Teachers' and Students' Attitudes Toward Error Correction in L2 Writing

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Comparing student and teacher attitudes toward various aspects of language and instruction including the way writing errors are corrected is a fruitful activity in langage education and SLA classroom research. To contribute to this line of inquiry, the present study investigated the preferences of 30 EFL teachers and 100 L2 students as to various language features as well as error marking techniques in writing. Two questionnaires were developed to elicit views of students and teachers on various error correction techniques in L2 writing. To add a qualitative dimension to the study and to triangulate the findings, nine teachers who took part in the survey study were invited for follow-up interviews. The results revealed that there are noticeable differences in the preferences and attitudes of teachers and students toward issues related to marking writing papers. Furthermore, not only were differences observed between students and teachers in terms of their preferences and attitudes, but there was also disagreement between teachers themselves and among students as to the most appropriate error correction techniques. Further results and implications of the study are discussed in the paper.

Keywords: preferences, features of language, error marking techniques, attitudes

Introduction

Responding to student writers' errors is a controversial issue and this controversy still rages between the supporters of both options – pro-correction and non-correction – since research has not been conclusive as to whether providing feedback has a significant effect on attaining fluency and accuracy in writing (Guenette, 2007).

For years and years, error correction in writing has been a matter of debate among language practitioners and researchers. Attitudes towards error correction range from the utter abolition of errors before 1960s, to strong disapproval of error correction as being noxious and unjustified in the late 1970s, and to an appreciation of the value of correcting errors in the 1980s (Lee, 1997). There is abundant evidence to indicate that ESL students crave for error correction and that it is effective (Agudo, 2012; Oladejo, 1993; Zhu, 2010). So, teachers are forced to deal with errors in the classroom (Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2002; Truscott, 1999). In spite of a sort of partnership or association that holds between error correction and the ESL / EFL classroom, the literature in language teaching includes evidence to substantiate the feebleness of error correction to guarantee that henceforth the learners will perform flawlessly (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2007; Truscott & Hsu, 2008).

Albeit the literature is abundant in arguments for and against the teachers' corrective feedback and comments, of course, with no apparent conclusive resolution, there exists paucity of arguments inquiring the preferences of students and teachers as far as corrective feedback is concerned.

There is not enough published work on students' preferences and viewpoints with respect to the relative importance of various features of language. Students' preferences, however, are important in offering them the right type of education. "It is important for learners to feel that their perceived needs are being catered to, if they are to develop a positive attitude toward what they are learning" (Oladejo, 1993, p. 73).

It is generally accepted that teachers require not only the necessary competence, teaching skills and experience, but also an understanding of the

non-linguistic aspects of teaching and learning such as understanding the learners, their psychological needs and their beliefs. Today, learners are no longer viewed as empty vessels to be filled with information, but as individuals who have their own personal understanding of the world around them (Chuang, 2012). Understanding learners' beliefs is indispensable in that more appropriate learner-centered language education policies can be developed or adopted.

Several studies have explored the impact of different types of teacher feedback on students' writing quality, but there is scant research examining students' and teachers' preferences for feedback and error correction. But preferences are important in that if teachers and students both have mutual understanding of the purpose of certain correction techniques and come to terms with their use, the odds are that the feedback would be fruitful. Conversely, "if teachers and students have mutually exclusive ideas regarding correction techniques, the result will most likely be feedback that is ineffective and, in the worst case, discouraging for students who are learning to write in their second language" (Diab, 2006, p. 2).

Horwitz (1988) avers that classroom realities that run counter to learners' anticipations about learning may give rise to looks of frustration and hinder learning (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). If the correction is to be efficacious, classroom practice cannot be based "rigidly on any standard practice derived from the opinions of linguists and teachers alone, but it must be flexible enough to incorporate the preferences and needs of the language learners" (Oladejo, 1993, p. 71). The discord and uncertainty about the usefulness of various types and amounts of corrective feedback and the discrepancy between students' and teachers' conceptions considering corrective feedback are not pedagogically without problems. Teachers, for instance, may be providing a certain type of corrective feedback but students may not accede to it. If students are not happy with a particular type of corrective feedback, they will hardly be inclined to use it. An agreement is, therefore, essential between teachers and students about what constitutes effective feedback (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010).

Purpose and Research Questions

The purpose of this study was to examine whether there exists any misfit between teachers' preference for a particular type of feedback and technique of error correction and those of the students. The questions were as follows:

1) On what aspect(s) of language (content, ideas, vocabulary, grammar, text organization, mechanical errors, etc.) do teachers offer and students receive feedback?
2) What are the favoured techniques of error correction according to teachers and students?

Research Methods

Participants

One hundred students and thirty teachers took part in this study. The three factors which affected the selection of the participants were their availabilty, their willingness to take part in the study and convenience. The study was conducted with the participation of students and teachers at Azad (Open) and Payam Noor Universities in the northern part of West Azerbaijan Province, Iran. The students' ages ranged from 18 to 51, with fifty percent being between 24 and 29 and just a minimal number of students (5%) aged 51. The participating students were in their final term of their BA degrees. They had successfully passed writing related courses such as 'English grammar 1 & 2', 'advanced writing', 'essay writing' and 'reading comprehension' course. Their language proficiency level ranged from low intermediate to intermediate. The majority of students (58%) were studying English Language Teaching; the rest were studying either English Language and Literature, or English Translation. Ten percent of the students claimed to have TOEFL certificates and just one person said to have TOLIMO

certificate. The participating students were from disparate native language backgrounds (i.e., Turkish, Persian, and Kurdish). The predominant gender was male with 58% as opposed to female with 42%.

