Chinese Students' Ambivalent Perceptions of Grammar

Correction in L2 Writing

Xu Shao[1,2*] & Jingyu Zhang[3]

[1] School of Foreign Langauge, Shanxi Normal University, Xian, China

[2] School of Foreign Langauge, Qinghai Normal University, Xining, China

[3] Xian International Studies University, Xian, China

[*] Xu Shao, E-mail: shaoxu1226@163.com

Abstract

The efficacy of Grammar Correction (GC) in second language (L2) writing classes has been the subject of much controversy and the field seems to take Ferris' (1999) generalization that students believe in GC and want to receive it for granted. To test Ferris' generalization, this study examines Chinese students' perceptions of GC in their English writing. The results of a questionnaire administered to six groups of three proficiency levels of university students majoring in or not in English show ambivalent perceptions towards GC. On the one hand, all learners believe GC has obvious effects and can improve their accuracy in L2 writing. On the other hand, they all agree that GC is not enough for improving learners' writing ability and that the time spent on GC should be allocated on training other writing abilities. All groups of participants gave a negative to uncertain answer to GC, though different perception patterns figure in whether or not majoring in English: English-major groups' mean expectation scores of GC increase while those of non-English-major groups decrease in keeping with their English levels. These results provide strong evidence for Truscott's (1996) view that GC should be abandoned. We believe that the different perceptions of GC shown by English and non-English major students stem from the fact that the former receives a more systematic grammar instruction than the latter. The ambivalent perceptions of GC originate in the fact that grammar accuracy occupies an important proportion in various writing evaluation systems.

Keywords

second language (L2) writing, grammar correction, students perception, ambivalence, English major and non-English major

1. Introduction

Written corrective feedback (WCF) in L2 writing, otherwise known as grammar correction (e.g., Truscott, 1996, 1999) or written error correction, has been much studied and hotly debated in applied linguistics over the past 18 years. Truscott (1996) questions the practicability of grammar correction, and he believes that Grammar Correction (GC) is not only a waste of time, but even harmful to the

students as well. This has led to a great deal of discussion and research on GC in second-language (L2) writing. Ferris (1999) is the representative opponent of Truscott's point of view, who argues that GC should not be abandoned in that it can improve the accuracy of L2 learners' writing.

Some applied linguists (Hammond, 1988; Truscott, 1996) posit that GC is of "no value" in speeding up L2 acquisition and even can be harmful to students, since it may activate the "affective filter" by raising the students' level of anxiety which, in turn, prevents the learner from actually acquiring communicative ability. Supporters of this view usually hold that L1 as well as L2 acquisition is governed by principles of universal grammar, and that grammatical structures are acquired in a certain predetermined order, regardless of sequence of instruction or amount of corrective feedback. The essence for Truscott (1996) stance is that most L2 writing teachers accept GC as a necessary activity without any critical thinking of whether this approach is effective or not. Grammar Correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned. The reasons are: (a) Research evidence shows that Grammar Correction is ineffective; (b) this lack of effectiveness is exactly what should be expected, given the nature of the correction process and the nature of language learning; (c) grammar correction has significant harmful effects; and (d) the various arguments offered for continuing it all lack of merit (1996, pp. 328-329). In response to Truscott (1996), Ferris (1999) pointed out Truscott's (1996) stance "grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (p. 328) is quite premature and overly strong. Ferris' ideas can be summarized in the following aspects: surveys of student opinion showed their consistent affirmation on the importance of GC; professors feel that students' linguistic errors are bothersome and affect their overall evaluation of students papers, writing instructors should not ignore their students' linguistic difficulties; the absence of any feedback or strategy training will ensure that many students never take seriously the need to improve their editing skills and they will not have the knowledge to edit even when they do perceive its importance.

