

SELF-CORRECTION-AND- REWRITING TECHNIQUE: THE INSTRUCTIONAL ASPECT OF COMPOSITION TEST

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List of Abbreviations

SCRT	Self-Correction-and-Rewriting Technique
CC	Correction Codes
ER	Error Recognition
CG	Control Group
EG1	Experimental Group 1
EG2	Experimental Group 2

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to experiment the use of Self-Correction-and-Rewriting Technique as a more effective procedure that may help students get rid of the errors they make when they write which may seriously inhibit communication. It is also conducted to consolidate students' command of the language through developing the accuracy of their written performance, due to the instrumental value that writing has in the TEFL context. In the present study students are provided with a motivating opportunity to practise writing through weekly conducted composition tests in which students are aided to correct their own errors, learn from them, and gain confidence in their ability to write and, eventually, use the language communicatively.

In the present study, the researcher experiments the use of Self-Correction-and-Rewriting Technique in dealing with students' papers of continually conducted composition tests aiming at:

1. Evaluating the effectiveness of employing self-correction and rewriting technique with the teacher's correction codes as a training procedure to develop students' written performance.
2. Evaluating the effectiveness of employing self-correction and rewriting technique with the students' error recognition as a training procedure to develop students' written performance.

3. Finding out which is more effective in learning, aiding students to correct their errors by the teacher marking the place and type of these errors, or asking students to recognize and correct their own errors by themselves.
4. Deciding on a more reliable scheme for scoring students' composition test papers.

To attain the aims of the study, the researcher conducts an experiment in which three groups are involved, two experimental groups and a control one. The following procedures are followed:

1. Students in the three groups are given one composition test weekly.
2. Errors of the students in the first group are marked and labeled with certain codes previously made known to students so as to inform them about the type of each error. Test papers are given back unrewarded to the students who are asked to rewrite their compositions correcting their own errors. The new test papers are checked and rewarded.
3. With the test papers of the second group, sentences that have errors are only underlined and students are asked to recognize then correct the errors they have made and rewrite their compositions.
4. Test papers of the students in the control group are treated traditionally, i.e., errors are marked and corrected by the teacher himself.
5. The experiment is run for about 14 weeks with a composition test administered once a week.

6. A post-test is administered to the students in the three groups to find out any possible development in the accuracy of their written performance.

The findings of the study show that Self-Correction – and-Rewriting Technique with the teacher’s correction codes proves to be an effective training procedure that may develop students’ written performance when employed in continually conducted composition tests. It is found out also that Self-Correction –and-Rewriting Technique with students’ error recognition has no significant effect on the development of students’ written performance.

In the light of the study of related literature and analysis of results obtained through the procedures followed in the study, the researcher decides on a more reliable scoring scheme for scoring students’ composition tests papers, along with a number of pedagogical recommendations.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

1.1. Statement of the Problem

One of the basic differences between the spoken form and the written form of language is that the former may have a variety of dialects, whereas the latter requires nearly a standard application of form, syntax, vocabulary and punctuation. Consequently, these items should receive greater emphasis on the part of the teacher when teaching and testing writing, and must be kept in mind on the part of the learners when performing any piece of writing.

Teachers of English at the college level in Iraq often notice distinct weaknesses in the students' written performance. Many studies have been carried out to investigate this problem through studying students' written compositions. Almost all of these studies have found out that these compositions are no more than a string of errors in spelling, punctuation, word formation, syntax, and vocabulary. (Ahmed1981,Dawood 1984, Surhan 1987, Jassim 1988, Abdul-Rahman 1989, AL-Saedi 1989, Hannonah 1990, Al-Azzawi1998,AL-Karkhi 1999). There is a real need, then, for adopting instructional techniques that

may be more beneficial in developing students' written performance.

On the other hand, asking students to write compositions is one of the basic techniques of teaching writing as well as testing it in mostly all TEFL institutions. Yet, little research seems to have been done on the effectiveness or otherwise of the ways in which students' compositions are corrected (Murphy, 1997).

However, when marking students' composition test papers, teachers in general tend to inform their students about the errors they commit and provide them with the correct forms of these errors (teacher correction). This tendency on the part of teachers seems to be global rather than local¹.

After spending a lot of time correcting students' errors in their composition test papers, teachers are often disappointed to see their students only glance at their grade and throw their papers away with the teacher correction left unnoticed on them. They may wonder what, if anything, their students have learned from their work (Wood, 1993:38).

So, in addition to being exhausting to the teacher and time consuming, teacher correction technique appears to be of little instructional value. Moreover, it does not correspond to the calls of mostly all modern methods of language teaching to help learners to be, as much as possible, responsible for their learning.

¹There was a vote on the Internet Web concerning the same issue. It was conducted by the BBC and the British Council in London. The results of the vote showed that 76% of teachers all over the world try to correct most/all of their students' errors, 21% correct some errors, and 3% do not correct any error. {<http://www.bbc.co.uk/teachingenglish/errors> (20 Sep.2003)}

However, it is assumed that, in some settings, students' self-correction of errors may be more effective than teacher correction in consolidating students' learning of the foreign language, yet "this assumption has neither been confirmed nor disapproved in the relevant literature" (Kavaliauskiene, 2004).

To the researcher's best knowledge, no alternative technique in error correction has, yet, been experimented upon in Iraq. This study is an attempt at bridging this gap in the literature.

1.2. Significance of the Study

The primary task of the teacher of EFL is to develop students' command of the language. This task cannot be achieved without helping students get rid of the errors they are likely to commit when they use the language. At the colleges of education, the need for developing students' accuracy of language use is greater since these colleges aim at producing competent and linguistically well-qualified teachers of English who are likely to be the main, if not the only, model that intermediate and secondary school students have.

It is commonly known that writing has a special place in the EFL context because of its instrumental value in the classroom (Pahuja, 1995:164). As a classroom activity it is "essential in learning a language since it reinforces what has been learned through oral methods" (French, 1963:71). A part

from its intrinsic value, writing also provides a variety in classroom procedures, in addition to "making possible individualized work in language classes"(Paulston & Bruder,1976:203). On the other hand, errors committed by foreign language students when performing any piece of writing can be viewed partly positively as a device by which students may learn the target language (Corder, 1974:69). Thus, the significance of the present study stems from the idea that it is directed to helping students get rid of the errors they make when they write, which may seriously inhibit communication. It is also conducted to consolidate students' command of the language through developing the accuracy of their written performance. It also provides students with a motivating opportunity to practise writing through weekly-conducted composition test in which students are aided to correct their own errors, learn from them, and gain confidence in their ability to write. Finally, even though the study is geared to the tertiary level, it is hoped to be of significance to EFL teachers at all levels of education since correction is one of the most serious problems any EFL teacher faces. It may also be helpful to

teachers of foreign languages in Iraq other than English since solving this problem will certainly be high on their agenda.

1.3. Aims of the Study

The present study aims at:

5. Evaluating the effectiveness of employing SCRT with the teacher's CC as a training procedure to develop students' written performance.
6. Evaluating the effectiveness of employing SCRT with the students' ER as a training procedure to develop students' written performance.
7. Finding out which is more effective in learning, aiding students to correct their errors by the teacher marking the place and type of these errors, or asking students to recognize and correct their own errors by themselves.
8. Deciding on a more reliable scheme for scoring students' composition test papers.

1.4. The Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that:

1. SCRT with teacher's CC in dealing with students' papers of continually conducted composition tests has no significant effect in developing the accuracy of students' written performance.
2. SCRT with students' ER in dealing with students' papers of continually conducted composition tests has no significant effect in developing the accuracy of students' written performance.

3. In SCRT there is no significant difference, concerning the effect on learning, between aiding students (with CC) to find out the place and type of the errors they have to correct, and asking students to find, recognize, and correct their errors by themselves (ER).

1.5. Limits of the Study

This study is limited to:

1. Evaluating the effectiveness of SCRT in composition test as an instructional procedure to develop students' writing accuracy.
2. Second year students of the Department of English, College of Education-Ibn Rushd, University of Baghdad during the first term of the academic year 2003-2004.

1.6. Definition of Basic Terms

1. Self correction and rewriting technique:

It is a technique in which students are given back their composition test papers unrewarded, asking them to rewrite their compositions, after correcting their own errors with or without the aid of their teacher. The new versions of compositions are to receive the marks.

2. Correction Codes:

They are a set of symbols used by the teacher to mark students' errors in a composition test. These symbols indicate the type of these errors so as to help students correct them.

3. Errors:

They are systematic deviations from norms made by students in composition test. They can be related to language use or to the general layout of composition.

4. Error Recognition:

It is the ability of students to recognize the errors they make in composition test as a step toward self-correcting these errors.

5. Composition Test:

It is a language assessment method in which students manipulate their skill in structuring words in order to produce linguistically accurate sentences that are linked to form a piece of continuous writing which successfully communicates students' thoughts and ideas on a certain topic(Heaton,1975:127). This piece of writing should be laid out in an accepted form.

CHAPTER TWO

Theoretical Background

2.1. Testing and Instruction

Language tests in general form an essential part of the instructional process in its two main phases; teaching and learning. Language teachers realize that tests are effective means by which they can improve their teaching as well as stimulate and consolidate students' learning. Moreover, "language tests can be a valuable tool for providing information that is relevant to several concerns in language teaching" (Bachman & Palmer,2000:8).

However, classroom tests should serve at least two functions; evaluation and instruction. Teaching should involve evaluation, for without evaluation "the results of teaching would be foolish" (Eble,1972:41). It is impossible to carry on teaching over a period of time without evaluating the progress of students' learning. For the sake of evaluation, no other means that are both efficient and beneficial have been discovered yet instead of tests (Hyman,1974:324).

Unfortunately, many teachers view classroom testing exclusively as evaluation procedures, while they should realize

that the high mark often scored by a student in one skill or area of language such as reading , writing, translation .. etc, may overlook the probable fact that this student may be deficient in other areas of language. Thus, “emphasis on the mark rather than on learning is a drawback in our system of evaluation” (AL-Mutawa & Kailani,1989:160).

Teachers on the one hand, may view students’ results of a test as an indicator of their progress in learning, i.e., how well they are approaching the mastery of the content being taught. This, in turn, enables teachers to judge the effectiveness of their plans and teaching techniques, and modify them if necessary, to meet this progress. Basanta (1995:3) illustrates this clearly when she says that

There is the personal implication that I would call ‘the image in the mirror’. Testing puts you face – to – face with your own effectiveness as a teacher.

In this sense, tests can be as frightening and frustrating to the teachers as they are for their students.

The diagnostic feature of tests gives teachers also feedback about the strong and weak points in their students’ performance so that teachers can take remedial procedures and/or modify their classroom teaching techniques.

Moreover, tests play an apparently significant role in motivating students to learn and directing this learning because

they tend to work harder when they expect a test (Lewis,1982:57). The reason behind this is explained by Al-Mutawa & Kailani, who point out that “students endeavor to score high grades in order to be able to join higher institutes and to meet the psychological need of achievement”(1989:159).

Language tests can also be viewed as a tool for clarifying instructional objectives and evaluating their relevance along with the instructional materials and activities to the language use in the light of the needs of students involved in the programme of instruction(Bachman & Palmer,2000:8).

Finally , the most obvious instructional aspect of language tests is the feedback that has a direct mutual effect on both teaching and learning. It can be used as a teaching procedure through which the teacher can reinforce, guide, and modify students’ learning. If it is given positively (e.g. praise comments), it is likely to encourage students to involve in more practice of language and give them confidence in their performance. When it is negatively given (e.g. error correction), it has some undeniable value in helping students widen their linguistic perspectives, get rid of their errors, and ultimately master the language accurately.

Language tests, then, serve a multitude of purposes in the ELT context, and thus, indistinguishable from general instructional practice. So, it can be concluded that “in a comprehensive theory, tests are not merely part of the

instructional process; they are the essence of it” (Oller, 1987:45).

2.2. Composition Test

Students’ competence in writing and their acquisition of vocabulary items and grammatical structures via writing were traditionally assessed through translation tests. Thus, students were asked to translate paragraphs or separate sentences from the native language into the target one. Although these tests lent themselves to more reliable scoring, teachers and language experts, at a later stage, started to question their validity. However, it was very obvious that translation tests do not really test the writing skill (Valette,1967:219).