Also present in this study were thirty teachers whose ages ranged from 20 to 50, with the following qualifications: six held a Ph.D degree; seven were Ph.D students; and the rest had an MA qualification (56.7%). Like students, the teachers were also from disparate native language backgrounds but unlike the students, the predominant gender category was female with 56.75%. Their teaching experience ranged from a minimum of one year to a maximum of 33 years.

Data Collection Instruments and Procedures

Data was elicited through the use of questionnaires and interviews. The questionnaire had two versions. The first one was designed for the teachers and the second one for the students. Except for addresses and reference conventions, the two versions were alike. To develop the questionnaire items, we consulted similar questionnaires used in previous studies (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Diab, 2005, 2006; Hamouda, 2011). The instruments used by other researchers were then adapted by modifying them and adding new items to make them suitable for this study. The questionnaires were composed of demographic information, multiple response items, closed items, such as yes / no, and Likert-type items. The questionnaire was pilot-tested with a small group of similar candidates to ensure that there was no ambiguity in the questionnaire items. Piloting resulted in some changes in wording of some of the items. The reliability of the final questionnaire was estimated using Cronbach's alpha ($r = 0.72$).

The candidates were instructed to complete the questionnaire individually. We administered the questionnaires in person in order to avoid a cross-fertilization effect which may occur in a collective administration of an instrument.

Apart from questionnaires, the data was also obtained through interviews.

It is worth noting that the responses to the questions were in English but the researchers, in the interest of clarity and comprehensibility, kept the content of interview intact but made some modifications in the wordings. The logic for using interviews in addition to questionnaires was that we wished to triangulate data gathered through the latter device and also to provide more oppotunity for candidates to delve into issues they did not have the space to do so while completing the questionnaires. Nine participants (four teachers and five students) were interviewed. The main bulk of information, in this study, was elicited through the use of questionnaires from the subjects (i.e., teachers and students). Similar but not exactly identical questionnaires were used. In other words, the questionnaire has two versions. The first one was designed for the teachers while the second one was for the students. Except for addresses and reference conventions and one small section exclusive to students, the two versions were alike.

Results

As stated before, the purpose of this quantitative - qualitative study was to determine the extent to which teachers' preferences and attitudes towards corrective feedback and features of langue were emphasized while giving feedback and techniques of error correction, and the degree of overlap (agreement or disagreement) with the views of students. To this end, all the information obtained from the participants was fed into SPSS for statistical analysis. Based on the nature of items in the questionnaires, SPSS yielded miscellaneous sorts of data. For multiple response items, frequency of participants attempted each item or option and their percentages are provided. For the Likert type items, frequency, mean of the students' and teachers' responses, standard deviation, standard error mean, Levene's test for equality of variances, t-test for equality of means, and p-value (i.e., level of significance) were computed. For closed items such as yes / no, frequency and percentage of participants as well as Pearson's Chi-square test (x^2) were

computed. The data obtained from the participants are presented is in the tables below.

TABLE 1
Frequencies of Teachers / Students' Responses to Amount of Corrective Feedback

| Choices | Teachers | | Students | | |
	F	%	F	%	Total
Teacher should mark all the errors.	12	40	29	29	41
Teacher should mark all the major errors but not the minor ones.	4	13.3	23	23	27
Teacher should mark most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them.	7	23.3	26	26	33
Teacher should mark only a few of the major errors.	2	6.7	6	6	8
Teacher should mark only the errors that interfere with communicating ideas.	22	73.3	18	18	40
Teacher should mark no errors and respond only to the ideas and content.	16	53.3	5	5	21
Teacher should not mark any errors.	0	0	23	23	23
Total	63	209.9	130	130	193

Note. Participants are allowed to make as many choices as they like. So, the total exceeds 100%.

As Table 1 shows, teachers and students have dissimilar and divergent opinions as far as the correction of errors is concerned. The most favored option for the teachers was that teacher should mark only the errors that interfere with communicating ideas (73.3%); the next most favored option for teachers is that teacher should mark no errors and only respond to the ideas and content (53.3%) and the least preferred option which did not draw the attention of any teacher is that teacher should not correct any errors (0%). As the table reveals, there exists a striking contrast between teachers' and

students' preferences. That is, the option that is highly perferred by the teachers (73.3%) just attracted the attention of 18% of students. The teachers' next preferred option (53.3%) was the students' least favored option (5%). More importantly, the option that teacher should not mark any errors, that did not draw the attention of any teachers, was favored by 23% of students The explanation for this may well be found in Oladejo (1993), Semke (1984), and Truscott and Hsu (2008) reasoning who opined that the return of papers embellished by unavoidable red marks, gives rise to looks of frustration and despair in the students' countenance. Such a frustration is clear in the remarks of one of the interviewed students: "I do not want my teachers to correct my errors. Error correction frustrates me and inhibits my willingness to perform in the language" (S4). From careful scrutiny of the table, one can detect that teachers' behaviour is influenced by certain patterns of thought or consideration. To put it simply, teachers mostly prefer correction of content errors but students' preference is the indiscrminate correction of all errors whether they are major or minor, grammatical or non-grammatical, excluding the 23% who reported that teacher should not mark any errors.