Many empirical studies have been conducted and the results support Ferris' view that GC is useful in promoting the accuracy of L2 writing (e.g., Lalande, 1982; Robb et al., 1986; Semke, 1984; Ferris & Helt, 2000; Bitchener, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Ellis et al., 2008; Russel & Spada, 2006; Sheen, 2007), but those researches didn't prove the improvement of the complexity and fluency of the English sentences in their L2 writing, the field seems to take Ferris' (1999) generalization that students believe in GC and want to receive it for granted. Studies that have investigated the relative merits of these approaches can be grouped into the following categories: studies compared direct and indirect types of written corrective feedback; researches compared different types of indirect feedback, and investigations compared different types of direct feedback. In studies that have compared direct and indirect approaches, two (Ferris & Helt, 2000; Lalande, 1982) have reported an advantage for indirect feedback, two (Robb et al., 1986; Semke, 1984) have reported no difference between direct and indirect feedback, and one (Chandler, 2003) has reported positive findings for both direct and indirect feedback. Several other studies (Ferris et al., 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Robb et al., 1986) have investigated the relative effectiveness of different types of indirect corrective feedback (coded and uncoded) but

none has found any difference between the two options. Clearly, firm conclusions cannot be made from these conflicting results. The bulk of such research has been conducted in laboratory-like conditions using experimental/quasi-experimental design, with little pedagogical relevance and ecological validity (Storch, 2010). Hence, there is a great need for written corrective feedback research to shift to naturalistic classroom contexts to explore the real needs of students. On the contrary, a few studies has been proven on the ineffectiveness of GC (Kepner, 1991; Polio et al., 1998; Truscott, 1996, 1999).

Although researchers have extensively studied the effectiveness of different types of GC usually in terms of L2 development as gauged by pretests and post tests in both laboratory and classroom settings, little is known about students' perceptions of GC in their English writing. Besides the continuing practical need for classroom teachers to be equipped with the best available answers about GC, there is a specific gap in the recent research base that is obvious: the lack of careful consideration of learners' needs. To the best of our knowledge no previous study has investigated this type of GC. It would certainly be premature to formulate any conclusions about this topic, more researches are needed on investigating students real perceptions over the effectiveness of GC. Black and William (1998), Gardner (2006) and Salder (1998, 2010) posit that the learner has an important role to play in the feedback process, research that explores students' role in evaluating their own writing is much needed to add new knowledge to the current research on feedback in writing.

2. Learners' Perceptions of Grammar Correction

In all the heated discussions for or against GC, one topic that is not controversial is L2 students' views toward teacher feedback on their written errors and very few studies have examined students' perceptions over this issue. The beliefs that students bring with them to the language learning process have been recognized as important determinants of learning (Bernat, 2005; Larsen-Freeman, 2001; Oxford, 2001). While previous research on GC has mainly focused on the differentiate effects of different types of GC, the cognitive processes which are prompted by GC to advance L2 writing development merit further attention. Learners' perceptions of GC which can be regarded as a cognitive window to their mental processes (Egi, 2007). According to Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt, 1990), "intake is that part of the input that the learners notices" (p. 139), one type of cognitive process which can be regarded as a yardstick to evaluate the effectiveness of GC is learners' awareness or noticing of the mismatch between their incorrect utterances and the target-like forms provided by GC. Learners' perceptions of GC were analyzed in previous studies (e.g., Carter et al., 2006; Egi, 2007; Mackey, 2006) to investigate the extent to which learners could successfully notice the mismatch between their incorrect forms and target-like forms. Investigating learners' perceptions of GC can also help researchers understand how it is possible to increase the overlap between teachers' intention and learners' perceptions of GC. According to Mackey et al. (2007), such an overlap is crucial for the efficacy of GC.

The studies about teachers' or students' perceptions can be divided mainly in three aspects: the vast majority of research shows the consistency of teachers and students about GC (such as: Schulz, 2001; Diab, 2005); few studies show that teachers and students' perceptions for GC is not consistent (such as: Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Lee, 2009); Montgomery and Baker (2007) reports that teachers show inconsistency between their practical error treatment and beliefs interviewed by the researcher.

Previous studies are based on the beliefs of Ferris (1999) to test students' preferences of the particular type of GC, but without any critical thinking of whether they need GC or not. This study aims at solving the following questions: the distribution of grammatical errors in English Writing at different levels; teachers responses to grammatical errors in English Writing; the relationship between GC and learners' writing enthusiasm and interests; learners' attitudes of GC and the effects of GC.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

The participants for the current study were 188 ESL students major in or not in English who were randomly selected from a university in China, comprising 35 males and 153 females, with an average age of 21.188 learners formed six groups: low-level group (24 students), intermediate group (35 students) and high-level group (24 students) of English major; low-level group (33 students), intermediate group (35 students) and high-level group (37 students) of non-English major. The groups have been classified according to whether they pass the following test: Test for English majors Band4 (TEM4); Test for English majors Band8 (TEM8); College English Test Band4 (CET4); College English Test Band6(CET6). students who didn't pass TEM4 and CET4 formed low-level groups; those who pass TEM4 and CET4 formed low-level groups formed intermediate groups; those who pass TEM8 and CET6 formed high-level groups (see Table 1).

