error correction techniques do teachers of English- Badji Mokhtar University- use while correcting students' writings? And is Error correction the responsibility of teachers or learners? Or, is it a shared responsibility?.

Key words: Error Analysis, error correction techniques, formative assessment.

Les Techniques de Correction des Erreurs Ecrites des Apprenants d'Anglais

Résumé

Les erreurs font partie du processus d'apprentissage, et l'enseignement des langues étrangères n'est pas une tâche facile, même pour l'enseignant expérimenté. Par exemple, les enseignants d'Anglais expliquent avec précision les règles d'utilisation de la langue, mais la majorité des apprenants continue encore à commettre certaines erreurs. Les questions à se poser donc, sont: "Quelles sont les techniques de correction des erreurs écrites utilisées par les enseignants d'Anglais à l'université Badji Mokhtar? Et la correction des erreurs est-elle la responsabilité des enseignants ou des apprenants? Ou bien encore une responsabilité partagée?.

Mots-clés : Analyse des erreurs, techniques de correction, évaluation formative.

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تقنيات تصحيح أخطاء الكتابة لدى متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية

ملخص

تعدُّ الأخطاء جزءا لا يتجزأ من عملية التعلم، ويعتبر تدريس اللغات الأجنبية من المهام الشاقة حتى للأستاذ ذي الخبرة الواسعة. ففي تعليمية اللغة الإنجليزية مثلا يقوم الأستاذ بشرح قواعد استخدام اللغة بشكل دقيق، ومع ذلك يرتكب أغلب الطلاب بعض الأخطاء مرارا وتكرارا. ولهذا الصدد، تحاول هذه الدراسة الإجابة عن التساؤلات الآتية: ما التقنيات التي يستعملها الأساتذة في تقويم أخطاء الكتابة لدي متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة باجي مختار، عنابة؟ وهل مسؤولية تصحيح الخطأ تقع على عاتق الأساتذة أم الطلاب؟ أم تقع على عاتقهما معا؟

الكلمات المفاتيح: تحليل الأخطاء، تقنيات تصحيح الأخطاء، تقييم تكويني.

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Introduction:

The communicative language teaching approach is based on the premise that errors are part of the learning process. If learners make errors or mistakes, this implies that they face problems in assimilating or in applying the related information. Then, errors and mistakes are not synonymous; they are different! Error correction has always been related to the summative assessment with teachers' red ink on students' papers. The majority of students have developed an interest in the mark without any drive to know why they get that mark; consequently, they keep doing the same errors repeatedly. The questions to be asked are: "What error correction techniques do university teachers use while correcting students' papers? Do they apply the formative assessment? And are learners part of the error correction process? To answer these questions, a questionnaire was administered to teachers of English at Badji Mokhtar Unversity- Annaba.

Error Analysis:

In Second Language Acquisition, the field of error analysis was established in the 1970s. Error analysis was a reaction to contrastive analysis. Lopez, Fernandez, Iseni & Clarkson[1] highlight that error analysis showed that contrastive analysis was unable to predict the great majority of errors. Makino[2] explains that with the spread of error analysis, learners' errors are seen as a natural and indispensable part of the learning process.

In relation with teaching, Erdo an[3] sees that error analysis enables teachers to find out the sources of errors and to take pedagogical precautions towards them. He clarifies that error analysis deals with "learners' performance in terms of the cognitive processes they make use of in recognizing or coding the input they receive from the target language" [4]. He further reports Keshavars' view (1997) that the field of error analysis can be divided into two branches: theoretical and applied. Theoretical analysis of errors is mainly concerned with the process and strategies of language learning and its similarities with the first language acquisition.

However, applied error analysis is concerned with the organization of remedial courses, devising appropriate materials and teaching strategies based on the findings of theoretical error analysis. The issue of students' formal errors in the second language and how to deal with them still remains a concern for both experienced teachers and teachers-in-training[5], but is there a difference between mistake and error?

Error or Mistake:

According to Oladejo[6], two of the major concerns of language teaching in the 1950s, and for a substantial part of the 1960s, were error prevention and error correction. Carranza[7] refers to Coder's (1967) argument that errors that truly reveal learner's underlying knowledge of the language at a certain stage reflect their transitional competence. Errors of performance, on the other hand should be referred to as mistakes.