The communicative movement in language teaching highlights the significance of communicative competence, productive capacities and the ability of self-expression in language. What follows is an increasing interest in language tests that involve integrated performance on the part of learners. Such tests integrate knowledge of relevant systematic features of language within meaningful context. Accordingly, a distinction is made between integrative tests (best represented by composition writing) and discrete-point tests (best represented by multiple-choice test) which are viewed as “focusing too exclusively on knowledge of formal linguistic system for its own sake rather than on the way such knowledge

is used to achieve communication”(McNamara,2000:14). As a result, teachers start to rely heavily on the written test of communication; namely composition test.

The ability to express and organize ideas and experiences in the written form is regarded as one of the most important skills that any educational programme seeks to develop. This stems from the idea that in this activity “all of language skills are substantially interrelated” (Oller, 1979:382). Composition test, as the chief technique of assessing as well as developing this ability, enjoys a great prestige in language assessment and represent one of the basic indispensable classroom activities.

Composition test is mainly based on the idea that, since all authentic uses of language require some degree of comprehension, they can be regarded as language tests. This idea, in turn, stems from the fact that comprehension always implicitly involves a certain kind of evaluation (Oller,1987:43). Accordingly, any use of language to represent meaning that can be evaluated and graded may be viewed as a language test.

Scholars in the field of language and language teaching do not mostly view composition writing as a mere test of students’ ability to write, rather they consider it a sign of intelligence, education, and academic achievement as well (Lado,1964:162). Since it forces students to use their intellectual abilities, illustrate their ideas , organize what they know , and deal with mature topics rather than trivial details, it is “so essential for real-life communication’(Heaton,1975:135).

In addition to providing students with a real opportunity to practise the real use of language, composition test motivates students to involve in language learning better than any objective – type test may do. This is because students, when writing a composition, are supposed to write about topics that are related to their own life, explain their own ideas in their own words, and organize them in their own style.

Although composition test requires more work on the teacher as well as his/her students , it is well-known for being a profitable assessment technique, because ‘it offers a rich yield of diagnostic information concerning the learners developing use of language’(Oller,1979:381).

Finally , a composition test enjoys a high degree of validity in testing different areas of language not only writing. It can be used effectively in testing basic structures, grammatical relations, vocabulary items, in addition to different writing skills. Then, if a more reliable scoring scheme is followed, a composition test “would appear a far more valid test than any number of objective tests of grammar” (Heaton,1975:135).

2.2.1. Types of Composition Test

Composition tests are mainly of two types ; guided composition and free composition.

2.2.1.1. Guided Composition

In such tests, students are guided by their teacher, in one way or another, to write a paragraph or more about a certain subject. Students here should restrictively respond to the guiding cues provided by their teacher. These cues may take several forms:

1. Visual cues : filmstrip, silent movies or cartoons, series of pictures or diagrams.
2. Oral cues: interviews, message taking , story telling.
3. Written cues: skeleton diagrams, writing notes or letters, answering an advertisement, filling out an application and answering questions.

Since students are to respond to the same cues, they are expected to produce the same paragraph. Although this makes the scoring of a guided composition more objective and reliable, it cannot be regarded as a truly communicative activity. However, it is best used in the early stages of language learning or in the transition from a sentence exercise to an early stage of self-expression. Therefore, it is advisable that the teacher offers varied graded degrees of guidance through the course to develop students' written performance gradually until they manage to write free composition (Valette,1967:254).

Throughout the present study, 'composition test' is going to be used to refer exclusively to the second type of composition (Free composition).

2.2.1.2. Free Composition

Students are asked here to write a composition of more than one paragraph about a certain subject. They are provided only with the subject and usually with the acceptable size of composition (a range of the number of words). Students are also responsible for choosing a suitable title for the written script.

2.2.2. Problems of Composition Test

In spite of its invaluable profits in language teaching , a composition test, if not appropriately conducted and scored, is likely to yield problems. As a subjective-type assessment, the main problem in conducting composition test lies in its scoring. Although it is usually criticized for being time consuming and, therefore, tiring to the teacher, composition scoring is chiefly attacked on the ground of unreliability. Scoring reliability is regarded one of the characteristics of a good test. It refers to the consistency of scores obtained by the same students when reexamined with the same test on a different occasion. It may also refer to the consistency of scores given by different scorers when grading the same performance of the same individual students (Anastasi, 1976:103).

It has long been believed that subjective ratings are less accurate than more objective scoring schemes. Therefore, the composition test, due to the dominant concerns for reliability, was discouraged in the 1950s and 1960s. Writing as well as other integrative types of performance were assessed by separate tests of control over the knowledge of grammatical system and vocabulary items. Supported by the advent of communicative approach to language teaching, with its emphasis being mainly on how linguistic knowledge is really used by learners, composition test has become indispensable in the evaluation of actual use of language as the art in which students- especially advanced ones- are expected to gain proficiency (McNamara,2000:15).

It is commonly known that the subjective nature of scoring is behind the probably unreliable scores yielded by a composition test. This subjectivity has been investigated by many scholars (Such as Harris1969, Heaton1975, Pilliner1976, Sesnan1988, Norman1990, McNamara2000, etc.). They mostly agree on the following as conceivable causes of subjectivity:

1. Scorers may award their marks according to different standards, for example, on what the student has written, the general layout of the script, or the previous impression about the student.
2. The awarded scores may differ in average standard or level, i.e., scorers may be different in their overall leniency.

3. Scores may show certain tendency of harshness or leniency in relation to one group of students rather than another, or one particular idea (expressed in students' scripts) rather than another.
4. Scorers are likely to differ from each other in the way they interpret the scoring scale they are employing.
5. The psychological and/or physical state of the scorer at the time of scoring may be another remarkable cause of subjectivity.

On the other hand, Oller (1979:394) believes that judges may truly differ widely in their awarding of the same written performance on the same rating scale, yet this does not necessarily prove that their judgments are unreliable. To illustrate his idea, Oller gives us an example in which two scorers are asked to grade composition test papers of three students. The grading scale allows for marks to be given between 0-10. Scorer1 is by nature more severe than scorer2. Their marks are as follows:

	<u>Scorer1</u>	<u>Scorer2</u>
Student A	3	10
Student B	2	9
Student C	1	8

Although scorer1 consistently awards much lower marks than scorer2, both of them rank students in exactly the

same order ,i.e., student A first, followed by student B and student C comes last. The judges, then, may have disagreed about how to calibrate the scale, but nonetheless, their evaluations are perfectly correlated.

Needless to say the high correlation among the arrays of marks given by different scorers does reflect high reliability in the test scoring procedures(Anastasi,1976:113).

However, more recent work on assessing language learners' written performance has shown that "even untrained raters tend to render fairly reliable judgments though trained do still better" (Oller,1979:392). Still , scoring reliability , as Heaton (1975:138) suggests, can be remarkably increased by the careful specification of an analytical scoring scheme, along with clear and specific direction for both students (how to perform) and teachers (how to grade).

2.2.3. Scoring Composition Test

Composition test is well known for being easy to conduct, for the teacher can simply provide the class with a topic asking them to write about. Yet, the teacher, after the test, is likely to face the difficult and time-consuming task of scoring students' test papers.

Reading, commenting on, and marking students' compositions cannot be simply done by counting the number of correctly spelled words and accurately structured sentences. The teacher should often use his/her own judgment in

considering what the student intends to say, rather than merely going by what appears in his/her composition. So, in addition to checking the accuracy of grammar and spelling, there are many questions to be raised by the teacher before awarding students' scripts. These can be like: is the message clear?, is it well organized?, are the words appropriately chosen?, is the text easily understood by a native speaker?, is the script written with an effecting style...etc (Richardson,2003:4). Answering these questions is often a bewildering task for the teacher who often experiences a period of hesitation about the mark that should be given to each script. And when grading is over, the possibility of being unfair to one of the students may also make the teacher feel uncomfortable.

The teacher , however, needs to consider, first of all, the purpose of the test . If it is conducted mainly to assess language mastery, the teacher should base his/her grading primarily on the form and only secondarily on the content (Tambini,1999:5).

Generally speaking, there are two main schemes of scoring composition test; the Holistic and the Analytic schemes of scoring.

2.2.3.1. Holistic Scoring scheme

It is often referred to as the “impressionistic” scoring because it involves the assignment of a single score to a piece of writing on the basis of an overall impression of it. It

looks at the entire written text as one unit of communication; therefore, individual features of the text such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and organization should never be viewed as separate entities (Terry ,1989:47).

Although holistic scoring has the advantage of being very rapid, it usually tends to be more subjective, and thus, yield quite unreliable results. However, if the test purpose is primarily to assess students' ability to use the language communicatively, the holistic scoring scheme is preferable (Gilfert,1999:17)

2.2.3.2. Analytic Scoring scheme

Recent research strongly suggests that scoring performance assessments, including composition test, by analytic procedure is likely to give more reliable results than those yielded by the global impressionistic method (Pilliner,1976:28) .

Analytic scoring consists of the teacher's attempt to separate the various elements of a composition for scoring purposes only. Each aspect , such as spelling , grammar, vocabulary, punctuation, organization ..etc, is allotted a mark out of some maximum. In addition to the virtue of being more reliable, this procedure is suitable for classroom situation. Since previously specified elements have been marked separately, each student is aware of how his/her mark has been achieved.

Heaton (1975:138) suggests the following as the most common aspects that can be evaluated separately in students' written performance :

1. grammar : the writing of grammatically correct sentences.
2. mechanics : the accuracy of punctuation and spelling.
3. fluency: the style and ease of communication.
4. relevance : the content in relation to the task demanded of students.
5. vocabulary: the suitability and range of the vocabulary used.

To what extent should the EFL teacher emphasize grammatical accuracy or communicative fluency in their evaluation of students' compositions is far from being resolved. In general, "there is still no definite agreement as to what should receive greater attention form or meaning" (Wasanasomithi, 1998: 23).

However, the specification of aspects to be awarded and the mark allotted to each primarily depends on the purpose of the test (Nasr,1972:173). In some cases all aspects are allotted equal weight, yet the relative significance of different aspects , as perceived by the teacher, is usually reflected in weightings allotted to the various aspects.

The idea of giving a number of scores makes scoring more reliable, because this usually involves balancing perceptions of a set of different aspects of the text. And it is

unlikely that the teacher will fail to award all these aspects appropriately (McNamara,2000:44).

Moreover, previous specification of aspects may enable the teacher, at the time of scoring , to consider certain aspects of students' performance which s/he might otherwise ignore. This may also increase the reliability of scoring.

Still, analytic scoring has two drawbacks. Firstly, it obviously takes longer time than the holistic scoring because the teacher often has several aspects to check. Secondly, due to the fact that the whole may be greater than the sum of its parts, analytic scoring "may be very reliable, but less valid"(Hughes,1989:62). The teacher's concentration on the different elements is likely to divert his/her attention from the overall effect of the scored script.

It can be concluded, then, that choosing one method of scoring rather than the other should be mainly determined by the purpose of the test itself. And that , if holistic scoring is chosen, the problem of reliability has to be faced, When choosing analytic scoring, the problem of validity has to be faced.

2.2.4. The Choice of Topics

In composition test, the choice of a topic should be especially given careful attention, for it may have a significant effect on students' written performance. It is strongly

recommended that, when writing a composition in a foreign language, students should not have to face difficulties of subject matter in addition to those of using the target language (Allen & Valette,1977:317).

The aim of composition test in EFL classes is to “elicit characteristic samples of every student’s writing and from these determine his proficiency at expressing himself in clear, effective, and grammatical prose”(Harris,1969:78). It aims also at providing students with generous opportunities to practise the real use of language in expressing the ideas they know and the facts they have already gathered for themselves in different contexts such as explanation, description, reasoning, persuasion ...etc. “Composition in a new language, therefore, is language practice”(Gurry,1973:139). Accordingly, it is recommended that topics involving a high degree of ingenuity and creativity which usually measure students’ creative power and require them to display fresh ideas are to be avoided. With such types of topics, students are likely to have trouble handling and, thus, instead of directing their efforts towards how to express themselves appropriately in the target language, they will have to spend much time searching for ideas and finding something to write (Valette,1967:257).