Table 1. A Description of the Participants

Group	English-majors			Non-English majors		
	low-level	intermediate	high-level	low-level	intermediate	high-level
Numbers of the students	24	35	24	33	35	37

3.2 Design

We began the development of our questionnaire by considering the generalization of Truscott (1996) and Ferris (1999) from a dichotomy view, items were succinctly worded and written in pairs, with each item contains the idea of GC is useful in parallel with the item that is no good. The item bank contained 17 items, these items were developed and categorized into 5 groups along 3 dimensions: (a) teachers

responses to grammatical errors in English Writing; (b) students' attitudes of GC; (c) the effects of GC. A Likert-scale has been used to get the quantitative data (5=strongly disagree; 4=disagree; 3=not sure; 2=agree; 1=strongly agree).

Through extensive discussion within the project team, which included the primary researcher and PhD students with experience in L2 acquisition, the items were drafted, scrutinized and re-worded several times. Care was taken to ensure that the language used in the questionnaire was suitable for students. In our effort to accomplish it, the items went through many reiterations that involved paring them down, clarifying the intent, substituting with a easier sentence and removing unnecessary phrases. The research team made a pilot-study to test the validity of the questionnaire and the index indicated the highly reliability and validity of it (α=0.80).

3.3 Procedure

The research process had three main parts. The researchers observed English writing classes and recorded it in the first stage; At the second stage students fill out the questionnaire; And in the final stage stimulated recall was used with students to elicit their perceptions of GC.

4. Results

4.1 The Distribution of Grammatical Errors in English Writing

Although nearly all the L2 writing teachers correct students grammatical errors in their English writing. Are grammatical errors the most frequent error type in students' English writing? Our aim is to find out the answer for this question. The result of item 1 (see Table 2) "The most frequent errors in my English writing are grammatical mistakes." tells us the mean score of all the groups of English major (low-level group, intermediate group and high-level group) is below 3, this means grammatical error is not the most frequent error type in their English writing, and English majors' grammatical errors decreases along with the increase of their English levels, on the contrary, those of non-English majors increases along with the increase of their English levels, while this doesn't mean the grammatical errors of low-level group are much less than intermediate group and high-level group of non-English major.

The result of item 2 (see Table 2) "The sentence of my English writing is too simple" tells us participants of low-level group would use simpler sentence and this would low down their grammatical errors. The mean score for the groups of non-English major is above 3 except for the low-level group, this result suggests that grammatical errors of non-English majors are much higher than those of English majors. The reason for this phenomena is that English majors acquire more systematic Grammar instructions than non-English majors in China, universities of China provide English Grammar lessons for English majors, while non-English majors can only learn it from comprehensive English classes.

Table 2. Results of the Distribution of Grammatical Errors in English Writing

Group Mean score	English-majors			Non-English majors		
	low-level	intermediate	high-level	low-level	intermediate	high-level
1. The most frequent errors occur in my English writing are grammatical mistakes.	2.958	2.800	2.333	2.848	3.114	3.135
2. The sentences in my English writing are too simple.	3.375	3.343	2.750	3.576	3.371	3.649

4.2 Teachers' Responses to Grammatical Errors in English Writing

Nearly all L2 writing teachers do GC one form or another; nearly everyone who writes on the subject recommends it in one form or another. Teachers and researchers hold a widespread, deeply entrenched belief that GC should, even must, be part of our writing courses (Truscott, 1996, p. 327).

Teachers of L2 composition who regularly provide grammar-oriented feedback would doubtless report that this is one of the most time-consuming and exhausting aspects of their jobs. Even though they still believe in it, the perceived importance of GC and the amount of emphasis both teachers and students place on it, it is reasonable to ask whether GC is effective and appropriate at all (Ferris, 1999, p. 1).

The result of item 3 (see Table 3) "My teacher made specific GC in my English writings." shows that all the groups: low-level group, intermediate group and high-level group of English major; low-level group and high-level group of non-English major, except for the intermediate group of non-English major, specific suggestions from L2 writing teachers have been given to students towards their grammatical errors in their L2 writings.