Likewise, Vilma[8] makes a distinction between errors which reflect gaps in students' knowledge, and mistakes which reflect occasional lapses in performance, confusion and slips of tongue. Errors occur because the student does not know what is correct; while mistakes occur because in a particular instance, the student is unable to perform what he or she knows[9]. Lopez et.al[10] view mistake as something natural, something that the teacher may identify, treat or ignore. Then, errors are related to learners' competence, while mistakes are related to their performance. The question to be asked here is: Do teachers have certain responsibility in learners' errors/mistakes?

Error/Mistake Causes:

Vilma[11] provides the following causes of making errors and mistakes:

1. Inadequacy of our teaching techniques.

2. Lack of hard work on the part of the learners.

3. The idea that we can't learn a language without making mistakes, consequently errors will occur despite our best efforts.

4. More attention is given to the concern about teaching than improving the way of learning the foreign language

5. The interference of the mother tongue (examples in phonology, word order, grammar,…etc.)

6. Overgeneralization (for example, overuse of the rules without focusing on exceptions as in the case of the "**s**" of plural, when the students wrongly say: child - childrens, foot- foots, etc)

7. Carelessness.

Hence, learners' lack of attention, laziness, overgeneralization, and the interference of the mother tongue are not the only reasons for making mistakes/errors; even teachers are responsible for that. Some teachers are more interested in providing the lessons that they do not pay attention to error correction, while others lack awareness of the different teaching techniques. Nevertheless, Carranza[12], clarifies that errors are significant in several ways as follows:

1. Errors tell the teacher how far the learner has progressed towards the goal.

2. They provide researchers with evidence on strategies and procedures the learner use to acquire a language.

3. They are indispensable to the learner himself because they can be regarded as a device in order to learn.

However, in order to avoid making constantly the same errors/mistakes, formative assessment provides opportunities for learners to discover and correct their own errors.

Formative Assessment:

Assessment is an essential part of the teaching/learning process. Brown[13] distinguishes two types of assessment: the formative and the summative. He defines the first as evaluating students in the process of forming their competencies and skills with the goal of helping them to continue that growth process. The key to such formation is the delivery (by the teacher) and internalization (by the student) of appropriate feedback on performance, with an eye toward the future continuation (or formation) of learning[14]. Whereas, "summative assessment aims to measure, or summarize, what a student has grasped, and typically occurs at the end of a course or unit instruction" [15]. He adds that summative assessment does not necessarily point the way to future progress[16].

Lambert & Lines[17] explain that formative assessment should be handled in the classroom as follows:

▪ Yield information that is useful in helping to improve teaching and learning

▪ Provide the basis for effective feedback to learners help them realize their undeveloped potential.

▪ Increase motivation.

▪ Help learners understand how they learn (best).

▪ Assist learners (and teachers) deciding what to learn.

▪ Show learners what and how well they have learned.

They further advocate that effective formative assessment needs "a leap of faith" by many teachers by believing in the importance of learning as a process and not only as a product. Besides, Bloxham & Boyd[18] pinpoint that the type of assessment affects how learners approach their learning, but it will not necessarily change every student's approach to learning[19]. Consequently, formative assessment is based on a continuous evaluation of learners' learning where teacher's feedback is very crucial.

Feedback:

Feedback is a necessary component of the assessment process. For Swaffield[20], "Feedback is powerful". Feedback is deeply rooted in regulatory system; "where part of the 'output' of a system is returned or fed back to it in a way that affects its performance, keeping it 'on track'" [21]. He adds; "feedback should be about whatever it is we (teachers) are trying to

improve"[22]. Rahimi & Dastjerdi[23] see that feedback is based on correcting learners' erroneous sentences.

Ellis et al. [24] clarify that the corrective feedback involves the following steps: 1)Indicating where the error has occurred; 2)Providing the correct structure; or, 3)Providing metalinguistic information describing the nature of the error, or any combination of these. Besides, Dinham[25] highlights that the corrective feedback can be written or spoken and may even be gestural, indicating approval, encouragement or criticism.

Bloxham & Boyd[26] show that recent studies have placed greater importance on the notion of "feed forward" which focuses on what a student should pay attention to in future assessment tasks. However, delaying the feedback time would affect its efficacy as learners would forget the language errors they relate with that lesson and will not be attentive to know them. Furthermore, in formative assessment, feedback is not only teachers' responsibility; learners too have certain roles to assume.