On the other hand, choosing topics within students’ command of language is particularly important in the mastery of the target language. This is based on the idea that asking students to compose a text of a certain size on too broad or too philosophical topic will leave them frustrated by their strong

desire to write at a quite satisfactory standard at a stage in which their linguistic sources of expression are still quite limited (Rivers,1968:253). Moreover, such complicated and unfamiliar subjects as the Work of the Legislation Assembly, What Steam Has Brought to Mankind, or the Purification of Water in Africa are known to invite errors. It was found that “the number of errors in students’ compositions was much greater when they were writing on subjects about which they know very little” (Gurry,1973:141). So , when they write about specific and familiar subjects , students’ performance will be characterized by much less errors.

In order to help students approach the target language easily and confidently through composition writing , the teacher should do all he can to inspire them to write. One way is to choose subjects that are clear, interesting , and realistic, i.e. related to the real life of students. The virtue of such types of subjects is that it makes the process of writing absorbing and enjoyable, for students will feel that they do have something worthwhile or interesting to say. They will have less difficulty in finding the suitable words and accurate forms to express their thoughts. If it is worked through to a final script, they will mostly feel proud in their work and wish to read it publicly (Ur ,1996:169). Subjects of this type may also enable students to direct their attention to correctness and well construction of language , because the ideas they communicate are readily flowing in their minds and even the weakest student will have something to say.

2.2.5. The Instructional Aspect

To be instructional means that the time given over to a classroom test is usually expected to provide a rewarding learning experience (Saleemi,1988:14). Accordingly, all assessment tasks are appropriate chances of instruction, though all instructional tasks are not necessarily appropriate for assessment (Valette,1967:4).

Being instructional, a test, as Bachman & Palmer (2000:165) suggest, may affect students in three main ways;

1. the experience of taking the test;
2. the feedback they receive about how they performed; and
3. the decisions that may be made according to their test results.

Sitting a composition test provides students with the valuable experience of demonstrating their abilities to use the target language meaningfully. And the preparation for such a test requires students to spend time in training themselves to communicate their ideas through their written performance. This is likely to develop their communicative ability which is the aim of mostly all foreign language courses.

Moreover, Performance tests in general are well-known for providing much better feedback than discrete-point tests (McNamara,2000:74). In this regard, Oller (1979:52) states that “it ought to be possible to use the test to enhance

the delivery of instruction in student's populations". Composition test, as a good representative of performance tests, can be primarily conducted as a motivating procedure to teach new material or as a device to reinforce what has been already learned by students. Due to the fact that it provides a maximum opportunity for students to practise the real use of language meaningfully, composition test saves teacher from the harmful influence of being teaching 'about' the language. In this sense, composition test "becomes a teaching procedure in the most obvious sense" (Ibid:52).

Another instructional task that can be accomplished by composition test is that of diagnosis. To get an accurate diagnosis, teachers usually have to be sure that the performance they are checking is the best their students can do. Since "we can motivate our students to do the best they can simply by giving them a test"(Wilhelms,1967:15),composition test, as one of the basic integrative tests, is likely to yield accurate diagnosis of the real problems that our students suffer from. This process involves the investigation or analysis of causes or nature of these problems. The result may be a clear image according to which teachers may take remedial actions and/or adjust their instruction continuously to match the discovered needs of students (Rubin,1982:11). Moreover, the teacher who marks students' scripts usually discovers a great deal about students' weaknesses and strengths in other areas of language such as grammar and vocabulary. Informing teachers who teach

grammar and comprehension of this valuable information will effectively help in developing students' progress and saving a lot of time and efforts on the part of teachers (Sesnan,1988:98).

Composition test may also help teacher individualize learning. By specifying and analyzing errors made by individual students, the teacher can inform each student separately of the areas of his/her mastery of the foreign language in which improvement is needed. If it is appropriately done, correction of students' errors in composition tests may help individual students overcome the weaknesses in their use of language. By marking and commenting on students' scripts in continually given composition tests, the teacher may be able to monitor the progress of individual students and direct them to what changes to make to improve their writing which ultimately improves their general use of language (Carbone,2003).

Generally speaking, teaching means changing the learner. And as s/he teaches, the teacher will always want to know how fruitful his/her teaching has been, i.e., how much students have been changed. In the EFL context, this change can be in several phases such as the amount of English students know, the quality of English they use, and their general ability to use English (Sesnan,1988:186). Composition test, however, is remarkably effective in doing all of this.

Still, to activate the function of composition test as a part of the teaching/learning process, students should know as soon as possible how well they performed in the test, in

other words , satisfactory performance is to be confirmed and errors are to be appropriately treated.

2.2.6. Improving reliability

The factors that affect the reliability of composition test may work in three phases; before, during, and after conducting the test. Once these factors are taken into consideration, reliability of scoring composition test can be improved considerably.

In the preparation phase, the most important step is the careful choosing of (a) suitable subject(s). Since all students are supposed to write about the same subject, the teacher should be quite sure that this subject is, as much as possible, familiar to mostly all students. In this way any deficiency in a student's writing may not be interpreted as a probable result of poor knowledge of the subject matter and vice versa.

When conducting the test, the teacher should inform the students in advance how their performance is going to be graded. When the teacher, for example, states in the test instruction specific elements of performance that will be evaluated and the mark allotted for each of these elements, this is likely to help test takers to understand what and how they are expected to write and hence perform at their best (Valette,1967:255). Test instruction should also include information about the criteria of correctness, the time allowed for the test , and the acceptable size of composition (the upper

and lower limits of the number of words). This may increase the reliability of the test since all students will write their compositions with the same criteria in mind.

However, Bachman & Palmer (2000:190) believe that the test instruction should be;

- a. simple enough for students to understand;
- b. short enough not to take too much of the test administration time; and
- c. detailed for students to know exactly what and how they are expected to write .

Scoring is the last phase in conducting the test. It received, and still receives, most of the attempts to improve the reliability of subjective tests (Pilliner,1976:28). The first point in this regard is that students' names on the test papers should be cut off or at least covered . This will help the teacher make sure that s/he is marking students' performance according to only the criteria specified without being affected by his/her personal subjective impression about students.

Since "marking gets more reliable when a student's performance is analyzed in much greater detail"(Harmer,2001:330), the teacher needs to follow an analytical scoring scheme that is previously prepared and illustrated in the test instruction. In this way, instead of just a general assessment, marks are given for different elements. These elements can be listed on small piece of paper along with the maximum mark allotted for each and an empty place for the mark awarded by the teacher as illustrated in Table1

below. This sheet of paper, sometimes called ‘grid’, can be attached to each student’s paper before starting the process of scoring. The scoring grid, however, is an effective classroom device as it helps the teacher maintain a consistent scoring procedure. At the same time, it enables students to know in advance the basis on which scoring will depend. In the teaching phase, scoring grid is likely to direct students’ attention to areas of strengths and weaknesses in their learning progress (Harris, 1969:79). It can also be used to hide the testee’s name on the test paper to ensure being unbiased.

Table (1)
Composition scoring grid

<i>Composition elements</i>	<i>Max.</i>	<i>Awarded</i>
Grammar	5	
Vocabulary	5	
Mechanics	5	
Fluency	5	
Relevance	5	
Total Mark	25	

However, McNamara (2000:37) believes that ;

If the rating category labels are clear and explicit, and the rater is trained carefully to interpret them in accordance with the intentions of the test designers, and concentrates while doing the rating, then the rating process can be made objective.

It is well known that scoring composition test papers is an exhausting task to be done by the teacher. It takes him/her relatively long time to read each sentence in each student's script. It also requires teacher, especially in large classes, to pay a great deal of mental effort to evaluate students' performance, specifying points of weaknesses and strengths in each script. So in order to make sure that the teacher is scoring the performance of individual students in the same manner, it is advisable that the teacher should time himself. If s/he starts to slow down marking fewer scripts per hour, s/he has to stop and resume marking later (Myers ,1999:25)

Finally , asking another scorer to mark students' compositions is another effective procedure by which the reliability of scoring can be checked and improved. Related literature has shown that the sum or the average of grades

rewarded by four independent scorers marking rapidly by impressionistic scoring scheme has a higher scoring reliability than that obtained by a single marker who follows an analytic scoring scheme (Chimombo,1986:30). It is said that different scorers usually mark students' performance differently. This may affect the consistency of marks given to each student. To solve this problem a moderation meeting can be held after scoring a sample of three testees' compositions. At this meeting, the scorers are confronted with the probable differences between the marks they have given. Discrepancies are to be noted and discussed in detail with particular attention to the way in which composition components are being interpreted and awarded by individual scorers (Josephson,1989:30).

2.3. Errors of EFL Learners

Dealing with students' errors is one of the basic responsibilities of teachers. However, teachers and scholars in the field of ELT view students' errors differently.

2.3.1. Error vs. Mistake

Brown (2000:217) believes that mistakes and errors are technically two different phenomena. He thinks that a mistake is basically related to performance. It takes place when a

language user fails to correctly utilize a previously known language system. Mistakes do not stem from a deficiency in competence; rather they are resulted from a temporary imperfection in the process of language use. On this base all people are likely to make mistakes in both native and foreign language contexts. Such 'lapses' can be recognized and self-corrected once attention is drawn to.

On the other hand, an error is viewed as related to competence of the language learner. It is "a noticeable deviation from the adult grammar of a native speaker"(Ibid,217). When a language user asks, for example, "Do you can swim?", this grammatically incorrect use of language reflects a competence level in which language learner believes that all verbs require 'do' auxiliary to formulate a question. Errors, however, cannot be self corrected independently.

Corder (1974:15) presents a three-category classification of errors. It is based on the possibility of the error for being explained and corrected by the language learner who commits it. In this classification Corder suggests that the 'postsystematic' error is the one that learner is able to explain and self corrected when attention is called to it. Such an error is pedagogically less serious than a 'systematic' error which the learner cannot immediately correct, yet ,when asked about, s/he is able to provide the explanation for it. The third type of error in Corder's classification is the 'presystematic' error which represents a more serious pedagogical problem than the former types. A presystematic error usually can be neither corrected

nor explained by the learner. This classification is clearly illustrated by an example in which three classmates in a discussion say * “The student have written his homework”. With the quizzical look on the part of teacher ;

-Student1 replies “ sorry, the student has written his homework”.

When asked, s/he can give accurate explanation (postsystematic error).

-Student2 can't understand what is wrong with his sentence.

But when the teacher gives him a hint like “Is the subject of your sentence singular or plural?”, student2 may reply “the student has written his homework” and s/he can explain why(systematic error).

-Student3 cannot understand why his sentence is wrong. And in spite of the teacher's provided cue(s), s/he is still unable to know why correction is needed (presystematic error).

Another three-type classification is suggested by Harmer (2001:99) in which he states that a ‘slip’ is a mistake that student can self correct once the mistake is pointed to. An ‘error’ is the mistake that student cannot self correct and which, therefore, needs explanation . An ‘attempt’ is the case when a student needs to express something but he doesn't know how to do this correctly. Harmer believes that

'error' is the most important of these three types because it is related to student's competence.

Oller (1979:387) has a special classification of students' errors which is exclusively applicable to students' written performance. He simply summarizes different types of students' errors when he states that "there are words that must be deleted from the students' composition; there are words that must be added; and there are words that must be changed".

It can be noticed that all the above mentioned classifications have agreed, in one way or another, on the different types of errors though with different titles.

In short, students' errors in general may be pedagogically classified into;

1. A 'mistake' which occurs when students know the correct language structure but incorrectly retrieve it from memory. So it is basically related to students' performance and do not reflect deficiency in their knowledge of language. It can be self-corrected once students' attention is called to it. It is unsystematic and its occurrence may be related to memory lapses and the physical or psychological state of language user. The mistake may be committed by both native speakers and foreign language learners.
2. An 'error' occurs when students have incorrectly learned or haven't learned yet the correct language structure to be used. It is related to students' competence and reflects a lot about their current knowledge. It is

systematic and not the product of chance circumstances and, hence, can't be self corrected even when students' attention is drawn to it. It is usually committed only by foreign language learners. However, it "may well provide chances for opportunistic teaching"(Harmer,2001:99).

However, in ELT literature 'error' and 'mistake' are usually interchangeably used.

2.3.2. Sources of Errors

Why errors occur and how they should be dealt with have been puzzling teachers for a long time. Research into second language acquisition has suggested many conceivable sources of errors which most, if not all, of students make at the different stages of language learning.