TABLE 2

Teachers / Students' Preference for the Correction of Different Types of Errors

	Teachers			Students		
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Organization errors	30	4.47	1.04	100	3.26	1.54
Grammatical errors	29	3.07	1.28	100	4.35	0.83
Content or ideas errors	30	4.43	1.04	99	2.98	1.41
Punctuation errors	29	1.90	1.24	99	2.85	1.28
Spelling errors	30	1.87	1.22	99	2.93	1.26
Vocabulary errors	30	2.73	1.26	99	4.17	0.99

The second type of items in the questionnaire are Likert type items in which the respondents show their preference or opinion by circling one of the scales (1 = not useful at all; 2 = not useful; 3 = doesn't matter; 4 = quite useful; and 5 = very useful). As shown in Table 2, the mean responses for

organization and *content or ideas* errors for both teachers and students are 4.47, 4.43 and 3.26, 2.98 respectively. Teachers' responses revealed that they favoured providing feedback on errors to do with organization and content whereas students' mean responses showed that students preference for the correction of organization errors was slightly positive (3.26) and for content or ideas errors was negative (2.98). In contrast, the comparison of mean responses of teachers for grammatical errors (3.07) and vocabulary errors (2.73) with mean responses of students for grammatical errors (4.35) and vocabulary errors (4.17), showed that students held an overall positive opinion towards the correction of grammatical and vocabulary errors, whereas teachers did not indicate any preference for the correction of grammatical errors and reacted negatively towards the correction of vocabulary errors. The results indicate that is there is a difference both between teachers and students on the one hand and among students themselves on the other hand in the imprtance they attach to various features of writing.

It is worth noting that the information contained in the Table 2 was not comprehensive enough to place the researchers in a position to pass judgments on the differences in participants' preferences or to say definitively whether there exists significant difference between the teachers and students as to the correction of different types of errors. The only piece of information which Table 2 provides is that, through looking at the mean responses of participants, one can say whether the participants held positive, neutral or negative opinions towards the correction of different types of errors. Therefore, further information is required in order to compare the performance of the two groups of participants. Table 3 details this information.

TABLE 3

Independent Groups Comparison on Various Aspects of Language

Options / Items		Levene's test for the Equality of Variances		*t*-test for the Equality of Means				
		F	Sig	*t*-test	Df	Sig(2-tailed)	Mean difference	Standard error difference
121	Equal variance not assumed	16.03	.000	5.04	66.176	.000	1.207	.239
122	Equal variance not assumed	26.47	.000	-5.09	35.158	.000	-1.281	.252
123	Equal variance not assumed	8.33	.005	6.02	62.118	.000	1.454	.242
124	Equal variance assumed	.45	.502	-3.55	126	.001	-.952	.268
125	Equal variance assumed	.24	.628	-4.06	127	.000	-1.063	.262
126	Equal variance assumed	3.58	.061	-6.72	127	.000	-1.438	.214

Note. For space constraints, the options / items are first coded and then entered into the table: 121 (Correction of organization errors), 122 (Correction of grammatical errors), 123 (Correction of content / ideas errors), 124 (Correction of punctuation errors), 125 (Correction of spelling errors), 126 (Correction of vocabulary errors).

As shown in Table 3, since the level of significance (.000) for Item 121 (correction of organization errors), is smaller than .05 on the Levene's test,

equal variance is not assumed. And because *t*-test value (5.04) is larger than ± 1.96 and *p*-value (.000) is smaller than .05, there is a significant difference between teachers and students on the correction of organization errors. The mean difference of (1.207 obtained from Table 2) indicates that teachers have a more positive opinion for the correction of organization errors than the students. For Item 122 (correction of grammatical errors), since *p*-value (.000) < .05, again equal variance is not assumed. Since *t*-test value (-5.09) exceeds ± 1.96 and *p*-value (.000) < .05, there is also a significant difference between teachers and students as to the correction of grammatical errors. But unlike the first item, the mean difference of -1.281 demonstrates that students (more than teachers) have a positive opinion of the correction of grammatical errors. Since for Item 123 (correction of content / ideas errors) the *p*-value (.005) < .05, the variances are not homogenous across groups either. *t*-test value (6.02) > ± 1.96 and *p*-value (.000) < .05, are indications of the fact that there is a significant difference between teachers and students as far as the correction of content or ideas errors is concerned. Mean difference of 1.454 demonstrates that teachers (more than the students) are inclined to correct content or idea errors.