Self and Peer Correction:

Who should correct learners' errors? For Ganji[27] most of the students prefer to be corrected by their teachers, because they represent the authority and the source of knowledge in the classroom. However, Oladejo[28] admits that there is a general agreement that students should have significant role, through self and peer correction, in order to complement teacher's role in error correction. Bloxham & Boyd[29] explain that self-correction refers to learners' ability to provide their own feedback as they know their goals and are keen on achieving them. Chamot, et.al[30] see that self assessment entails reflecting on one's prior experiences and knowledge, as well as getting to one's current status.

In peer correction, peers correct each other's work through suggestions, comments, checking lists or rubrics. Smith[31] pinpoints that peer correction has received a share of attention in most modern ESL classrooms. Ganji[32] adds that self correction and peer-correction are the methods used in the learner-centered approaches these days, and both seem to be promising and effective. Therefore, learners' self-correction can have a long-lasting effect on their memory, because they are involved in the process directly and actively. Peer-correction is an informative method because it comes from someone who has had the same experience. Peer correction is less threatening, because no scoring is involved. However, teachers need to gain knowledge of the different types of self and peer assessment.

Self and Peer Assessment Types:

Brown[33] proposes five types of self and peer assessment. First, 'assessment for a specific performance' takes place directly after a performance through journals, self- correcting quizzes or tests. Second, 'Indirect assessment of general competence', teachers focus on general ability and disregard minor weaknesses. This can be through a scale of rating (Appendix1) or better through journal writing. Third, 'Metacognitive assessment for setting goals' that evaluates learners' personal goal setting and how to achieve them. For example, "My objective for this week is to participate effectively in all the sessions through lessons preparation and note taking". Fourth, in "Socioaffective assessment", learners' evaluate the efficacy of their social and affective strategies in learning through checklists. The list can include: efficacy in group/pair work, self confidence/shyness (in oral production/ doing a task/interacting with others), asking clarification questions,…etc. Finally, 'Student-engagement test' refers to the process of engaging students in designing test themselves.

Moreover, he[34] suggests four guidelines for self and peer assessment. First, teachers should tell the students the purpose of the assessment. Second, teachers should define clearly the task. Third, encourage objective evaluation of performance or ability by stressing the significance of being honest, trustful, responsible and objective in one's assessment. Fourth, teachers ensure beneficial washback through follow-up tasks such as self-analysis, reflective journal, and teacher's written feedback. Nevertheless, being aware of the different types of

self and peer assessment is not sufficient; teachers need to gain knowledge of the different techniques of correcting learners' written errors.

Written Error Correction Techniques: Teachers usually encounter certain problems while correcting errors. Woods[35] sees that the complexity of error correction lies in two important areas: 1) deciding that an error has occurred and interpreting what the error is, and 2) the need to be fair, consistent and correct in the treatment of the error. Iseni[36] admits that errors should be corrected more carefully in the written work, because if they are left without correction, these errors can become fossilized. He suggests that teachers can correct learners' errors following one of the four approaches.

First, "correcting all the mistakes" approach which is the traditional way as all mistakes are corrected by teachers' red ink. Second, "the selective correction of errors" presupposes teachers not to correct all the mistakes but only those that the teacher has decided to focus on as: tenses, verbs, articles, etc. This procedure is more practical and more effective if the teacher has clear objectives. Third, teachers underline the mistakes; write the nature of the mistake and the student has to correct them. This procedure is mainly done through symbols (Appendix2). This approach includes five phases as Vilma[37] explains:

1. Teachers underline the mistakes and write the right symbol in the margin on the same line.
Example: She <u>write</u> the poem when she was in exile.   (Gr/VT)
2. Underline the mistake and do not write the symbol; students would find the type of the mistake themselves**. Example:** She <u>wroted</u> the poem when she was in <u>exzile</u>.
3. Write the symbol on the margin, next to the line where the mistake is, but do not show exactly where the mistake is, and show only the line. Example:
In 1999, she writes the poem.   (Gr/VT)
4. Put a cross (X) on the margin, put as many crosses as mistakes are in a line. The students will find the mistake and the type, knowing how many mistakes are in one line. **Example:**
After, she leave his contry, Mary wroted execclent poem.   XXXXX
5. Put a cross next to the line in the margin, but do not show how many mistakes are. This is a more difficult way of correction. **Example:**
She leave his contry to be poet.   X

Fourth, teachers may leave the students find their own mistakes. This procedure develops learners' self correction as teachers may explain the types of mistakes on the margin, and learners focus on correcting them. Teachers opt for this procedure when they have time to discuss learners' mistakes, especially when the students made general mistakes. Example: In the margin teacher writes: "Be careful to grammar and spelling mistakes" and the student has to find and correct them himself.