A. L1 interference (Interlingual Transfer)

Most of EFL scholars agree that native language interference is the most significant source of errors for all students (Louro,1994:23).

It is well-known that EFL students, particularly at the early stages of learning find themselves, sometimes, using structures of their native language when doing any linguistic performance. This is simply because they know the systems of the foreign language only partially, and the native language is

the only linguistic system upon which they can draw(Lado,1961:23). However, elements of the native language that are similar to those of the foreign language will function satisfactorily. Errors usually occur when elements of the native language used by students differ from those of the target language they attempt to use (Hahn,1987:8).

When writing a composition, the students' imagination may lead them to constructions they may not have learnt yet. So they draw back to their native language and the result will be a great deal of errors that occur by translating from the native to the foreign language. Thus their compositions become full of mistakes as translation is too difficult for them. The more the two languages are different the larger become the number of errors students make (Al-Nakkash,1978:130).

B. Developmental progress (Intralingual Transfer)

Researchers in foreign language teaching have found that the early stages of language learning are characterized by the predominant phenomenon of 'over-generalization' which is the negative aspect of intralingual transfer. This occurs when language learners start to over generalize a rule that they have just learnt to include even the irregular forms that they have known before. As they progress in mastering the target language, students start later to learn new language structures taking into consideration the irregularity of each (Selinker, 1972:208). Hence, errors are normal part of students'

intralinguage, i.e., the version of the target language that a student has at any particular stage of development. This version is , however, continually reshaped as the student approaches the full mastery of foreign language.

C. Learnability of Language Structures

Research in foreign language education shows that there are some language structures that can be mastered more quickly when given special attention on the part of teacher. And there are other structures that can be mastered only in the students' own time regardless of teacher's attention. This helps to explain why , for example, intermediate learners usually omit third person (s) just like beginners, but often form questions with (do) correctly, unlike beginners (Clandfield & Foord,2001:22).

D. Context of Learning

Ellis (1986:9) and Brown (2000:226) suggest that 'context of learning' is a major source of students' errors. By the context of learning they refer to the classroom with its teacher and materials. In a classroom context, the teacher, by giving a misleading explanation, and/or the textbook, by inaccurate presentation of a structure, can lead students to make faulty hypotheses about the target language. However, this occurs

when textbooks and teaching techniques are selected in a way that does not meet the real needs of students.

E. Other Sources

Apart from the previously mentioned sources, “language complexity and error fossilization are also possible reasons for committing mistakes”(Ancker,2000:23). Many errors and writing weaknesses in advanced classes may also be related to “lack of systematic training during the earlier stages of the foreign language course”(River,1968:245).

2.3.3. Error Treatment

Foreign language learning is a gradual process in which students, as they progress in the language , continuously form hypotheses about language aspects they are dealing with. It follows that students start testing these new hypotheses and as J. Smith asserts (cited in Hahn,1987:9) “when you test a hypothesis there must be a possibility of being wrong .If you are certain of being right there can be nothing to learn because you know it already”. Hence, in the process of learning a new language every learner commits errors, i.e. , errors are inevitable .

Although they represent normal phenomena, errors that are made by learners of a foreign language and how they should be dealt with have attracted the attention of many

teachers, methodologists, and linguists for a long time. In this regard, there have been two main schools of philosophy, the first school has adopted the idea that “if we were to achieve a perfect teaching method errors would never be committed in the first place”(Corder,1974:20). When errors occur, it would be a mere sign of the inadequacy of our teaching. This perspective is related to the Behaviourist Approach to language in the syllabus of which , to prevent errors, elements are very carefully graded and successive structures are so graded. Only one structure is introduced at a time so as students can proceed from one to the next with limited difficulty. According to this school , errors, if they occur, are better to be neglected , for “if they were repeated they would become habitual” (Hahn,1987:8).

The perspective of the second school of philosophy is associated with the Cognitive Approach to language with its emphasis on hypothesis formulation, experimentation, and feedback. It considers errors as essential to the learning process. According to this philosophy errors will always occur regardless of the efforts exerted on the part of teacher. Then, “our ingenuity should be concentrated on techniques for dealing with errors after they have occurred”(Corder,1974:20).

The shift in language teaching from the behaviourist to the cognitive approach has been associated with changes in both how to view students’ errors as well as how to treat them. Errors have become to be seen not only as a natural part of language learning but as a sign that learning is taking place.

Many methodologists and linguists have begun to view students' errors not as a sign of failure but "wonderful opportunities for learning"(Wood,1993:38).

The most important step in error treatment is to develop a positive attitude on the part of the teacher as well as his students towards their errors. Teachers have to realize that learnability does vary from a student to another and that "all language learning is based on continual exposure, hypothesizing and, even the correct hypothesis , testing and reinforcing the ideas behind them"(Bartram & Walton,1991:97). Since it is very important for the teacher to know the problems of his students in the course of their learning the target language, students' errors can be seen as an accurate indicator for the areas of difficulties where students need more attention and careful guidance.

Students, on the other hand, need to know that it is normal to make errors. They should , with the help of their teacher, overcome their fear of making errors because "fear of making mistakes prevents learners from being receptive and responsive"(Kavaliauskiene,2004). Students should be encouraged not to get stuck on worrying about the possibility of making errors , for language learning can't be achieved unless students are relaxed and keen on practicing , as much as they can, the target language.

2.3.4. Error Recognition

Modern orientations in language teaching, represented by the Cognitive Approach, put more emphasis on the learners' innate ability. Therefore, they suggest that students should be trained to self recognize and correct their own errors, as they are trained to induce the grammatical rules by themselves (Hahn, 1987:10).

Since cognitive approaches are more interested in the learners' self knowledge, it is believed that teaching should be subordinated to learning and that good learning should demand that "any language student carefully observe his or her performance" (Pint, 1997:17). On this basis, traditional teaching techniques, including teacher's correction of students' errors, are to be substituted with modern ones in which the teacher, for example, acts mainly as a facilitator of his students' self recognition and then correction of their own errors.

Developing the skill of error recognition is a slow difficult process, yet well worth-while. Since there is little instructional value in the teacher's marking each and every error his students make, it is the students rather than the teacher who should develop the skill of identifying errors. Therefore, it is believed that "it does the pupil better to find five errors for himself than it does him if the teacher finds fifty" (Bright and McGregor, 1976:155).

As a step towards self-correction, students should "acquire the habit of noticing mistakes in their own writing"

(Gurrey, 1973:147). This habit is likely to be deeply rooted in students' linguistic performance if they are trained gradually and continuously to practise it starting from the early stages of language learning.

To develop their skill of error recognition, students should believe, in the first place, that all language learners make errors when performing something written, but "only ill-mannered ones leave any they can eliminate in something that other people are going to read"(Ibid:155).

Even when students do not fully acquire error recognition skill, the mere looking for errors is likely to help draw their attention to the basic structures, grammatical relations, and the mechanics they study in the other courses of their programme of study. This enables them to reinforce their linguistic knowledge and provides them with extra exercises to practise its use.

Moreover, Many errors of spelling and punctuation and a great deal of errors that are related to students' carelessness rather than their inefficiency can be recognized easily by average students and then corrected if they are given a real chance to reconsider their written performance (Lewitt,1990:9).

Although asking students to identify their errors provides them with real opportunities to reinforce and activate their linguistic knowledge, students are not the only ones who get benefit from it. In the long term, the teacher will find himself gradually doing less works in marking and correcting his students' errors (Gurrey, 1973:148).

2.3.5. Error Correction

Correction of students' errors is regarded as a basic part of the instructional function of the teacher. When left unchecked and/or uncorrected, students' errors are likely to become permanent and, then, irreversible. Such errors can lead to a complete breakdown in communication on a daily basis which might be arguably explained as an indicator of weakness in both students as well as their teacher (Makino,1993:337).

Still, when and how to correct students' errors is the greatest question puzzling EFL teachers. They find themselves pulled in many directions , not least by individual students' requirements, needs and personalities, and the practicalities of daily class management and limited time. Considering timing and methodology is of vital importance when correcting students' errors because mis-timing and/or inappropriate correction may be detrimental to class flow and students' confidence in their own ability as well as that of their teacher. When appropriately used, "correction can play an extremely important role in language learning"(Power,2003).

Research on error correction shows that students in general want and expect their errors to be corrected. It also shows that correction does improve the proficiency of EFL learners, yet it offers no conclusive linguistic or educational rules to apply. It seems that the classroom teacher only can take responsibility of the actual decisions of when and how to

correct, simply because only the teacher is in a position to gauge what is helpful at what point in students' learning (Brown,2002:13).

However, the time and way of error correction seems to be determined by several factors such as type of error, frequency of its appearance , its effect on communication , class size , activity in hand, stage of language learning ...etc.

2.4. Correction of students' compositions

When taking any test , students expect to receive some type of feedback from the teacher. In composition test, "this feedback usually takes the form of error correction"(Dickson,2001:8). Efforts exerted by Composition teachers who pay detailed attention to students' errors in language forms and structures are convincingly justifiable on the basis that the "mastery of forms is an important and indispensable prerequisite for writing"(Mao,1991:33).

There is a premise that correction is a basic part in testing writing , and so it should be interwoven with composition test. If correction is always practiced as an integral part of composition, there should be less need for remediation (Rubin,1982:6). Correction , then , can be regarded as the core of the instructional phase of composition test.

Generally speaking, students' scripts should be read by the teacher as soon as possible after being written. Then errors in these scripts should be corrected , for a great deal of

uncorrected writing is merely a waste of time and energy. Uncorrected errors are likely to consolidate students' bad habits in language which will be very difficult to eradicate at a later stage (River,1968:256).

Even those errors that may not hinder comprehension ,for example those of spelling, should be continually checked and corrected if our aim is to develop students' ability to express themselves accurately. This is the main task of the teacher of writing because students "do not see their own mistakes readily; only their teacher does"(Allen & Valette,1977:285).

Writing, as a skill, can best be developed by a systematic training, yet it seems that , to be effective, systematic training in writing requires systematic correction of individual scripts. This is likely to help the teacher monitor the standards of accuracy and appropriateness in his students' written performance.

Though the importance of error correction is well agreed upon, the problem of how to do so is still unsolved. The correction and evaluation of written performance are very complex tasks because there are so many considerations to be taken into account such as students' background, learning stage, aims of the course , how much students practice writing...etc. However, Li Xiaochun(1990:34) presents various ways for correcting students' written work. The following are the most practical ones :

1. Model Correction

After a very detailed correction of randomly-chosen five compositions of his/her class, the teacher tries to determine the most frequent errors made by class in general. During the next lesson period , the teacher deals with these five compositions explaining errors committed and making remedial suggestions. The teacher then asks students to correct their own compositions.

- Though it is suitable for large classes, this technique of correction may not cover all types of errors made by students. Moreover, some students may fail to classify their errors according to their teacher's classification.

2. Peer Correction

Students are asked to correct each other's composition and hand in the corrected work to their teacher who corrects them again and marks them. The teacher then returns the twice-corrected compositions to students telling them to pay attention to the difference between teacher's correction and their own.

- In this correction technique students' papers are likely to be messy, as they are corrected twice. Hence, some students may fail to distinguish between teacher's and peer's corrections and consequently fail to know the suitable ones. What is more important is the fact that

students will not be motivated to reconsider their errors because the mark is already given.

3. Group Discussion

The class is divided into groups of 3-5 students. The teacher gives each group 3-5 compositions from other groups telling them to correct these compositions by group discussion. When correction is finished students' papers are handed in to the teacher for marking.

- This technique is also suitable for large classes , still, students have no chance to learn from their own errors. They are to discuss others' errors which may be quite different from their own. Moreover, students are not given the chance to rewrite their compositions which are already marked by the teacher.

4. Conference Correction

When students finish writing their compositions, the teacher starts to confer with them individually reading and explaining their errors. When s/he finishes conferencing students, s/he asks them to rewrite their compositions and hand them in for marking.

- This technique is very tiring to the teacher and time consuming, therefore it does not suit large classes. In addition to that, students are likely to depend completely on

the teacher to know what errors they make and how they should be corrected.