But for Item 124 (correction of punctuation errors), Item 125 (correction of spelling errors) and Item 126 (correction of vocabulary errors) homogeneity of variances is assumed, for the *p*-values of Items 124, 125, and 126 (.502, .628, and .061) respectively exceed .05. Though there is a difference between teachers and students as far as the correction of punctuation errors is concerned, for the *t*-value (-3.55) > ± 1.96 and *p*-value (.001) < .05., but the mean difference of -.952 shows that both teachers and students have an overall slightly negative opinion towards the correction of punctuation errors. As with Item 124, in Item 125 (correction of spelling errors) *p*-value (.000) < .05 and *t*-value (-4.06) > ± 1.96, so there is a difference between the two groups under investigation. The difference of -1.063 shows that both teachers and students have an overall negative opinion toward the correction of spelling errors. And finally, since the *p*-value (.000) < .05. and *t*-test value (-6.72) > ± 1.96, there exists significant difference between teachers and

students as to the correction of vocabulary errors. The mean difference of -1.438 indicates that students have a positive opinion but teachers have a negative opinion toward the correction of vocabulary errors.

TABLE 4
Students' / Teachers' Evaluation of Various Correction Techniques

	Teachers			Students		
	n	*M*	*SD*	*n*	*M*	*SD*
Clues on how to fix an error	30	1.77	1.305	96	2.76	1.628
Error identification	30	1.97	1.450	91	2.66	1.477
Error correction with a comment	30	4.37	.718	93	4.10	.910
Comment with no correction	30	3.93	.640	91	3.48	1.129
Overt correction with no comment	30	4.27	.828	90	4.24	.865
Error ignored	29	1.72	1.131	88	1.94	1.299
Personal comment	30	1.67	1.295	92	2.11	1.305

The third type of items in the questionnaire are again Likert type items and examine teachers' and students' preference for various error correction techniques. The mean responses of teachers and students for clues on how to fix an error are 1.77 and 2.76 respectively suggesting that both groups held negative

attitude toward the technique in question though students' opinion is slightly negative. Error identification technique is not well received by both teachers and students. Error correction with a comment and error correction with no comment are the options that are positively favored by both teachers and students. Of surprise is the option of comment with no correction which considerably attracted the attention of both teachers and students. Error ignored and personal comment also were not well received by either teachers or students.

The striking point about this table is the teachers' and students' convergence of preference and opinion on the various error marking techniques though some slight differences in preference or opinion between the groups are sure to exist.

One may, through looking at Table 4, claim that whether teachers' or students' preference for a particular technique of marking errors is negative, neutral or positive, but one may not claim if there is a difference between the two groups. To elaborate on the differences between the two groups further information is needed which is presented in Table 5.

As shown in Table 5, since the p-value (.001) < .05 on the Levene's test for Item 131(clues on how to fix an error), variances are not homogeneous across the groups. In so far as t-test value (-3.53) > ± 1.96 and p-value (.001) < .05, one may claim that there is a significant difference between the teachers and students in their preference for this method of feedback. Mean differences (obtained from Table 4), however, show that both teachers and students hold a negative opinion towards this type of feedback. For Item 132 (error identification), since the p-value (.395) > .05, equal variances are assumed across the groups on the Levene's test. There is also difference between the groups under comparison since t-test value (-2.24) > ±1.96 and p-value (.027) < .05. Mean difference of -.693 is indicative of the fact that both teachers and students disapprove of the error identification technique but this disapproval is slightly stronger for teachers.

TABLE 5

Independent Groups Comparison on the Various Error Correction Marks

Options / Items	Levene's Test for the Equality of Variances			*t*-test for the Equality of Means				
		F	Sig	*t*-test	Df	Sig(2-tailed)	*M*	Std.error difference
131	Equal variance not assumed	12.63	.001	-3.53	59.77	.001	-1.03	.29
132	Equal variance assumed	.73	.395	-2.24	119	.027	-.69	.31
133	Equal variance assumed	.17	.686	1.48	121	.141	.27	.13
134	Equal variance not assumed	36.83	.000	2.71	88.93	.008	.45	.17
135	Equal variance assumed	.23	.630	.12	118	.902	.02	.18
136	Equal variance assumed	1.02	.315	-.81	115	.418	-.22	.27
137	Equal variance assumed	.02	.889	-1.61	120	.109	-.44	.27

Note. For space constraints, the options / items are first coded and then entered into the table. 131 (Clues or directions on how to fix an error), 132 (Error identification), 133 (Overt error correction with a comment), 134 (Comment with no correction), 135 (Overt error correction), 136 (Error ignored), and 137 (Personal comment).

As with Item 132, for Item 133 (overt correction with a comment) homogeneity of variances is assumed (*p*-value .686 > .05). There is, however, no significant difference between teachers and students as far as overt correction of errors is concerned since *p*-value (.141) > .05, and *t*-test (1.48) < ± 1.96. Mean difference of .270 confirms non-existence of difference between groups and teachers slightly more than students preferred this technique. For Item 134 (comment with no correction) there is also difference between

teachers and students on the this technique of providing feedback, for *p*-value (.008) < .05 and *t*-test value 2.71 > ± 1.96. There is no difference between teachers and students on Item 135 (overt correction) since *p*-value (.902) > .05 and *t*-test (.12) < ± 1.96. Equal variances are assumed on the Levene's test since *p*-value (.630) > .05. As regards Item 136 (error ignored) there is a convergence of opinions between teachers and students. In other words, there is no significant difference between teachers and students on the uselessness of this technique of error correction since the *p*-value (.418) > .05 and *t*-test value (-.81) < ± 1.96. The last item in the table is personal comment coded as 137. Homogeneity of variances on the Levene's test is assumed for the *p*-value (.889) > .05. There is also no significant difference between teachers and students, for *p*-value (.109) > .05 and *t*-test value (-1.61) < ± 1.96.