Table 3. Results of Teachers' Responses to Grammatical Errors in English Writing

Mean score Group	English-majors			Non-English majors		
	low-level	intermediate	high-level	low-level	intermediate	high-level
3. My teacher made specific GC in my English writings.	4.000	3.286	3.625	3.273	2.914	3.378

4.3 The Relationship between GC and Learners' Writing Enthusiasm and Interests

Different from oral corrective feedback, some researchers think teachers oral corrective feedback would disturb the flow of the English class and even dampen students enthusiasm. The result of item 4 (see Table 4) "Teachers' negative comments on my English writing discouraged writing enthusiasm and interests" shows the mean score of all the groups (low-level group, intermediate group and high-level group of English major; low-level group, intermediate group and high-level group of non-English

major) is lowly below 3 with one accord, English majors' mean score basically decreases, while those of non-English majors increases along with the increase of their English levels. This shows all the students in 6 groups agree that GC in English writing from their teachers would not discourage their writing interests or enthusiasm. Meanwhile the result of item 5 (see Table 4) "Teachers' positive comments on my English writing strengthened my writing enthusiasm and interests" shows all the groups (low-level group, intermediate group and high-level group of English major; low-level group, intermediate group and high-level group of non-English major) consistently agree that teachers' positive evaluation could definitely arouse students writing interests and enthusiasm, the mean score of all the groups is highly above 3, English majors' mean score increases with the increase of their English levels, non-English majors' mean score basically the same except for the intermediate group. The result of these two items is a reflection of students' ambivalent perceptions of GC in English writing.

Table 4. Results of the Relationship between GC and Learners' Writing Enthusiasm and Interests

Mean score	Group	English-majors			Non-English majors		
		low-level	intermediate	high-level	low-level	intermediate	high-level
4. Teachers' negative comments on my English writing discouraged writing enthusiasm and interests .		2.167	1.800	1.917	1.818	2.229	2.351
5. Teachers' positive comments on my English writing strengthened my writing enthusiasm and interests.		4.125	3.771	3.750	3.818	3.429	3.811

4.4 Learners' Attitudes of GC

4.4.1 Learners' Positive Attitudes of GC

The result of 4.2 shows that all the teachers do GC in students' English writing, then what is the students' perceptions of GC? And do they really need it? Is it true that students want to get GC because of the pressure from their teachers (Truscott, 1996)? Item 6, 7, 8 and 9 give us the answer.

Item 6 "I wish my teachers to spend most time on correcting the grammatical in of my English writings"(see Table 5) suggests that although teachers do GC in students' English writing without any doubts, students just do not wish their teachers to invest most of their time on correcting their grammatical errors except for the low-level group of English major and high-level group of non-English major, the other four groups' mean score is below 3, English majors' mean score decreases, while those of non-English majors increases along with the increase of their English levels. In conclusion the result of this research is quite from the generalization of Ferris' (1999) students are

strongly desired to get GC from their teachers.

On the contrary, item 9 (see Table 5) "it is necessary to have grammar instruction in English writing class" All the six groups' mean score is above 3, this implies all the students want to get grammar instruction form their teachers in English writing class. English majors' mean score decreases with the increase of their English levels, non-English majors' mean score is basically the same with the increase of their English levels. The result of this research item 6 and item 9 reflect students' another ambivalent perception of GC in L2 writing.

In order to test the "teacher-pressure" (Truscott, 1996), we made item 7 (see table 5) "I wish my teacher to correct my grammatical mistakes as my teacher did it before" the result shows that the mean score of all the groups is below 3, except for the intermediate group of English major and high-level group of non-English major. However, these two groups' mean score is quite close to 3. To sum up, students'wishes for GC doesn't come from the pressure from their teachers.

Students would feel helpless if they could not get GC from their teachers (Ferris, 1999). Item 8 (see Table 5) "Students would feel helpless when their grammatical mistakes are left uncorrected." gives different research result, the mean score of all the groups except for the low-level group is below 3 and English majors' mean score basically decreases, non-English majors' mean score decreases along with the increase of their English levels. All in all students would not feel helpless without teachers' GC. The research result of Item 9 and item 8 shows another students ambivalent perceptions of GC: on one hand, they wish get teachers grammar instructions in their English writing classes. On the other hand, they won't feel helpless without GC.