2.5. Self Correction

In regard to the unquestionable significance of writing in the teaching-learning process, the traditional approaches to language seem to be far from being able to put such significance into practice. Their deficiency seems to be resulted from the basic tenet of the traditional approaches which assumes that the teacher is the one that should play the active role in the classroom. The students are given a passive role which is restricted to listening to the teacher and writing down notes(Hobleman &Wiriyachitra,1990:37).

Conversely, modern approaches to language call for individualizing language learning. The excessive advances in foreign language teaching methodology, including the new emphasis on learner centeredness , have significantly changed the roles teachers play in the classroom and made greater demands on their classroom management skills (Nunan & Lamb,1996:82). Thus, students should play an active role beside their teacher. In this respect , self – correction technique does transfer a great deal of the responsibility of learning from the teacher to the students. It helps them focus attention on their errors and reduce reliance on the teacher. It moves students towards a more independent and self evaluative style in which they develop the ability to

comprehend , process, analyze and synthesize information in the target language(Canning,2000).

On the other hand, traditional emphasis on extensive correction done by the teacher proves to be not only ineffective but also having a negative impact on students' written performance (Kavaliauskiene,2004). Accordingly, by initiating self – correction technique, a reconciliation of attitudes might be secured since the primary task of teacher in this context is to indicate students' errors, in one way or another, but not to correct them.

Modern approaches to language view errors made by students as learning opportunities for them. If the teacher gives the corrections, s/he is preventing students from exploiting these learning opportunities (Dawson,1999:8). Students' involvement in this task is a real indication of their response to their situation as language learners.

Self – correction technique is one of the individualized language learning strategies. By involving students in this task, they are likely to gain a considerable advantage throughout the different stages of language learning, for it may help to increase the length of time students commit to language study and their chances of success in it. It simply encourages students to become part of the whole process of learning (Finch&Taeduck,2000).

On the other hand, extensive investigation has shown the importance of language learning strategies in making

language learning more efficient and in producing a positive effect on learners' language use. So, developing effective learning strategies, such as self correction, is an important part of mastering the target language. Thus, in addition to developing students' knowledge and use of language, it is likely to lead to the development of lifelong learners(Rausch,2000).

The advantages of self – correction technique are argued by many ELT practitioners. Sekara(1988:8) believes that such technique may :

- a. shift classroom instruction focus from teacher to students;
- b. maximize the amount of time each student spends in active rather than passive learning; and
- c. increase the responsibility of students for skill acquisition.

White (1995:135) believes that self correction may ;

- a. save the teachers time;
- b. help students become independent learners;
- c. force students to apply their knowledge about writing; and
- d. require students to use all language skills.

Bartram&Walton(1991:81),on their part, suggest that it is important to get students involved actively in dealing with their errors for four reasons. In addition to that of acquiring correct forms and uses of the target language, it stimulates active learning, induces cooperative atmosphere, and develops independent learners.

In self – correction technique, students are not required to work solely alone. They are to be aided by their

teacher, for example by labeling or coding their errors to help them know the type of each one. The idea behind making students correct their own errors is convincingly argued by Gurrey(1969:149) when he states that by asking a student to do the correction himself, he is left with the correct usage in mind, whereas, when the teacher makes the correction, the student may still have the wrong form in mind because it hasn't necessarily been replaced by the correct one. What happens here is that the teacher corrects students' errors on their test papers which may have no impression at all on the incorrect usage that is still fixed in the student's mind. Accordingly "it is the student's mental habit that needs correcting , not the writing on the paper"(Ibid:149).

One of the factors for efficient learning is that the learner must receive feedback concerning his/her performance. If it is internal from the learner himself, this feedback may be more valuable. Without some kind of feedback "the individual may not learn at all or may learn incorrect information"(Frank,2002). Teachers, however, need to teach their students to correct their errors just like they teach them any other aspects of language. Developing students' ability and methodology to use internal sources of information for feedback may prevent students from developing excessive dependence upon the teacher's feedback and presence.

Teachers can implement a system of feedback for their students early in their writing course, for example by using

correction codes which help students become aware of the types of errors they make. Correcting these errors, identified by their teacher, repeatedly, students are likely to incorporate gradually the identification and correction of similar errors into their ability to proofread and edit their written performance. After many repeated experiences they will integrate proofreading into their writing skills without serious interference on the part of their teacher. “The result is more accurate, responsible work on the part of students, allowing the teacher to focus on aspects of students’ writing that students are less able to improve”(White,1995:139).

One of the basic principles in education is that good teaching should always conform to the demands of learning. Traditional teaching techniques, being too concerned with filling student’s memories rather than educating their awareness, should be eliminated. Teachers should realize that in language teaching repetition and explanation are far less important than educating awareness. So in helping students correct their own errors teaching is really subordinated to learning.

However, in composition test, self – correction technique provides students with a chance to consider and activate their linguistic competence. So, instead of being passive recipients of feedback, they can be active participants in language learning.

CHAPTER THREE

Previous Studies

3.1. Introductory Note

In this chapter, a number of different studies that have, in one way or another, some relevance to the present study are going to be surveyed. They are (8) studies (4) of which are carried out outside Iraq. At the end of this chapter, the relevance of these studies to the present one is going to be pointed at.

3.2. Iraqi Studies

3.2.1. Jassim (1988)

The study aims at surveying the situation of teaching composition activity in the secondary schools in the city of Basrah, finding out and analyzing reasons of inadequacy in teaching this activity from the English language teachers' point of view, and suggesting remedial actions to overcome the diagnosed difficulties.

The study is limited to investigating techniques of teaching composition in the secondary schools in Basrah. To achieve the aims of the study, the researcher makes a survey for textbooks VI, VII, and VIII of the NECI as far as composition teaching is concerned. As a tool for data collection , the researcher designs and distributes a questionnaire to most English teachers to elicit the actual teaching situation of composition.

The findings of the study attribute the weakness of Iraqi students in writing composition to the inappropriate teaching techniques adopted by teachers of English among other factors which are outside the scope of the study.

3.2.2. Abdul-Rahman (1989)

This study is designed to investigate the techniques used in teaching writing. It also examines the written responses of teachers to students' written performance at the university level.

To achieve the aims of this study, the researcher prepared a questionnaire that is distributed to faculty members who are engaged in teaching writing in the Iraqi universities.

The findings show that teachers are still clinging to the traditional approach to teaching writing despite the effective findings that recent approaches emphasize, that they respond overwhelmingly to form, undertake the responsibility of

extensive corrections at the expense of engaging students in language learning. It is found also that teachers give vague comments that students find difficult to interpret and they are inconsistent in their reactions due to the lack of a common technique for responding to students' written performance.

3.2.3. AL-Azzawi (1998)

The study aims at investigating the difficulty manifested by EFL Iraqi college students in the various skills of writing and suggesting effective remedial pedagogical solutions.

To verify the aims, the researcher has developed a two-part test to be given to all students of the Department of English, College of Education/Ibn Rushd in the four grades. The first part of the test is a free composition test and the second is a guided composition test designed especially for examining students' ability to use certain skills of writing.

The findings of this study reveal that there are more common errors in relation to most of the skills of writing which have no equivalents or counterparts in Arabic, and that students' percentages of errors are not different across the four stages.

3.2.4. AL-Karkhi (1999)

The study aims at identifying and classifying difficulties faced by EFL college students in writing English composition.

To verify the aims of the study , the researcher has chosen a free written composition test to examine students' ability to produce a correct connected piece of writing in English. The test is given to fourth-year students of the four departments of English at the University of Baghdad. Through this test, difficulties that may prevent students from producing correct English composition are supposed to be found out.

The study has revealed that Iraqi college students of English usually face different types of difficulties. In the area of grammar , the most common difficulties are the misuse of tenses, shift in tenses, subject- verb agreement, misuse of articles, and misuse of prepositions. In the mechanics of writing, students are likely to make different errors in punctuation such as the omission of quotation marks, misuse and/or omission of comma, semi colon, and capitals. In spelling , wrong spelling representation of vowels and diphthongs, inversion of vowel diagraph , wrong doubling of consonants, and the addition of letter (e) at the end of words are the most common errors. Finally it is found that the lexical difficulties are limited to the misuse of words, wordiness, and the translation from Arabic.

3.3. Foreign Studies

3.3.1. Mahmoud (1982)

The study aims at examining the cohesive and coherence strategies used in composition written in English by Egyptian college students of English and by native speakers of English.

In order to fulfill the aims of this study, the researcher conducts a composition test. Thirty compositions are chosen to be the sample of the study of which twenty are written by Egyptian students and ten by native speakers.

The sample compositions are read by a team of four experts native English EFL teachers for holistic evaluation. The scoring team employs a standard for scoring that includes five scales.

The findings of the study indicate that the majority of strategies are shared by both native speakers and Egyptian students, yet Egyptians' compositions do not show the strategies of reporting past or present conditions, defining, and exemplifying. And that the degree of using the shared strategies varies considerably.

3.3.2. Makino (1993)

The purpose is to investigate to what degree teacher's cues or hints help their students correct their own errors in EFL written compositions , and what kind of cues are more effective in self-correction.

The study is limited to investigating students' ability to self correct , and not the effect of this correction on their writing skills. Sixty-two Japanese college students are involved in this study. They are asked to correct their own errors using the cues provided by their teacher.

The findings show that the more detailed the cues to students' errors, the higher the ratio of their self-correction achieved. That is , students demonstrate that they can activate their linguistic competence to some extent in order to correct their own errors in written composition.

3.3.3. Murphy (1994)

The study aims at evaluating the usefulness of teacher's corrections from the students' perspective.

The subjects of this study are a small group of first-year class at the City Polytechnic during a mid-semester composition- in-class course.

To collect the data required, students are asked to consider the teachers corrections on their compositions and highlight any they have found useful.

The study reveals that comparatively few of teacher's corrections (fewer than 10%) are considered useful by students, and that the praise comments of teacher to encourage them to develop their ability appear to have no impact.

3.3.4. Hyland (1999)

The study aims at investigating the probable effects of teachers' feedback (written comments) on students' written compositions in developing their writing skills.

The study is limited to the written feedback only given to ESL students' written scripts.

To collect the required data, the researcher follows a case study approach including questionnaire responses, interviews, classroom observation and the analysis of student writing and teacher's related feedback. In this case study six ESL students at the Polytechnic University the written performance of whom is evaluated repeatedly.

It is concluded that students adopt different stances to feedback, and that there are also fundamental differences in the value that teachers and students place on written feedback. It is found that the past experience of feedback may affect students' expectation and use of current feedback.

3.4. Critique

The survey of the previous studies shows that all of them are related to the same subject, namely; composition writing in EFL/ESL context.

Concerning the purpose, two of the Iraqi studies aim at investigating the situation of teaching composition (Jassim and Abdul-Rahman). The other two (AL-Azzawi and AL-Kharkhi) aim at investigating the difficulties faced by students when writing composition in English, while one of the foreign studies aims at discovering the cohesive and coherence strategies used by students in writing composition(Mahmoud). The purpose of the other three studies is to evaluate the effect of teacher's feedback and correction on students' writing skill (Makino, Murphy, and Hyland). None of these studies is experimental and all of them deal with composition as a teaching activity. The present study differs in aiming at evaluating the instructional aspect of composition test by conducting an experiment in which composition test is used as a training procedure to develop students' writing skills and ultimately their mastery of language. The present study shares most of the previous studies in collecting the required data through a test in composition writing except for Jassim and Abdul-Rahman in which questionnaire is the basic tool for data collection.

The present study shares Jassim, Abdul-Rahman , Murphy, Makino, and Hyland in being mainly concerned with the effect of teacher's techniques in developing students

mastery of writing skills. The other studies are concerned with checking students' written performance.

Makino, Murphy and the present study deal with the correction of students' errors. Murphy examines the effect of teacher correction. Makino and the present study deal with self-correction technique, while Makino aims only at checking the feasibility of this activity, the present study uses it instructionally to teach students something.

The previous studies have found out that students are weak at writing composition and that the teaching techniques followed by teachers in this respect need to be reconsidered and modified. The present study is trying to find out, experimentally, whether students' writing skills can be improved if they, aided by their teacher's correction codes, practise self correcting their own errors in continually conducted composition test.