TABLE 6
Participants' Responses to the Correction of a Repeated Error

	Teachers					Students			
Yes	%	No	%	Total	Yes	%	No	%	Total
4	13.8	25	86	29 / 100%	66	69.5	29	30.5	95 / 100%

The fourth item type in the questionnaire (whether an error should be corrected every time it occurs) is a closed item in which the respondents show their preference / reaction for a repeated error in the students' compositions by choosing either 'Yes' or 'No'. whereas 69.5% of the students stated that it should be corrected, only a small minority of teachers (13.8%) responded positively. From mere percentages, however, one may not be able to say whether there exists a difference between the groups under comparison. One needs to compute a Chi-square test to comment on the differences.

TABLE 7
Using a Chi-square Test to Comment on Participants' Differences

	Value	Df	Sig (2-sided)
Pearson's Chi-square	28.019	1	.000

As Table 7 shows, a Chi-square test ($p < .05$) shows that there is a significant difference between the participants as far as the correction of a repeated error is concerned.

TABLE 8
Teachers' / Students' Preference on When to Give / Get Feedback

	Teachers		Students	
	F	*%*	*F*	*%*
I prefer to give / get feedback at the pre writing stage.	2	6.7	18	18
I prefer to give / get feedback at the drafting stage.	7	23.3	41	41
I prefer to give / get feedback at the revising stage.	23	76.7	31	31
I prefer to give / get feedback at the evaluation stage.	16	53.3	20	20
Total	48	160	110	110

The first type of items in the second section of the questionnaire are again multiple response items which examine teachers' / students' preference on when to give / get feedback. That is why the frequency of respondents goes beyond the actual number of respondents (teachers = 30 and students = 100) and so does the percentage.

The most favored option for the teachers is to give feedback at the revising stage (76.7%) and the next most favored option in the descending order of popularity is to give feedback at the evaluation stage (53.3%), while to get feedback at the drafting stage is the most preferred option for the students (41%). Unlike teachers who overwhelmingly prefer to give feedback at the revising and evaluation stages, students' preference is spread over the four options more or less, evenly.

TABLE 9
Teachers' / Students' Views Regarding the Amount of Written Correction

	Teachers		Students	
	F	*%*	*F*	*%*
I like / I' like my teacher to correct all the errors.	16	53.3	43	43.3
I like / I' like my teacher to correct some errors.	14	46.7	28	28.9
I like / I' like my teacher not to correct any errors.	0	0	26	26.8
Total	30	100	97	100

As can be seen in Table 9, items are close-ended in nature, meaning that respondents cannot make multiple choices. The options to correct all the errors and to correct some errors are favorably preferred by 53.3% and 46.7% of teachers respectively. Not even one teacher chose not to correct any errors option. This means that teachers are like-minded that students' errors should be corrected. In contrast, the option not to correct any errors attracted the attention of 26.8% of students, though approximately more than 70% of the students are in the favor of having all or some of their errors corrected. Though the difference between teachers and students in terms of their preference for the amount of written correction is obvious, one needs to compute Chi-square tests to comment professionally and statistically on whether there exists any difference between teachers and students.

TABLE 10
Chi-square Tests on the Amount of Written Correction

	Value	Df	Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	10.64	2	.005
Likelihood Ratio	16.43	2	.000
Linear-by Linear Association	4.84	1	.028

As revealed by Table 10, the difference between teachers and students as regards the amount of written correction is confirmed.

TABLE 11
Teachers' / Students' Views on the Color of Pen

	Teachers		Students	
	F	*%*	*F*	*%*
I Like / I'd like my teacher to use the red pen.	6	20	72	76.6
I Like / I'd like my teacher to use the pencil.	24	80	22	23.4
Total	30	100	94	100

The items in Table 11 are closed items, in which the participants are required to choose either the red pen or the pencil on giving or getting corrective feedback. There is a sharp contrast in the preferences of respondents as to the color of pen. 24 teachers out of 30 (80%) prefer to use pencil while giving feedback, while only a small minority of students (23.4%) want to receive feedback in pencil. As with most of the items above, though the difference between the respondents is obvious, a Chi-square test will reveal whether there is a significant difference between the teachers and students as regards the color of the pen.

TABLE 12
Chi-square Test on the Color of Pen

	Value	Df	Sig (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-square	31270	1	.000

Since $p < .05$, there is a significant difference between the teachers and students as to to the color of pen used while giving or receiving feedback.