Iseni[38] sees that some preparation is needed to reduce learners' number of mistakes and errors right before writing. In addition, the correction of the written work with comments helps the students to improve their work[39]. For instance, teacher's feedback can involve comments as: " I am impressed by your writing style", " well done", "Generally good", "well"," Your handwriting is not quite clear!", " The ideas are not coherent", ..etc.

The Study:
Research Questions and hypothesis:
This study attempts to investigate these research questions: "What error correction techniques do teachers of English at Badji Mokhtar University apply in their classrooms? Is error correction teachers' or learners' responsibility? And do teachers apply the summative or the formative assessment? We hypothesis that: if the teachers of English apply the formative assessment in correcting learners' written English, then the frequency of their errors would decrease.

Setting and participants:
This study took place in the department of English, Faculty of Letters, Social and Human Sciences, University of Badji Mokhtar- Annaba. In the academic year 2014-2015, eighteen

teachers of English from different specialties (language sciences, literature and civilization) were involved in this study. Fifteen teachers had the magister degree and three teachers are doctors. These teachers have different teaching experiences as university teachers arranging from 5 to 34 years.

Instrument of the Research: A questionnaire was conducted to investigate the actual teaching situation of English as a foreign language in the department of English. It examined mainly teachers' error correction practice. The questionnaire was divided into four sections: teachers' beliefs about error correction, teachers' error correction techniques, the role of peer and self-assessment in error correction, and technology role in error correction. The questionnaire included yes/no questions, multiple choice questions and open-ended questions.

Analysis and Results:

In the first section of the questionnaire, "teachers' beliefs about error correction", 6 teachers (33,33%) assert that their students *usually* make mistakes/errors in their writings; however, for 12 teachers (66,67%) their students *always* do so. No teacher opted for never, rarely or sometimes. In clarifying the reasons leading to this high frequency of committed errors, teachers' answers can be ranked as follows:

1. Interference of Arabic.
2. Equally: Learners' carelessness and errors are part of the learning process.
3. Interference of French and teachers' lack of error correction techniques.
4. Teachers' concern with teaching rather than correcting learners' errors.

Then, teachers see that learners' first and second languages have certain negative effects on their students' written English. In this case, teachers need to raise learners' awareness of the similarities and differences between written English and written Arabic; written English and written French. Here, contrastive analysis is of great profit for teachers to increase learners' awareness and decrease their errors.

A teacher who did not opt for any of the earlier options clarifies:" *None of these reasons, I think, but rather the lack of personal efforts at their [students]level: reading with attention to English as a Foreign language and therefore with attention to intuitive mechanism of avoiding errors*". This teacher refers to learners' laziness to make efforts while learning English. This teacher raised a very important point which is learners' ignorance of the importance of reading in English in order to avoid errors in writing.

Concerning whose responsibility is the correction of learners' written errors, a teacher (5,55%) sees that it is the responsibility of language teachers (grammar and written expression teachers); whereas 94,45% find that it is the responsibility of all teachers: language and content teachers. Then, the great majority of the teachers are aware of their crucial role in correcting students' errors whatever the module they are teaching.

In addition, (94,45%) perceive that correcting learners' errors is the responsibility of both teachers and learners; however, only one teacher believes that it is teachers' duty. As a result, these teachers acknowledge that learners should have an active role in the correction of their own errors.

In the second section on' teachers' error correction techniques', 44,45% of teachers under investigation while correcting their learners' papers are more concerned with providing the mark with the correction of the general errors, that is, selective correction. 33,33% focus on providing the mark with the correction of all the errors. Only, 22,22% of the teachers are concerned with providing the mark with certain hints about the errors that students will correct later by themselves. However, considering the results of this question in relation to the previous one, there is a discrepancy between what teachers' believe in concerning whose responsibility is error correction, and what they actually do in their classrooms. It is teachers' responsibility for 77,78% of the teachers (44,45%+ 33,33%). For a minority of teachers (22,22%), learners have an active role to play in correcting their written errors.

In answering the question on the types of errors they focus on while correcting, the great majority of teachers (90%) focus on correcting tenses, spelling, punctuation and the content. However, focusing on correcting essay structure is not an essential element in teachers' correction, except for two teachers. Then, the majority of teachers concentrate on the content of the written work and neglect the form.