CHAPTER FOUR

Procedures

4.1. The Design of the Experiment

Since the subjects of the sample involved in the study cannot be chosen and grouped randomly and since the independent variable to be checked has three levels, a pre test – post test control group design in which the involved groups are chosen randomly is adopted. The experimental design is illustrated in Table (2) below:

Table (2)
The Experimental Design

Group	Test	Type of treatment	Test
CG	pre	Traditional	post
EG1	pre	SCRT with CC	post
EG2	pre	SCRT with ER	post

4.2. Sample Selection and Organization

The population of the study consists of Iraqi university students at the departments of English in the colleges of Education since they all aim at developing their language skills

one of which is writing. They also share the aspect of taking courses in composition writing to which the findings of this study can be applied. The sample is limited to second-year students of the English Department of the College of Education-Ibn Rushd/ University of Baghdad during the academic year 2003-2004. The rationale behind the choice of the sample is six-fold. First of all, the researcher is a faculty staff member at the department in question, a status which is likely to facilitate the process of conducting the experiment of the study. Second, for the same reason just mentioned, students will be more motivated to get in the procedures of the experiment unconsciously and seriously. Third, students at the department in question are drawn from different Iraqi governorates and so represent a wider population than that represented by other departments of English. Fourth, students of this department are usually distributed randomly on three or four classes of nearly equal size. Fifth, Second year students are required to take a course in composition through which the procedures of this study can be carried out. Finally, the writing skill of the students involved in the study is not advanced; therefore, any probable development can be noticed and measured if suitable test procedures are followed.

4.2.1. Sample Size and Grouping

The total number of second-year students is 163 of both sexes grouped in four sections. Twenty seven students are excluded for different reasons (16 repeaters, 7 teachers on study -leave, 4 top students at the teachers training institutes).

The rest totaling 136 students participate in the experiment in four sections. One section is randomly assigned as the reliability sample whereas the remaining three are also randomly chosen to participate directly in the experiment (Table 3).

Table (3)
Sample Size and Organization

sections	function	Number of students
section B	reliability sample	30
section C	CC	36
section D	EG1	37
section A	EG2	33

4.2.2 Equalizing the Groups

Although students of the English Department - College of Education-Ibn Rushd are already distributed randomly on the sections, ascertaining the equalization of the three experimental groups is of vital importance for the study so as to achieve accurate results. For this purpose all the subjects sit a test in which they are asked to write a

composition on the subject (A Dream That Came True). Table (4) shows the descriptive data of the three groups involved in the study.

Table (4)

Mean and Standard Deviation of Written Performance of the Sample in the Pre-test

Group	Number of Subjects	Mean	Standard deviation
CG	36	8.64	4.402
EG 1	37	8.76	4.431
EG 2	33	8.79	4.512

The ANOVA results show that, at (0,0.5) level with a degree of freedom of (2,103) , there is no significant difference between the three groups in students' writing skill. Computed (F) ratio is found to be (0.011) whereas the tabulated ratio is (3.0718).This means that the three groups are acceptably equalized. Table (5) provides the statistical information relevant to this examination.

Table (5)

One-way ANOVA of the Pre-test

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	
				C	T
Between groups	0.435	2	0.217	0.011	3.0718
Within groups	2036.632	103	19.773		
Total	2037.067	105			

4.3.The Tests

In order to achieve the aims of the study, a pre test is conducted to ensure the equalization of the groups involved in the study and a post test to evaluate the effectiveness of the experimental procedures. Since writing skill on production level can be mostly exclusively evaluated through composition test(Heaton,1975:127), pre and post tests take the form of composition writing.

4.3.1. Face validity of pre and post tests

Validity is the first aspect to be checked when constructing any type of testing. It refers to the degree to which a test assesses the particular intended skill(s). So “when a test measures that which it is supposed to measure, and nothing else, it is valid”(Ingram,1977:18).

Face validity is proved by exposing the tests along with the scoring procedures to a jury of specialists. The jury for this research consists of a number of prominent figures in the field of language and language teaching at the University of

Baghdad and some other foreign universities². The jury members agree on the tests as being appropriate for measuring the written performance of students.

4.3.2. Reliability of the Tests

Reliability is one of the necessary characteristics of any good test. It refers to the consistency of measurement which makes validity possible and indicates the amount of confidence that can be placed in the results of a test (Oller, 1979:4). A reliable test is usually referred to as “one that

² The jury includes the following figures at the University of Baghdad :

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Ayif Habib | Professor |
| 2. Dr. Khadum Al-Khazraji | Professor |
| 3. Dr. Abdul Hamid Nasir | Assistant Professor |
| 4. Dr. Abdul Karim Fadhil | Assistant Professor |
| 5. Dr. Fatin Khairi | Assistant Professor |
| 6. Firas Awad | Assistant Professor |
| 7. Lamiaa Abdul Hamid | Assistant Professor |
| 8. Dr. Munther Manhal | Assistant Professor |
| 9. Najat Al-Jubori | Assistant Professor |
| 10. Dr. Omran Musa | Assistant Professor |
| 11. Dr. Radhiya Muttar | Assistant Professor |
| 12. Dr. Safaa Tarik Garma | Assistant Professor |

The researcher also consults a group of scholars in different foreign universities. The suggestions of the following figures have been remarkable:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------|
| 1. Carmen Perez Basanta | Assistant Professor |
| University of Granada / Spain | |
| 2. Cecilia B. Ikeguchi | Assistant Professor |
| Tsukuba Women's University / Japan | |
| 3. Kenneth J. Dickson | Assistant Professor |
| Chinese Culture University / Taiwan | |
| 4. Sharon Myers | Assistant Professor |
| Texas Tech. University / USA | |

produces essentially the same results consistently on different occasions when the conditions of the test remain the same” (Madsen, 1983:179). In practice, it is well known that even the same test when reconducted at a later time to the same group of testees, under the same conditions; it is unlikely to yield exactly the same scores. However, the more comparable the scores are, the more reliable the test scores are (Wells and Wollack, 2003:13).

In fact, in the question of reliability two types of consistency may be involved, the reliability of test results, which is more related to close-end tests, and the reliability of test scoring. As far as the present study is concerned, the second type is the one to be ensured since it is “a matter of great importance when the tests are of the free response types” (Harris, 1969:66).

4.3.3. Determining scoring procedures

The results of a test are often reported in the form of scores. These scores are likely to assist the test users in making decisions, modifying certain methods or taking remedial actions concerning the process of teaching/learning. Therefore, the method adopted to achieve these scores is a vital phase of the evaluation process. So the scoring method is likely to play a significant role in “ensuring that the test scores are reliable and that the uses made of them are valid” (Bachman and Palmer, 2000:193).

The main interest in this study lies in assessing the students' writing skill which is an integrative skill in which several areas of language are involved; therefore, the students' written responses may be scored according to several criteria of correctness. Free written responses are also known of not lending themselves easily to objective scoring; yet, the employment of an analytical scoring scheme in which the different elements of the written responses are to be marked separately " is likely to 'objectivize' scoring of students' writing"(Heaton,1975:135).

Accordingly, in order to ensure as much objective scoring of students' compositions as possible, certain scoring procedures relying on related literature and jury opinions are adopted.

The developed scoring procedures include the following:

1. General Procedures

- a. The subjects of the composition tests are chosen by the students themselves so as to ensure that mostly all students are motivated to take the test willingly and that even the weak students will have something to say.
- b. Students' names are to be covered to avoid any chance of being biased.
- c. Students are informed of the marking scheme before they start taking the test.

- d. Students are informed of the time allowed for the test (60 minutes).
- e. Students are informed of the acceptable size of composition (the upper limit is 300 words and the lower limit is 250 words).
- f. The scorer is to time himself. If he starts to slow down marking fewer scripts per hour, he has to stop and resume marking later.

2. The choice of the tests subjects

The researcher surveys the subjects that the students in the three groups have suggested to write compositions on . The following subjects are selected:

1. A dream that came true.
2. Teaching as a profession.
3. Having a satellite system at home.
4. What does the concept of happiness mean?
5. The accident I can't forget.
6. War and peace.

The list of subjects is exposed to the jury members to choose the two most suitable subjects that can serve the aim of the study. They mostly agree on numbers 1 and 5 to be the subjects of the pre and post tests respectively.

3. Scoring Scheme

The analytical scoring scheme chosen for the research is outlined in Table (6). This scheme is approved by the jury.

Table (6)

The Analytical Scoring Scheme

Components	V.good (3marks)	Good (2marks)	Fair (1mark)	Weak (0mark)
Form				
Punctuation				
Basic structures				
Grammatical relations				
Vocabulary accuracy and range				
Spelling Accuracy				
Fluency				
Relevance of ideas				
Total mark	24			

As shown in Table (6) each component is marked separately. This scoring scheme is followed in scoring students' written compositions in the pre and post tests. It is photocopied on small pieces of papers and attached to each test paper before scoring.

3. Checking the reliability of scoring

Free response tests, one type of which is composition test, involve a great deal of subjective judgment on the part of the scorer. With such a type of testing there is a real need for checking the reliability of scoring. Anastasi (1976:119) states that “scorer reliability can be found by having a sample of test papers independently scored by two examiners”. Then, the sets of scores awarded by the two scorers are to be correlated and the result is the measure of scorer reliability.

Accordingly, to check the reliability of the prepared scoring scheme, the researcher applies it experimentally to a pilot test. In this test (30) students are asked to write a composition on one subject (My family) . The researcher photocopies the students’ written scripts. He scores one copy asking another scorer (A university instructor) to score the second copy according to the prepared scoring scheme. The two sets of scores are treated statistically by applying Pearson’s Formula. The correlation coefficient is found to be (0.813) which is considered a high stable correlation (Appendix 3).

4.4. The Experimental Procedures

To achieve the aims of the study, the researcher adopts the following procedures:

1. At the first meeting in the experiment, the researcher gives each student in the EG1 a copy of a set of correction codes

that he has previously prepared. The researcher has adopted a set of codes (with some modification) used by N. Wood (1993:38) in a related study conducted at the University of Veszprem in Hungary (Appendix 2).

These codes are supposed to help students identify the type of each error they may commit. Students are asked to keep the correction codes copy to refer to in the rewriting phase.

Telling students to leave a space between lines for him to mark and write in symbols, the researcher gives students in the EG1 a composition test weekly. In these tests students are asked to write compositions on subjects that have been chosen by them. This is based on the idea that “short writing assignments given at frequent intervals and then carefully corrected and discussed provide the most effective form of practice”(Rivers,1968:256).

Two class periods are devoted to each test. The first class period is devoted to writing the initial version of the composition, and then test papers are handed to the researcher. Errors of the students in this group are marked and labeled by the researcher with the correction codes that are previously known by students. At the second class period, the test papers are given back unrewarded to the students who are asked to rewrite their compositions correcting their own errors according to the correction codes provided on the assumption that by having to rewrite the corrected scripts, students are left with the correct usage in mind. In addition to

that if the initial version of the composition is rewarded, “what reason do the students have for reconsidering the teacher’s notes?”(Lewitt, 1990:6). The new version of the test papers are checked and rewarded. Group work is, when necessary, conducted to discuss common errors that are inappropriately corrected.

2. With the test papers of the EG2, inaccurate sentences are only underlined and students are asked to recognize then correct the errors they make and rewrite their compositions. A great deal of learning is likely to be achieved by learners “when they identify and correct their own mistakes”(Louro,1994:13). Group work is also encouraged to discuss unrecognized and/or inappropriately corrected errors.
3. The test papers of the students in the CG are treated traditionally, i.e., errors are marked and corrected by the teacher himself.
4. The students in the three groups are given one composition test weekly.
5. The experiment was conducted during the first term of the academic year 2003-2004. It lasted for about 14 weeks.

4.5. Post test Administration

At the end of the first term of the academic year 2003-2004 the researcher conducted the post test to evaluate any possible development in students’ written performance in the three groups. In order to motivate students to do their best in the test, they were told that they were sitting a monthly test of

composition writing. The researcher tried his best to provide identical conditions under which students of the three groups took the test.

4.6. Statistical Means

The following statistical means are used in the analysis and interpretation of the tests results:

1. Pearson's Correlation Formula is used to find the reliability correlation coefficient between the two sets of scores of the pilot test.
2. One way ANOVA is used to measure the difference in the written performance of the three groups of students in the pre-test.
3. One way ANOVA is used to measure the difference in the written performance of the three groups of students in the post-test.
4. Scheffe Formula is used in making multiple comparisons between the performances of the three groups in the post test.