Table 5. Results of Learners' Positive Attitudes of GC

Mean score	Group	English-majors			Non-English majors		
		low-level	intermediate	high-level	low-level	intermediate	high-level
6. I wish my teachers to spend most time on correcting the grammatical in of my English writings.		3.042	2.229	1.875	2.546	2.914	3.243
7. I wish my teachers to correct my grammatical mistakes as my teacher did so.		2.708	3.114	2.583	2.697	2.686	3.027
8. Students would feel helpless when their grammatical mistakes are left uncorrected.		2.417	2.771	2.333	3.061	2.829	2.919
9. Grammar instruction is indispensable in English writing class.		3.541	3.486	3.083	3.546	3.257	3.595

4.4.2 Learners' Negative Attitudes of GC

Truscott (1996) points out GC is a time-consuming activity and it can help students improve their writing ability better by putting those time on training students' other writing abilities. So do students agree or disagree with his idea? The result of item 10 (see Table 6) "Students would make more progress without GC." tells us all the groups' mean score are above 3, English majors' mean score increases, while those of non-English majors decreases along with the increase of their English levels. Students agree with Truscott's (1996) point of view: their English writing level would improve better if putting more time on training their other writing abilities instead of correcting their grammatical errors in English writing most of the time.

Truscott (1996) suggested students would use simpler sentences in order to avoid grammatical mistakes. Item 12 (see Table 6) "I would use simple sentences to avoid making grammatical mistakes" tests his idea, the result tells us students won't use simpler sentences to avoid grammatical mistakes. The mean score of English major groups are above 3, the low-level group and high-level group of English major have exactly the same mean score, the low-level group and high-level group of non-English major's mean score is a bit higher than 3.

The result of item 13 (see Table 6) "GC would distract my attention on the overall organizing of my writing" shows all the groups except for the high-level group' mean score are below 3, English majors' mean score decreases, while those of non-English majors increases except for the high-level group along with the increase of their English levels. All the students except for the high-level group think correcting grammatical mistakes won't disturb their thoughts on designing their English writing.

All the students in this research show cutaneous idea towards item 14 (see Table 6) "Grammatical knowledge is not enough for improving students' writing ability." all the groups' mean score are above 4, English majors' mean score increases with the increase of their English levels, while low-level group and high-level group of non-English major's mean score are near to 4.36. This is another reflection of students' ambivalent perceptions of GC: On one hand, students think grammar instruction is needed in English writing class. On the other hand, they believe grammatical knowledge is not enough for improving their writing ability.

Table 6. Results of Learners' Negative Attitudes of GC

Mean score	Group	English-majors			Non-English majors		
		low-level	intermediate	high-level	low-level	intermediate	high-level
10. Students would make more progress without GC.		3.083	3.514	3.583	3.576	3.343	3.297
11. Students would feel helpless when their grammatical mistakes uncorrected.		2.417	2.771	2.333	3.061	2.829	2.919
12. I would use simple sentences to avoid making grammatical mistakes.		2.667	2.600	2.667	3.091	2.914	3.189
13. GC would distract my attention on the overall organizing of my writing.		2.875	2.800	2.792	2.970	2.857	3.162
14. Mastering grammatical knowledge is not enough for improving my writing ability.		4.083	4.400	4.583	4.364	4.171	4.378

4.5 The Effects of GC

Previous research shows different result for the effects of GC, Truscott (1996) thought GC is not effective and even harmful to students, while Ferris (1999, 2011) pointed GC is effective, at least GC can improve the accuracy of students English writing and researchers' objective is to find out the most effective corrective feedback in L2 writing. The result of item 15, 16 and 17 (see Table 7) show students' perceptions towards this issue.

All the groups think GC has obvious effects, the mean score of each group is above 3. All the groups believe correcting grammatical mistakes can improve students' accuracy in L2 writing. The mean score of all the groups is above 3. English majors and non-English majors' mean score increases along with the increase of their English levels (see Table 7).

However, the result for items 17 (see Table 7) "Students would make the same grammatical mistakes in their next writing" tells us all the groups mean score are above 3 except for the high-level group of English-major group. The same grammatical errors would reappear in their following English writings. This is another ambivalent perception of students: on one hand, they think GC can improve their accuracy in L2 writing. On the other hand, they admit the same grammatical issue would reappear in their following English writings.