Concerning feedback, all the teachers see it crucial on their learners' papers, and they provide the following reasons:

• *"To help them know their mistakes to avoid them"*.
• *"Feedback serves as a reference to the student to better recognize his/her errors and thereby avoid them in future. It also breaks repeated cycles of errors"*.
• *"Feedback is extremely important for the students. It makes them feel that their teacher is interested in what they produce"*.
• *"For the learner to understand where exactly he went wrong"*.
• *"Providing feedback is necessary for the learners to understand the nature of their errors, their strengths and weaknesses. It is also a form of encouragement"*.
• *"For the justification of the mark given, because they will have the correction on board afterward"*.

Then, essentially teachers provide feedback in order to raise their learners' awareness of their errors. It is a sign of interest and encouragement from teacher's part, and it is also a justification of the mark. Teachers, further, explain that their feedback takes the form of correction in addition to remarks as follows:

• *"By providing the right information: the content, important dates, right spelling, tense,.."*.
• *"Under the form of constructive remarks"*.
• *"By making remarks and observations on the students' papers in addition to oral discussion when necessary"*. This teacher provides written feedback on the paper and oral feedback in the classroom after giving students' papers.
• *"In a telegraphic style, I point out to the students the key ideas and words he/she should have stressed to address my questions"*.
• *"Show them their mistakes with correction sometimes"*.
• *"By producing general correction"*.

From these answers, it appears that some teachers take error correction itself as feedback; however, others see constructive remarks as feedback. Besides, a teacher joined the written feedback on the paper with the oral feedback in the classroom. This teacher is aware that learners need to discuss their errors in addition to the correction provided. This sheds light on an important point that not all what teachers wrote on learners' papers would be clear for them, they need further clarifications.

55,55% of the teachers explain that the day of paper correction (quizzes/ exams/ assignments), they begin with general correction, provide the mark then discuss every student' paper. Whereas, for 44,45%, they begin with general correction then provide the paper with the mark , but with no discussion with students. No teacher opted for the option of asking students, by the end of the session, to assess each others' papers or to assess them themselves either in a written form or orally. Then, where is the formative assessment of learners' papers either through self-assessment or peer assessment?

Conversely, in the third section on the role of peer and self-assessment in error correction, 72,22% think that peer assessment is beneficial for the following reasons:

• *"The students are more or less 'witnesses' of each other's errors and this makes them more involved and committed to avoid errors"*.
• *"students will remember each other's remarks easily and may understand each other's remarks because they are at the same level of communication. It seems also to be a funny experience that students may enjoy"*.

• *"Students feel more comfortable in this case".*

• *"It is a good strategy to boost students to learn from each other".*

• *"Peer assessment helps the students to detect their mistakes. The students prefer to be corrected by their peers than by the teacher who represents authority and power".*

• *"It allows the students to pay more attention to the kinds of errors they are likely to make in their future performance when evaluating their peers".*

Then, teachers see that peer-assessment develops learners' involvement in their learning, raises their awareness of their errors, increases their attention, and creates joy of learning. However, 11,11% see that peer assessment is not beneficial since " *most of the students care only about the mark and if they check each others' papers, it is only to verify the difference in teacher's evaluation*". Hence, according to this teacher, learners will use peer correction to assess teachers' evaluation and not to assess learners' errors. Whereas, 16,67% did not answer because "*students are unable to understand their mistakes*". This teacher believes that learners are unable to assess their own errors, and how can they assess others' errors? Here comes the "leap of faith" where teachers should believe they can make a change.

Teachers who see peer-assessment beneficial provide the following ways of applying it:

1. The teacher should show the importance of peer assessment before involving students in it.

2. Students exchange their papers.

3. Motivating students to read each other's papers carefully, and try to identify the errors and correct them.

4. Frequent exercises after each assignment before teacher's correction.

5. During the correction of the exams/tests, students compare the model answer with the ones in their peers' papers.

Concerning self assessment, 72,22% of the teachers see that it is beneficial in error correction, mainly for the following reasons:

• *"It is significant because the students usually do not forget the mistakes that they discover themselves".*

• *"self-assessment is very beneficial to avoid making the same mistake since it will be easily kept in mind because it is discovered by the students themselves".*

• *"I think it's important because it makes the student more responsible of his mistakes and this gives him/her a certain degree of maturity".*

Therefore, self-assessment develops learners' sense of responsibility and a long lasting retention of the correct form.