TABLE 13
Teachers' / Students' Views on Teachers' Comments and Corrections

Options / Items	Teachers		Students	
	F	*%*	*F*	*%*
241	11	36.7	75	75
242	3	10	33	33
243	8	26.7	16	16
244	25	83.3	3	3
245	14	46.7	0	0
Total	61	203.4	127	127

Note. For space constraints, the options / items are first coded and then entered into the table: 241 (Reading carefully every mark / comment the teacher writes on their piece of work), 242 (Paying attention to feedback on vocabulary and grammar in their piece of work), 243 (Paying attention to feedback or comment on content and organization of their writing)**,** 244 (Concerning about the grade and paying no attention to the comments or feedback), and 245 (Not reading the entire composition again after the teacher has marked it)

The items included in Table 13 are multiple type items in which teachers and students can choose as many options as they wish. That is why the frequency of teachers (61) and students (127) attempting items is much greater than the actual number of teachers (30) and students (100). Percentages, in the table, go beyond 100% for the same reason.

As Table 13 shows, 83.3% of teachers reported that students are mainly concerned about the grade and pay no attention to the comments or feedback offered by the teachers, whereas a great majority of students (75%) think otherwise. In other words, there is a wide gap in the opinion of teachers and students regarding paying attention to the comments or feedback given by the teacher. Teachers' and students' opinion clashes are also blatant in a number of cases. In Option 241 (Reading carefully every mark / comment the teacher writes on their piece of work), only 36% of teachers reported that students carefully read comments teachers write on the students' papers whereas this figure is 75% for the students. Another area of opinion clashes relates to Item

245 (Not reading the entire composition again after the teacher has marked it). Approximately half of the teachers (46.7%) hold the viewpoint that students do not reread the entire composition after the teacher has marked it. The striking point is that this viewpoint is not supported by even a single student (0%). Opinion gap is also apparent in Item 242 (Paying attention to feedback on vocabulary and grammar in their piece of work) where only 10% of teachers report that students pay attention to feedback on vocabulary and grammar in their piece of work, while this figure is 33% for students.

Discussion

While explaining the results of the study, whenever necessity arises some extracts (in italics) will be given from students and teachers who participated in the study. For, as stated before, though the leading source of data for this study emanates from the teachers' and students' responses to the items included in the questionnaires (i.e., self-report data), the data obtained from the interviews conducted with the students and teachers with respect to two open-ended questions are noteworthy as well.

The Amount of Corrective Feedback Students and Teachers Think is Useful

Although the results of this study demonstrate that both teachers and students are optimistic about the effects brought about as a result of teachers' employing corrective feeback, there is considerable discrepancy between students and teachers as to areas or features of language that should be emphasized. There exist attitudinal differences among both teachers and students in how they prefer error correction and in what they believe is important to attend to in students' writing.

Whereas teachers give priority to providing feedback on errors of content or ideas and on errors that bring meaning negotiation process to a halt,

students prefer indiscriminately to get feedback on all errors, be it major or minor. The findings of this study corroborate the results of studies conducted by a number of writers. Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), for example, found that students gave priority to larger quantities of error correction on all types of errors, while teachers were selective and tended to focus on meaning negotiation and accuracy. As with this study, they also found that students, unlike teachers, crave feedback on as many errors as possible. Students prefer teachers to provide feedback on all errors, rather than focusing on global errors or those that impede communication only or those that deal with the content of writing.

Radecki and Swales (1988), supporting the viewpoints of students in this study and the stance adopted by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), believe that if teachers do not correct all errors whether they are mechanical, surface level errors, or major ones, the students might lose their faith in their teachers. In a similar vein, Leki (1991) concludes that students believe that good writing is equal to error-free writing and accordingly desire that all their errors be corrected. Leki's viewpoints were endorsed by a teacher in this study:

> All the students' errors should be dealt with in depth, but features of the language (such as wrong use of lexical items) which impede the process of meaning negotiation should take precedence over other features such as spelling, punctuation and grammar. The teachers may lose their credibility with the students if they do not correct all the errors (T5).

Another teacher believes otherwise:

> Teachers by placing too much emphasis on the mechanical errors to the total exclusion of ideas, content or text organization, they often lose sight of important aspects or features of language such as idea development. After all, writing is not a means to practice language (T3).

The above teacher's stance (T3) is well supported by a student on being interviewed who opined that I do not want my teachers to correct my errors. Error correction frustrates me and inhibits my willingness to perform in the language (S4).

Oladejo (1993) is at odds with S4's viewpoints and found that an overwhelming majority of students disagreed with the view that frequent error correction could baffle the learner and restrain his or her yearning to perform in the language.

Research findings have proposed that learners wish their errors corrected more often than teachers think, thus endorsing the viewpoints of students in this study. Oladejo (1993), for example, found that students were like-minded in their thinking that their errors should be corrected to gain fluency and accuracy in the language. Not only did the learners wish their errors to be corrected, but also they crave for comprehensive as opposed to selective error correction. As with the findings of this study, students in Oladejo's study strongly disagreed with the idea that grammatical errors should be disregarded in favor of errors that break down the exchange of meaning. Unlike Oladejo's students' viewpoints, one teacher in this study articulated opposing viewpoints.

> The preference should be given to the correction of grammatical errors, for if the teachers treat them with much lenience, they may deeply be seated in the student writer's interlanguage repertoire. Additionally, these (grammatical errors) are the first to be noticed at the first and glimpse glance by every reader. They belittle or detract the value of students' work (T4).