Table 7. Results of the Effects of GC

Mean score	Group	English-majors			Non-English majors		
		low-level	intermediate	high-level	low-level	intermediate	high-level
15. GC has obvious effects on my English writing.		3.458	3.371	3.500	3.242	3.143	3.595
16. GC can improve students' accuracy in writing.		3.667	3.771	3.917	3.788	3.800	3.919
17. I make the same grammatical mistakes in my writing corrected previously.		3.000	3.229	2.875	3.212	3.229	3.216

4.6 Summary

As shown from Table 8 and 9, an analysis of Descriptive Statistics and Univariate Tests has been used to test item 6, 11, 4, 3, 2 in order to make further understanding towards students' perceptions of GC. According to ANOVA analysis, the result of item 6: $F(5,182)=7.238$, $p=.000$, $\eta^2=.166$, significant differences occurred among six groups of different proficiency levels, and the main cause is from high-level of English majors: significant differences occured between high-level of English majors and low-level of English majors; high-level of English majors and intermediate, low-level of Non-English majors; high-level of Non-English majors and intermediate of English majors. Differences also occured among the six groups from the results of item 3: $F(5,182)=3.037$, $p=.012$, $\eta^2=.077$ and item 2: $F(5,182)=2.486$, $P=.033$, $\eta^2=.064$, the main case is respectively from intermediate of Non-English majors and high-level of English majors. Marginal differences can be found from the results from item 11 and item 4: $F(5,182)=2.295$, $P=.047$, $\eta^2=.059$; $F(5,182)=2.011$, $P<.04$, $\eta^2=.052$, the main case is respectively from high-level and low-level of English majors.

Table 8. Descriptive Statistics of Item 6, 11, 4, 3, 2

Groups		Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Q6	1	3.0417	.99909	24
	2	2.2286	1.03144	35
	3	1.8750	.79741	24
	4	2.5455	1.03353	33
	5	2.9143	1.22165	35
	6	3.2432	1.09050	37
	Total	2.6702	1.13654	188

	1	2.4167	.88055	24
Q1	2	2.7714	1.19030	35
1	3	2.3333	1.04950	24
	4	3.0606	.86384	33
	5	2.8286	.95442	35
	6	2.9189	.95389	37
	Total	2.7606	1.00860	188
Q4	1	2.1667	1.23945	24
	2	1.8000	.90098	35
	3	1.9167	.65386	24
	4	1.8182	.72692	33
	5	2.2286	1.05957	35
	6	2.3514	1.03323	37
	Total	2.0532	.96868	188
Q3	1	4.0000	1.02151	24
	2	3.2857	1.20224	35
	3	3.6250	.92372	24
	4	3.2727	1.09752	33
	5	2.9143	1.24550	35
	6	3.3784	1.08912	37
	Total	3.3670	1.14620	188
Q2	1	3.3750	.96965	24
	2	3.3429	1.05560	35
	3	2.7500	1.03209	24
	4	3.5758	1.17341	33
	5	3.3429	1.05560	35
	6	3.6486	.94916	37
	Total	3.3723	1.06459	188

1=low-level of English majors; 2=intermediate of English majors; 3=high-level of English majors; 4=low-level of Non-English majors; 5=intermediate of Non-English majors; 6=high-level of Non-English majors

Table 9. Univariate Tests of Item 2, 3, 4 , 6 and 11

Dependent Variable	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
Q6	5	8.013	7.238	.000	.166
Q11	5	2.257	2.295	.047	.059
Q4	5	1.838	2.011	.079	.052
Q3	5	3.783	3.037	.012	.077
Q2	5	2.709	2.486	.033	.064

5. Discussion and Conclusions

The result of this study show students' ambivalent perceptions towards GC. On one hand, all learners believe GC has obvious effects and can improve their accuracy in L2 writing. On the other hand, they all agree that GC is not enough for improving learners' writing ability and that the time spent on GC should be allocated on training other writing abilities; grammatical mistakes is not the most frequent error type in their English writing.