However, 11,11% opted for no; "*I think that any kind of assessment has to be spearheaded by the teacher, because a student who commits mistakes rarely admits the seriousness of his mistake and therefore, it is doubtful whether he/she will proceed to a serious remedial activity*", and "*The learner cannot really see his mistakes*". Though these teachers do not believe in learners' self-assessment, following the five steps of underlining the mistakes, writing the nature of the mistake and involving students in correcting them would assure certain degree of learners' self-assessment. 16,67% of the teachers provide no answer.

Then, the majority of the teachers under investigation show positive attitudes towards both self and peer assessment, though the great majority do not apply them in their classrooms. Consequently, formative assessment is absent in their classrooms.

In the last section on "technology role in error correction", 66,67% advance that technology and smart phones can help learners to effectively handle an active role in error correction:

▪ *"Yes but difficult, still it is not impossible if we learn how to use effectively the technology like using the dictionary".*

▪ *"My learners usually check how words are spelled in order to write them correctly. They also look up vocabulary variation".*

▪ *"I think technology is beneficial to error correction in many ways"*. Then, these teachers see that learners' self correction can be boosted through the use of technology via downloading dictionaries in order to check spelling via smart phones.

27,77% of the teachers see the opposite:

▪*"students would focus more on meaning rather than on accuracy which would heavily impact their level of reflection and accuracy in EFL"*.

▪*"learners will not feel the need to memorize the correct forms of language"*.

▪*"I think that the introduction of these technologies has further complicated the issue, because students have become almost insensitive to calls for self-assessment and self-correction simply because they have become over-dependent on those technologies to guide all their learning behaviors"*.

Hence, these teachers highlight that learners rely heavily on technology to the point that they become totally dependent on it and as a result they do not even memorize words' correct forms. Besides, they focus only on meaning and forget about grammar.

5,56% opted for both yes and no because it all depends on the learner and his environment (home , school, society). Hence, technology is an instrument with double edges, and here comes teachers' role in enlightening learners' minds with the best ways to use technology in error correction while focusing, on the same time, on retention, grammar, and autonomy. Technology is just a tool for a better learning.

For the open ended question about teachers' suggestions of possible ways/ techniques/ procedures to decrease learners' errors/mistakes in EFL writing, they propose the followings:

1- Students' reflective practices.
2- Systematic rereading (first guided then autonomous).
3- Teachers' eclectic approach in using error correction techniques and strategies.
4- Learners' self and peer assessment.
5- Students devote more time in correcting their written performance in class and discussing the ways to avoid the main types of errors with the guidance of the teacher.
6- Adopting peer assessment in the form of pair-work which would enlighten students' general knowledge of the foreign language as well as the content when discussing it with classmates.
7- Learners' training is the responsibility of all teachers.
8- The effective skill in enhancing learners' writing is reading.
9- Using dictionaries to check spelling and pronunciation.
10- Dictation.
11- Writing some sentences daily.
12- Focusing on learning the grammatical rules.
13- Using some vocabulary games.
14- Encourage them to identify their mistakes, assess them even during class whenever it is possible.
15- Through writing itself.

Therefore, teachers suggest that learners should be involved in self and peer assessment that start with some training in the classroom through reading, rereading, dictation, grammar exercises, vocabulary games, checking dictionary and writing tasks. In addition, discussing the ways of avoiding the main types of errors is another option to decrease learners' errors while writing in English.

Pedagogical Implications:

The questionnaire showed that the teachers under investigation were aware of the importance of self/peer assessment; however, they did not apply them in their classrooms, only a minority did. There is a discrepancy between what they believe in and what they did in their classrooms and as a result formative assessment is absent in their classroom. These teachers believe in the formative assessment, but they apply the summative one. As a result,

the frequency of their learners' error is always high as they confirmed themselves in the first section. Hence, teachers need to alter their correction techniques and engage gradually their learners in the correction of their own errors.

However, promoting effective error correction of learners' written work in our classrooms can be achieved by altering our beliefs, following certain stages in addition to applying/ modifying certain teaching techniques in accordance with our students' developmental level. First, for the best of our students, teachers should develop an awareness of their beliefs and practice in relation to error correction in their classrooms. For instance, correcting learners' written errors is no more the responsibility of only the written and the grammar teachers; all teachers, whatever their subject matters, are concerned. All teachers should develop an interest in the field of error correction, and they should be keen on enlarging their error correction technique repertoire.