The results of this study are also in line with those of Diab (2006). About 73.3% of teachers in this study stated that they preferred correcting errors that interfere with communication; in Diab's study, eight out of 14 teachers held the same belief. Likewise, students' viewpoints in this study were not dissimilar to the ideas of students in Diab study. In this study, just 18% of

students wanted their teachers to correct errors that interfere with communication and in Diab's study only 10% of the students wanted their teachers to focus exclusively on errors that interfere with communication.

Teachers' / Students' Preference for the Correction of Different Types of Errors

Not only is there a wide rift between teachers' and students' beliefs about the amount of errors teachers should mark, there exists discordance between teachers and students as to the features of language that should receive due attention by teachers. Whereas teachers, in this study, strongly uphold paying attention to the errors of content / idea and organization, the students gave priority to errors of grammar and vocabulary choice. The preferences of students in this study, however, are inconsistent with those in Diab's (2005) about the importance of various features of their writing. Unlike the results of this study in which students attached more importance to grammar and vocabulary choice, he found that students preferred comments on the writing style and idea / content as the most important teacher feedback they longed for; fewer students chose organization, vocabulary choice and grammar. He also found that despite the fact that students showed a stronger inclination for the correction of all errors, it is promising that a great majority of them lay stress on the importance of comments on the writing style and content, in lieu of surface level errors. Diab's study of students' preferences for various features of language were in absolute agreement with the teachers' preferences in this study where teachers gave heavy weight to content and organization errors instead of vocabulary and grammar. Therefore, not only is there discrepancy between teachers and students as far as their preferences for features of language are concerned, the students viewpoints run counter to those of Diab's study.

Huntley (1992, in Diab, 2006), on the other hand, agreeing with the teachers stance in this study, upholds that feedback on content and organization should be given to the students while feedback on form should

be shunned. Huntley's assertion is in opposition with an overwhelming majority of students' viewpoints, for they favor indiscriminate correction of all types of errors whether they are minor or major and they prefer correction of grammatical errors and vocabulary choice over errors of content and ideas. Nevertheless, one student, in this study, backs Huntley's position by saying that I hold the comments on the writing style and ideas / content in high regard; at the same time, I have the preference for the correction of all the errors (S2).

As with Amrhein and Nassaji's (2010) finding, students in this study positively valued corrective feedback on form–focused errors such as grammatical errors, and vocabulary errors. However, they displayed negative or neutral opinions about the effectiveness of corrective feedback on ideas and content of the writing. Amrhein and Nassaji found that students were concerned about using correct English, implying that they set error-free writing rather than interesting and coherent content as their goal. This concern for accuracy rather than coherence of ideas is also found in the words of a student participating in this study who stated that I hold positive attitudes for error correction and highly favor teachers correcting all errors. I have a strong preference for the correction of grammatical errors rather than lexical and semantic errors (S1). By the same token, teachers' viewpoints, in this study, as to the relative importance of various features of language, were not dissimilar to teachers' viewpoints in the Amrhein and Nassaji study. They found that teachers believed that corrective feedback should "focus as much on comprehensibility of the content as on form–focused correction" (p. 115). As with the results of this study, Amrhein and Nassaji found that teachers demonstrated positive opinions towards the correction of organization errors, content or ideas errors as well as grammatical errors.

The findings of this study are irreconcilable with those of Semke (1984) and Zamel (1985) who found evidence indicating that students long for corrective feedback in the form of comments on content and ideas rather than on grammatical, structural, surface errors.

The preferences of students in this study, on the other hand, are in

harmony with Lee (2005; cited in Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010) who found that students preferred comprehensive corrective feedback rather than selective corrective feedback, and that students approved of overt correction.

Students' / Teachers' Evaluation of Various Error Correction Techniques

Despite a sharp contrast between teachers' and students' opinions and preferences on the amount of error correction and on the degree of importance that should be attached to various features of language such as content / idea, text organization, grammar, vocabulary, spelling, punctuation in the students' writing, there is, however, convergence of opinions and preferences between teachers and students as far as the employment of various error correction techniques is concerned. Both teachers and students hold the error correction techniques of error correction with a comment, overt correction with no comment, and comment with no correction in high regard. Similarly, other error marking techniques such as clues on how to fix an error, error identification, error ignored and personal comment are negatively received by teachers and students alike, though, admittedly, there are some subtle and slight differences between the said groups.

The results of this study accord with those of Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), who found that students thought it was chiefly the responsibility of teachers to do the correction; and as with this study, students in Amrhein and Nassaji study favorably viewed teachers correcting their errors explicitly with error correction with comment and overt correction ranking high. The explanation put forward by a student in Amrhein and Nassaji's study for the explicit error marking technique was that explicit types of written corrective feedback help them remember their errors and understand how to fix them. More or less similar explanations were put forward by a student and a teacher:

> Explicit correction of my errors and letting me know what was wrong with my writing helps me learn from my mistakes (S2).