CHAPTER FIVE

Results, Recommendations and Suggestions for Further Research

5.1. Results

In the light of the experiment carried out to achieve the aims, and verify the hypotheses of this study, the following results are derived from the statistical treatment of the scores of the post-test which yields the descriptive data shown in (Table 7).

(Table 7)
Mean and Standard Deviation of Written Performance of the
Sample in the Post-test

Group	Number of Subjects	Mean	Standard deviation
CG	36	9.61	4.128
EG 1	37	14.76	5.123
EG 2	33	10.97	4.268

5.1.1. Aims-Related Results

A. The first three aims of this study are:

9. Evaluating the effectiveness of employing SCRT with the teacher's CC as a training procedure to develop students' writing accuracy.
10. Evaluating the effectiveness of employing SCRT with the students' ER as a training procedure to develop students' written performance.
11. Finding out which is more effective in learning, aiding students to correct their errors by the teacher marking the place and type of these errors, or asking students to recognize and correct their own errors by themselves.

Applying One Way ANOVA Formula shows that there is a significant difference in students' written performance in the three groups. This is so since computed F ratio is found to be (12.573), whereas the tabulated one is (3.0718). (see Table 8).

(Table 8)

One-way ANOVA of the Post-Test

Source of variance	Sum of squares	df	Mean square	F	
				C	T
Between groups	518.607	2	259.304	12.573	3.0718
Within groups	2124.336	103	20.625		
Total	2642.943	105			

In order to check in favour of which group the significant difference is, the following comparisons are made by applying Scheffe Formula:

1. EG1 and CG

The comparison shows that the mean difference between the two groups is significant at the (0.05) level. Computed mean difference is found to be (5.15). (See Table 9).

Table 9
Comparison of EG1 and CG

Groups	Mean Difference	Std.Error	Sig.
EG1 - CG	5.15	1.063	0.000

The difference is in favour of the EG1 since its mean score (14.76) outweighs that of the CG (9.61).

This indicates that SCRT with teacher's CC proves to be an effective training procedure that may develop students' written performance considerably when employed in continually conducted composition tests. This conclusion is related to the first aim of this study. With regard to this point, it is found that this result is in correspondence with that achieved by Makino(1993) and the related assumption in the related literature.

2. EG2 and CG

The mean difference between the two groups is found to be (1.36) at (0.05) level. This indicates that there is no significant difference in the students' written performance in these two groups (Table 10).

Table 10
Comparison of EG2 and CG

Groups	Mean Difference	Std.Error	Sig.
EG2 - CG	1.36	1.094	0.465

It can be concluded that employing ER with SCRT has no effective impact on developing students' written performance. This conclusion is related to the second aim of this study. Theoretically, ER with SCRT is assumed to be effective in motivating students' learning, however, as far as this study is concerned, this assumption is experimentally proved to be inaccurate.

It is worth mentioning that students in EG2 are mostly unable to recognize the majority of the deviations they make in their written scripts. Accordingly, it is concluded that these deviations are mostly errors rather than mistakes.

3. EG1 and EG2

The mean difference between the two groups is found to be significant at (0.05) level. Computed mean difference is found to be (3.79) as illustrated in Table (11).

Table 11
Comparison of EG1 and EG2

Groups	Mean Difference	Std.Error	Sig.
EG1 - EG2	3.79	1.087	0.003

The mean score of the EG1(14.76) outweighs that of the EG2(10.97). Accordingly the significant difference is in favour of the former. It can be concluded then that using teacher's correction codes with SCR technique in continually conducted composition tests is more effective, as a training procedure to develop students' written performance, than asking students to recognize their own errors as a first step towards self correcting them. This is related to the third aim of the study. It is worth mentioning that, to the researcher's best knowledge, no similar comparison is made, neither theoretically in the related literature nor empirically in the previous studies.

B. The fourth aim of this study is to decide on a more reliable scheme for scoring students' composition test papers. In this respect, the researcher decides on the following :

A. General Considerations

1. It is preferable to cover students' names.
2. The subjects of the composition tests should be chosen by the students themselves so as to ensure that mostly all students are motivated to take the test willingly.
3. Students should be informed of the marking scheme before they start writing.
4. Students should be informed of the acceptable size of composition (the upper and lower limits of the number of words).
5. The scorer is to time himself. If he starts to slow down, marking fewer scripts per hour, he has to stop and resume marking later.

B. Scoring Scheme

1. Since marking gets much more reliable when students' performance is analyzed in much greater detail, it is advisable to follow an analytical scheme of marking in which each component of the composition is to be graded separately. A scale of (very good, good, fair, weak) is to be used as follows:

Components	Very good (3marks)	Good (1marks)	Fair (1marks)	Weak (0mark)
Form				
Punctuation				
Basic structures				
Grammatical relations				
Vocabulary accuracy & range				
Spelling accuracy				
Fluency				
Relevance of ideas				
Total mark	24			

2. This scoring scheme can be photocopied on small pieces of papers. These sheets of paper, sometimes called ‘grids’, can be attached to student’s paper before starting the process of scoring. The scoring grid, however, is an effective classroom device as it helps the teacher maintain a consistent scoring procedure. It can also be used to hide the testee’s name on the test paper to ensure being unbiased.

5.1.2. Hypotheses-Related Results

The three hypotheses in this study read as follows:

1. SCRT with teacher's CC in dealing with students' papers of continually conducted composition tests has no significant effect in developing the accuracy of students' written performance.
2. SCRT with students' ER in dealing with students' papers of continually conducted composition tests has no significant effect in developing the accuracy of students' written performance.
3. In SCRT there is no significant difference, concerning the effect on learning, between aiding students (with CC) to know the place and type of the errors they have to correct, and asking students to find, recognize, and correct their errors by themselves(ER).

With reference to hypothesis 1, it is found that students who practise SCRT aided by the teacher's CC in continually conducted composition tests develop their written performance considerably. This does not confirm this hypothesis so, accordingly, it is refuted.

Concerning hypothesis 2, no significant difference is found between the written performance of students in the EG1 and those in the CG. It can be concluded, then, that employing ER with SCRT proves to have no effect on developing students' written performance. This conclusion confirms hypothesis 2.

With reference to hypothesis 3, the development in written performance of students who practise SCRT aided by the teacher's correction codes outweighs that achieved by students who practise SCRT after self recognition of the errors committed. This does not confirm hypothesis3, which is refuted.

5.2. Recommendations

In the light of the study, the researcher makes the following recommendations:

1. Traditional scoring procedures, such as teacher correction, should be scrapped and SCRT, as an effective instructional procedure, should be adopted in scoring composition test.
2. ELT teachers as well as students should be trained to view committing errors as a natural phenomenon as students approach the learning of a foreign language. With appropriate correction procedures, this positive attitude may help in enabling students to get rid of their errors gradually and encourage them to practise language confidently.
3. EFL teachers should view their students' errors positively, i.e. as good chances for learning. This is likely to guide EFL teachers to adopt effective instructional procedures that may help students overcome any shortcoming in their linguistic performance.

4. EFL teachers should be aware of the conceivable sources of errors. This may help them choose the most appropriate techniques to be followed in dealing with the different types of these errors. This, in turn, is likely to enable students to correct the knowledge of the linguistic forms and idioms they usually misuse.
5. SCRT, as an effective instructional procedure, may be employed in other different types of assessment.
6. In composition tests, the first version of students' scripts has to be viewed only as an attempt. The mark should be given to the rewritten version. This is based on the idea that correction, in all its types, has but little value if students are not given "an opportunity to redo whatever they were doing and get it right"(Clandfield and Foord,2001).
7. Developing Self correction tendency in students should be viewed as an important step towards students' centeredness of language learning.
8. Using SCRT with teacher's CC in composition test as an instrument for continuous assessment may help individualize language learning and provide the most effective form of practice.
9. Employing composition test as an instrument for continuous assessment may yield a great deal of diagnostic information. The composition teacher should inform teachers of other courses, like grammar and comprehension, of students' weaknesses. This is likely to help these teachers take

suitable remedial actions to overcome the diagnosed weaknesses.

10. Developing an efficient analytical scoring scheme is likely to help teachers reduce the subjective influence in scoring students' composition.
11. It is advisable to ask students to write compositions on subjects of their own choice. This is to ensure that students are mostly willing to write and that even weak students will have something to say.
12. It is preferable that marking students' errors and commenting on their test papers should not be in red colour, for "nothing is more discouraging to a student than to find his or her paper covered with red marks" (Valette, 1977: 317). This is so because red is known to be the most aggressive colour possible.

5.3. Suggestions for Further Study

The following suggestions for further study are put forward:

1. Conducting an experimental study to evaluate the instructional value of self-correction technique in oral tests.
2. Carrying out an experimental study in which the instructional effect of different types of correction (self-correction, teacher-correction, peer-correction, etc.) is investigated.
3. Conducting empirical studies to investigate the instructional aspects of other types of tests.

4. Investigating the effectiveness of self correction technique in other study levels.

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Appendix (1)

University of Baghdad
College of Education-Ibn Rushd
Department of Educational &
Psychological Sciences

To The Jury Members

Dear Sir./Mam.

The researcher intends to carry out a study about using self-correction-and-rewriting technique in composition test as a training procedure to develop students' written performance. To achieve the aims of the study, the researcher is to conduct an experiment in which three groups are involved, two experimental groups and a control one . Students in the experimental groups are to be exposed to certain types of training procedures.

As you know, the exposing of students to the new procedures (independent variable) should be preceded by a pre-test and followed by a post-test in order to evaluate the effect of the independent variables. Since the best way of checking students' ability to write is by asking them to write, both pre and post tests will be composition tests. Aiming at reducing the subjectivity of scoring its reliability, the researcher is to consider the following:

1. General Consideration:

- a. The subjects of the two composition tests are chosen by the students themselves so as to ensure that mostly all students are motivated to take the test willingly.
- b. Students should be informed of the marking scheme before they start writing.
- c. Students should be informed of the time allowed for the test.
- d. Students should be informed of the acceptable size of composition (the upper and lower limits of the number of words).
- e. The scorer is to time himself. If he starts to slow down, marking fewer scripts per hour, he has to stop and resume marking later.

2. The Choice of Subjects:

The researcher has surveyed the subjects that students in the three groups involved in the study would prefer to write compositions on. The following list of subjects is concluded from this survey. Please encircle the two subjects that you think most appropriate to serve the aim of the study.

- a. A dream that came true.
- b. War and peace.
- c. Teaching as a profession.
- d. A satellite system at home.
- e. What does the concept of happiness mean?

f. The accident I can't forget.

3. Scoring Scheme:

Since marking gets much more reliable when students' performance is analyzed in much greater detail, the researcher is to follow an analytical scheme of marking in which each component of the composition is to be graded separately. A scale of (very good, good, fair, weak) is to be used as follows:

Components	V.good (3marks)	Good (2marks)	Fair (1mark)	Weak (0mark)
Form				
Punctuation				
Basic structures				
Grammatical relations				
Vocabulary accuracy and range				
Spelling Accuracy				
Fluency				
Relevance of ideas				
Total mark	24			

4. Reliability of Scoring:

To check the reliability of scoring scheme of the tests, the researcher intends to apply the scoring scheme in a pilot test. Thirty students are to be asked to write composition on

one subject (My family). Students' test papers are to be photocopied. The researcher and another scorer are to score the two copies independently. Then, correlation coefficient of the two sets of scores is to be computed in order to judge the reliability of the prepared scoring scheme.