Besides, teachers need to be aware of the focus of their correction; "is it grammar, spelling, meaning, content, form, or what? That is, before being engaged in the correction process, teachers should ask themselves:" What is the focus of my correction?" And which technique(s) will I apply? Moreover, in the written work, the correction focus should be both on form (as essay format or paragraph format, capitalization, punctuation …etc) and content (as spelling, meaning, grammar, coherence, cohesion, …etc). As a result, the picture becomes clear and neat in teachers' heads before proceeding in the correction.

In addition, teachers' beliefs about learners' role in error correction through self or peer correction are crucial for learner centred classrooms. Learners do not know how to be responsible on their learning, if teachers do not involve them actively in doing so. For a long lasting retention of correct language, formative assessment is the solution and self and peer correction should be part of the classroom practice. If teachers do not believe in the positive effects of self and peer correction and do not apply them, learners will never know their merits and their passivity will persist since error correction in this situation is teacher's responsibility.

Second, learners will not adopt self and peer correction with interest only if teachers underline their advantages and motivate them to do so. Learners' self assessment can take the form of finding out all the correct forms of the already underlined words; at this level students can make use of hard copy dictionaries or the digital ones. Learners need to discover their errors through the effective use of the technology they have. Besides, learners' peer assessment can be realized through teachers' provision of the correction sample to be followed by the peer. The peer can also check the underlined errors and correct them.

Third, teachers should be aware of the importance of involving learners before, during and after the correction of their written work. Before the correction, by paying their attention to the most occurred errors to be avoided. During the correction, teachers follow certain correction techniques that are in accordance with learners' level and provide effective feedback. After the correction of the written work, through involving learners in self/peer correction in addition to a teacher- learner discussion. This will assure formative assessment in correcting learners' written work.

Concerning the techniques of error correction, teachers can gradually go from the correction of major errors to the step where they just underline the errors and reponsibilise learners to find their types and correct them, either individually, in pairs, or through peer correction. As a result, the session of returning back learners' papers will not be solely about marks. Moreover, teachers' feedback on learners' papers is better to be followed by short discussion with students. Learners need to know where they have done well, where they missed the point, why they did not do well, and how to make it better next time. In fact, teachers should develop learners' need to know "how to be better in future writings". Learners gradually will shift interest from "What is my mark?" to "How to get a good mark?" To conclude with, teachers need to gain understanding of formative assessment, effective

corrective feedback, the different types of self and peer assessment, and the techniques of correcting learners' written errors.

Conclusion:

Error correction and its application are a serious issue in our classrooms, but is it teacher's or learners' responsibility? In fact it is both. The teacher is the knowledgeable figure in the classroom and s/he is the one who decides whether to deal with learners' errors or not. Besides, s/he who determines the correction focus, techniques' choice and learners' way of involvement. However, whatever procedure teachers use in correcting learners' written work, they should be aware of the significance of allowing students time to identify their mistakes/errors and correct them. Formative assessment is crucial for an effective error correction, and learners need to be involved in assessing their learning through self and peer-correction. Moreover, applying formative assessment urges teachers to provide effective feedback and to reflect on the appropriate techniques for correcting their learners' written English.

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Appendices:

Appendix1: Indirect self Assessment rating scale (Brown, 2004, p. 272)

I demonstrate active listening in class	5 4 3 2 1
I volunteer my comments in small-group work	5 4 3 2 1
When I don't know a word, I guess from context	5 4 3 2 1
My pronunciation is very clear	5 4 3 2 1
I make very few mistakes in verb tenses	5 4 3 2 1
I use logical connectors in my writing	5 4 3 2 1

Appendix2: Some correction symbols (Vilma, 2009, p. 52)

The following are **some correction symbols** that a lot of teachers use while correcting written work:

S – Spelling mistake

WO – Word Order

Gr – Grammar mistake

(VT – Verb Tense, S/P – Singular/Plural agreement, Mod – Modals, GI Gerund/Infinitive,

Com – Comparison, A/P – Active/Passive, Prep – Prepositions, etc.)

S/V – Subject/Verb agreement

Seg – Sentence Segment

^ - Something is missing

WW – Wrong Word

P – Punctuation

C – Capital letter

Inc. – Incomplete sentence

? – Not clear, what do you intend to mean.