> Explicitly showing the students what the correct answer is, is the optimal error correction technique employed by the great majority of teachers. I, personally, think that if the above technique is coupled with comment or explanation about the correct answer, it may prove to be more powerful or effective (T4).

As with students in this study, teachers preferred more explicit techniques of error correction which runs counter to teachers' preference in the Amrhein and Nassaji study. In that study, teachers unlike students, favored less explicit techniques of error correction.

Students' and teachers' preference for more explicit error correction techniques, in this study and students' preference in Amrhein and Nassaji, may imply that they prefer explicit and explanatory error marking techniques to being asked to self-correct or peer-correct. Self or peer correction has been found to be useful in some previous research (Ferris & Robberts, 2001; Makino, 1993).

Though an overwhelming majority of students in this study held explicit correction of errors in high regard, a small number of teachers and students in this study and particularly teachers in Amrhein and Nassaji study also showed that they valued clues on how to fix an error. The explanations put forward by some students on letting the students self correct are noteworthy and give support to previous research findings on the importance of self or peer correction. They opined:

> I would like my teacher to provide students with signals facilitating or accelerating peer- or self-correction, rather than immediately correcting non - target like form(s) in compositions (S8).

> I would like my teacher just to tell me why something is incorrect the way it is. Teachers' correction might not have long term effectiveness unless it is coupled with further meta linguistic comments and explanations (S9).

The preferences of students in this study are in agreement with the preferences of students in Nunan's (1988 in Farroukhi, 2007) study in which students' preference for teacher's error correction was high but teachers' preference for it was low, an observation which contradicts the findings of this study. Contrary to teachers' preference for explicit error correction in this study, teachers in Nunan's (1988 in Farroukhi, 2007) study displayed great tendency to help prepare students for role reversal, transferring the resposibility of error correction to students, which is the overall goal of language pegagogy. In plain language, the preference for teachers, in Nunan's study, was students' self–discovery of errors despite students' desire to evade this resposibility. According to Nunan (1988 cited in Farroukhi, 2007), "in a learner–centered curriculum, methodology, as much as any other element in the curriculum, must be informed by the attitudes of the learner" (p. 93). This shows a dramatic misfit between teachers' and students' views on error correction.

Nunan's reasoning stands to reason and seems theoretically sound, for error correction is a time-absorbing and painstaking activity and it seems that students' sanction of corrective feedback that demands less of their endeavour to correct explains their keenness on transferring the responsibility of error correction to teachers. There should be a role reversal. This responsibility (i.e., error correction) should be shouldered by the students themselves to foster student autonomy (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). Teachers' stance in Amrhein and Nassaji's contention is well echoed in the remarks of one teacher in this study, who said:

> The teachers should refrain from correcting students' errors themselves. They can emancipate themselves from this laborious, time consuming and painstaking undertaking through entrusting the responsibility of error correction to the students themselves. There is a wealth of evidence in the literature which demonstrates that students who make significant progress as a result of teacher feedback may be few and far between. Students learn most when they themselves embark on fixing

their errors. Besides, teacher generated discourse may not have the same influence as student generated discourse (T6).

Conclusion

A careful scrutiny of the teachers' and students' responses to the items included in the questionnaires, reveals some glaring discrepancies in the preferences, attitudes, and opinions of teachers and students alike. More importantly, both groups presented a somewhat disjointed front. In plain language, there was some variation between teachers themselves and students as far as their preferences, attitudes, and opinions for error correction techniques and various features of language are concerned. Teachers, however, should keep in mind that students' preferences and opinions are weighty and influential because any incongruity between students' and teachers' opinions can curb or hinder the effectiveness of corrective feedback (Hamouda, 2011).

Preferences are, thus, important. If teachers and students both have mutual understanding of the purpose of certain correction techniques and come to terms on their use, the odds are that feedback will be productive. The opposite is true; if teachers and students are at odds over the usefulness of certain correction techniques, the result will probably be feedback that is ineffective, and worse still, disheartening for students who are learning to write (Diab, 2005, 2006).

The findings of this study back the common and universal contention that students appear to crave surface–level error correction from their teachers and think that such feedback is useful, research evidence albeit arguing otherwise. If the teachers "do not surface–correct but respond to a writer's meaning, their credibility among their students can be hampered" (Radecki & Swales, 1988, p. 364).

Having said that students' preferences are important, it does not follow that they should be "idealized because they are not necessarily more effective for

being preferred" (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010, p. 117). Therefore, rather than right away complying with the preferences of students, it is vital that teachers be cognizant of the possible outcomes of the misfit between their students' expectations and their own expectations. Ignoring students' expectations may dishearten students. Teacher's immediate yielding to students' preferences and expectations, however, may give rise to student over-dependence on the teacher (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010).

Students' need for error correction does not necessarily imply the usefulness of such feedback (Radecki & Swales, 1988). Some students may "hold unrealistic beliefs about writing, usually based on limited knowledge or experience . Therefore, in addition to exploring students' beliefs, teachers can try to modify students' unrealistic expectations about error correction and reinforce realistic ones" (Diab, 2006, p. 6). Clearly, teachers must mediate and intervene to modify students' belief patterns and help them understand how feedback is supposed to influence their writing and why it is given in the way it is (Diab, 2005).

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