Appendix (2)

The Correction Codes

Symbol	Type of Error
Cap	Capitalization
P	Punctuation
Sp	Spelling
X	Omit this
A	Add a word
Ph	Paragraph
SV	Subject-verb agreement
VT	Verb tense
VF	Verb form
WC	Word choice
WF	Word form
WO	Word order
Frag	Sentence fragment
Con	Connect this
?	Unclear

Appendix (3)
Pilot Test Scores

Students	Scorer1	Scorer2
1	12	10
2	2	3
3	6	8
4	5	6
5	12	15
6	7	5
7	8	4
8	10	12
9	3	5
10	16	19
11	8	7
12	2	6
13	5	10
14	12	12
15	17	14
16	6	4
17	8	10
18	5	8
19	4	4
20	8	10
21	9	12
22	3	5
23	17	13
24	6	6
25	15	10
26	4	6
27	17	16
28	8	10
29	9	5
30	5	8

Appendix (4)

Pre-test Scores

Control Group	Experimental group 1	Experimental Group 2
8	9	10
2	3	2
6	4	4
4	6	3
12	12	12
14	17	17
5	14	16
12	13	12
2	3	3
15	14	14
5	7	6
3	2	2
12	11	11
9	12	10
15	14	8
14	13	12
17	16	4
6	4	9
16	10	12
3	9	13
8	8	2
12	12	15
4	3	4
12	14	12
5	7	14
10	2	12

Control Group	Experimental group 1	Experimental Group 2
12	3	10
7	7	8
3	8	6
4	15	2
13	12	6
7	8	8
12	7	11
8	5	
6	2	
8	8	
	10	

Appendix (5)

Post-test Scores

Control Group	Experimental group 1	Experimental Group 2
11	11	17
4	6	4
8	20	14
8	19	4
7	18	16
12	19	13
6	18	12
4	16	17
5	7	4
12	20	18
8	21	12
9	10	8
17	14	10
13	19	9
16	18	7
14	12	4
12	19	12
9	8	6
8	14	8
9	16	10
15	19	12
8	17	19
12	21	9
3	19	7
6	7	12
5	12	16

Control Group	Experimental group 1	Experimental Group 2
4	10	8
3	4	12
11	17	16
8	19	11
8	12	14
12	13	12
14	19	9
19	17	
12	15	
14	2	
	18	

خلاصة البحث

الدراسة الحالية هي محاولة لتجريب استخدام أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي واعداد الكتابة بوصفه اكثر فاعلية في مساعدة الطلبة على التخلص من الأخطاء التي يقعون فيها عندما يكتبون ، والتي قد تمنع حدوث التواصل بشكل جدي. كما إنها أجريت لاجل تقوية وتعزيز تمكن الطالب من اللغة من خلال تطوير دقة الأداء الكتابي لدى الطلبة، نتيجة للقيمة التعليمية التي تتمتع بها الكتابة في سياق تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية. وقد تم في الدراسة الحالية تزويد الطلبة بفرصة تحفيزية ليمارسوا الكتابة في اختبارات إنشاء أسبوعية يتم خلالها إعطاء الطلبة بعض المساعدة لتصحيح أخطائهم والتعلم منها والحصول على الثقة بقدرتهم على الكتابة ومن ثم استخدام اللغة بشكل توأصلي.

لقد قام الباحث بتجريب استخدام أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي واعداد الكتابة في التعامل مع أوراق الطلبة في سلسلة من اختبارات الإنشاء المستمرة التي تهدف إلى:

1. تقويم فاعلية استخدام أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي واعداد الكتابة مع رموز التصحيح التي يقدمها المدرس بوصفه إجراء تدريبياً لتطوير الأداء الكتابي لدى الطلبة.
2. تقويم فاعلية استخدام أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي واعداد الكتابة مع تشخيص الطلبة الذاتي لأخطائهم بوصفه إجراء تدريبياً لتطوير الأداء الكتابي لدى الطلبة.
3. معرفة أي الأسلوبين أكثر فاعلية في التعلم : مساعدة الطلبة على تصحيح أخطائهم من خلال تأشير المدرس لمكان ونوع هذه الأخطاء ، أم جعل الطلبة أنفسهم يشخصون أخطاءهم و يصححونها.

4. تحديد خطة من شأنها جعل تصحيح الأوراق الامتحانية لكتابة الإنشاء أكثر ثباتاً. ولتحقيق أهداف الأطروحة أجرى الباحث تجربة تدخل فيها ثلاث مجموعات :
إحداها ضابطة والأخرىان تجريبيتان ، واتبعت فيها الخطوات الآتية:

1. أجري للطلبة في المجموعات كلها اختبار واحد في كتابة الإنشاء كل أسبوع.
2. تم تأشير الأخطاء التي وقع فيها طلبة المجموعة التجريبية الأولى وتعليمها برموز اعلم بها الطلبة مسبقاً لغرض مساعدتهم على معرفة نوع كل من هذه الأخطاء. بعد ذلك أعيدت الأوراق الامتحانية من غير درجات إلى الطلبة الذين طلب منهم إعادة

كتابة إنشائاتهم مصححين تلك الأخطاء. يقوم المدرس بعد ذلك بقراءة الإنشاءات الجديدة واعطاء الدرجة الملائمة لكل إنشاء.

3. أما بخصوص الأوراق الامتحانية للمجموعة التجريبية الثانية فقد وضعت فقط خطوط تحت الجمل التي تحتوي على أخطاء وطلب منهم معرفة هذه الأخطاء وتصحيحها واعادة كتابة الإنشاءات ثم تسليمها للمدرس لغرض قراءتها ووضع الدرجة التي يستحقها كل إنشاء.

4. الأوراق الامتحانية للمجموعة الضابطة تمت معاملتها بالأسلوب التقليدي حيث تصحح الأخطاء من قبل المدرس فتعطى الدرجة مباشرة.

5. استمرت التجربة حوالي أربعة عشر أسبوعا باختبار واحد في كتابة الإنشاء يجرى مرة واحدة في الأسبوع.

6. اجري اختبار بعدي للطلبة في المجموعات الثلاث لمعرفة أي تطور ممكن في دقة أدائهم الكتابي.

أظهرت النتائج أن أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي واعادة الكتابة مع رموز التصحيح المقدمة من قبل المدرس قد اثبت انه إجراء تدريبي اكثر فاعلية من شأنه أن يطور الأداء الكتابي لدى الطلبة بصورة ملحوظة عندما يستخدم في اختبارات كتابة الإنشاء المستمرة. كما أظهرت الدراسة إن أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي واعادة الكتابة مع ترك تشخيص الأخطاء على عاتق الطلبة ليس له اثر ملحوظ في تطوير أدائهم الكتابي.

وفي ضوء الدراسات ذات العلاقة ، وتحليل النتائج المستخلصة من خلال إجراءات هذه الدراسة ، حدد الباحث من خلال التجربة العملية خطة من شأنها أن تجعل تصحيح اختبار الإنشاء اكثر ثباتا وموضوعية. وقدم عددا من التوصيات ذات العلاقة.

أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي وإعادة الكتابة: الجانب التعليمي لاختبار الإنشاء

أطروحة مقدمة إلى

مجلس كلية التربية-ابن رشد / جامعة بغداد
وهي جزء من متطلبات درجة دكتوراه فلسفة في
التربية (طرائق تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية)

تقدم بها

سلام حامد عباس التميمي

بإشراف

الأستاذ المساعد الدكتور
عبد اللطيف علوان الجميلي شيماء عبد الباقي البكري
الدكتورة

ذو الحجة 1425 هـ

شباط / 2005 م

خلاصة البحث

الدراسة الحالية هي محاولة لتجريب استخدام أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي وإعادة الكتابة بوصفه أكثر فاعلية في مساعدة الطلبة على التخلص من الأخطاء التي يقعون فيها عندما يكتبون ، والتي قد تمنع حدوث التواصل بشكل جدي. كما إنها أجريت لاجل تقوية وتعزيز تمكن الطالب من اللغة من خلال تطوير دقة الأداء الكتابي لدى الطلبة، نتيجة للقيمة التعليمية التي تتمتع بها الكتابة في سياق تدريس اللغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية. وقد تم في الدراسة الحالية تزويد الطلبة بفرصة تحفيزية ليمارسوا الكتابة في اختبارات إنشاء أسبوعية يتم خلالها إعطاء الطلبة بعض المساعدة لتصحيح أخطائهم والتعلم منها والحصول على الثقة بقدرتهم على الكتابة ومن ثم استخدام اللغة بشكل تواصل.

لقد قام الباحث بتجريب استخدام أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي وإعادة الكتابة في التعامل مع أوراق الطلبة في سلسلة من اختبارات الإنشاء المستمرة التي تهدف إلى:

1. تقويم فاعلية استخدام أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي وإعادة الكتابة مع رموز التصحيح التي يقدمها المدرس بوصفه إجراء تدريبيا لتطوير الأداء الكتابي لدى الطلبة.
2. تقويم فاعلية استخدام أسلوب التصحيح الذاتي وإعادة الكتابة مع تشخيص الطلبة الذاتي لأخطائهم بوصفه إجراء تدريبيا لتطوير الأداء الكتابي لدى الطلبة.
3. معرفة أي الأسلوبين أكثر فاعلية في التعلم : مساعدة الطلبة على تصحيح أخطائهم من خلال تأشير المدرس لمكان ونوع هذه الأخطاء ، أم جعل الطلبة أنفسهم يشخصون أخطاءهم و يصححونها.
4. تحديد خطة من شأنها جعل تصحيح الأوراق الامتحانية لكتابة الإنشاء أكثر ثباتا. ولتحقيق أهداف الأطروحة أجرى الباحث تجربة تدخل فيها ثلاث مجموعات :
إحداها ضابطة والأخريان تجريبيتان ، واتبعت فيها الخطوات الآتية:

1. أجري للطلبة في المجموعات كلها اختبار واحد في كتابة الإنشاء كل أسبوع.
2. تم تأشير الأخطاء التي وقع فيها طلبة المجموعة التجريبية الأولى وتعليمها برموز اعلم بها الطلبة مسبقا لغرض مساعدتهم على معرفة نوع كل من هذه الأخطاء. بعد ذلك أعيدت الأوراق الامتحانية من غير درجات إلى الطلبة الذين طلب منهم إعادة

كتابة إنشاءاتهم مصححين تلك الأخطاء. يقوم المدرس بعد ذلك بقراءة الإنشاءات الجديدة واعطاء الدرجة الملائمة لكل إنشاء.

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an attempt to experiment the use of Self-Correction-and-Rewriting Technique as a more effective procedure that may help students get rid of the errors they make when they write which may seriously inhibit communication. It is also conducted to consolidate students' command of the language through developing the accuracy of their written performance, due to the instrumental value that writing has in the TEFL context. In the present study students are provided with a motivating opportunity to practise writing through weekly conducted composition tests in which students are aided to correct their own errors, learn from them, and gain confidence in their ability to write and, eventually, use the language communicatively.

In the present study, the researcher experiments the use of Self-Correction-and-Rewriting Technique in dealing with students' papers of continually conducted composition tests aiming at:

1. Evaluating the effectiveness of employing self-correction and rewriting technique with the teacher's correction codes as a training procedure to develop students' written performance.
2. Evaluating the effectiveness of employing self-correction and rewriting technique with the students' error recognition as a training procedure to develop students' written performance.

3. Finding out which is more effective in learning, aiding students to correct their errors by the teacher marking the place and type of these errors, or asking students to recognize and correct their own errors by themselves.
4. Deciding on a more reliable scheme for scoring students' composition test papers.

To attain the aims of the study, the researcher conducts an experiment in which three groups are involved, two experimental groups and a control one. The following procedures are followed:

1. Students in the three groups are given one composition test weekly.
2. Errors of the students in the first group are marked and labeled with certain codes previously made known to students so as to inform them about the type of each error. Test papers are given back unrewarded to the students who are asked to rewrite their compositions correcting their own errors. The new test papers are checked and rewarded.
3. With the test papers of the second group, sentences that have errors are only underlined and students are asked to recognize then correct the errors they have made and rewrite their compositions.
4. Test papers of the students in the control group are treated traditionally, i.e., errors are marked and corrected by the teacher himself.

5. The experiment is run for about 14 weeks with a composition test administered once a week.
6. A post-test is administered to the students in the three groups to find out any possible development in the accuracy of their written performance.

The findings of the study show that Self-Correction –and-Rewriting Technique with the teacher’s correction codes proves to be an effective training procedure that may develop students’ written performance when employed in continually conducted composition tests. It is found out also that Self-Correction –and-Rewriting Technique with students’ error recognition has no significant effect on the development of students’ written performance.

In the light of the study of related literature and analysis of results obtained through the procedures followed in the study, the researcher decides on a more reliable scoring scheme for scoring students’ composition tests papers, along with a number of pedagogical recommendations.