The cause of different perceptions between English majors and non-English majors in China is English majors receive much more systematic grammar instructions than non-English majors. Students' ambivalent perceptions of GC are also strongly influenced by the English writing rubrics of the CET4, CET6, TEM4, TEM8 system and the ambivalence of GC originates in the fact that grammar accuracy occupies an important proportion in various writing evaluation systems. The results of this study provide strong evidence in support of Truscott's (1996) point of view: grammar correction should be abandoned in L2 writing.

References

Berg, B. C. (1999). The effects of trained peer response on ESL students' revision types and writing quality. *J. Second Lang. Writ*, *8*(3), 215-241.

Bernat, E. (2005). Beliefs about Language learning: Current knowledge, pedagogical implications, and new research directions. *TESL-EJ*, *9*(1), 1-21.

Bitchener, J. (2008). Evidence in support of written corrective feedback. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *17*, 102-118.

Bitchener, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2011). *Written corrective feedback in second language writing*. New York: Routledge.

Black, P., & Wiliam, D. (1998). Assessment and classroom learning. *Assessment in Education*, *5*(1), 7-74.

Carter, R., & McCarthy, M. (2006). Cambridge grammar of English: A comprehensive guide. *Spoken*

and written English grammar and usage. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press.

Chandler, J. (2003). The efficacy of various kinds of error feedback for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of L2 student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing. 12*, 267-296.

Diab, R. L. (2005). Teachers' and students' beliefs about responding to ESL writing: A case study. *TESL Can. J.*, *23*(1), 28-43.

Egi, T. (2007a). Interpreting recasts as linguistic evidence: The roles of linguistic target, length, and degree of change. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *29*, 511-537.

Ellis et al. (2008). The effect of focused and unfocused written corrective feedback in an English as a foreign language context. *System*, *36*, 353-371.

Erickson, F. (1986). Qualitative methods in research on teaching. In M. C. Wittrock (Ed.), *Handbook of Research on Teaching* (3rd ed.). New York: Mac-millan.

Fathman, A., & Whalley, E. (1990). Teacher response to student writing: Focus on for versus content. In F. B. Kroll (Ed.), *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom* (pp. 178-190). New York: Cambridge University Press.

Ferris D. R., & Helt, M. (2000). *Was Truscott? New evidence on the effects of error correction in L2 writing classes*. Paper presented at the American Association of Applied Linguistics Conference.

Ferris D. R., & Roberts, B. (2001). Error feedbackinL2writingclasses: How explicit does it need to be? *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *10*(3), 161-184.

Ferris, D. R. (1999). The Case for Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes: A Response to Truscott (1996). *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *8*(1), 1-11.

Ferris, D. R. (2002). *Treatment of error in second language student writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Ferris, D. R. (2003). *Response to student writing: Implications for second language students*. New York: Routledge.

Ferris, D. R. (2010). Second language writing research and written corrective feedback in SLA: Intersections and practical applications. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *32*(2), 181-201.

Ferris, D. R. (2012). *Treatment of error in second language student writing*. Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Ferris, D., & Hedgcock, J. S. (1997). *Teaching ESL composition: Purpose, process, & practic*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Gardner, J. (2006). *Assessment and Learning*. London: Sage.

Hammond, R. M. (1988). Accuracy Versus Communicative Competency: The Acquisition of Grammar in the Second Language Classroom. *Hispania*, *71*, 408-417.

Heift, & Rimrott. (2008). Learner responses to corrective feedback for spelling errors in CALL. *System*, *36*, 196-213.

Hirvela, A., & Belcher, D. (2007). Writing scholars as teacher educators: Exploring writing teacher education. *J. Second Lang. Writ.*, *16*, 125-128.

114

Hu. (2012). Do teachers and students share similar beliefs about teaching and learing strategies. *System*, *40*, 237-254.

Incecay. (2011). Foreign language learners' beliefs about grammar instruction and error correction. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *15*, 3394-3398.

Kepner, C. G. (1991). An experiment in the relationship of types of written feedback to the development of second language writing skills. *Modern Language Journal*, *75*, 305-313.

Krashen, S. D. (1984). *Writing: Research, theory, and applications*. Oxford: Pergamon Institute of English.

Krashen, S. D. (1985). *The Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. New York: Longman.

Lalande, J. F. II. (1982). Reducing composition errors: An experiment. *Modern Language Journal*, *66*, 140-149.

Larsen-Freeman, D. (2001). Individual cognitive/affective learner contributions and differential success in second language acquisition. In M. P. Breen (Ed.), *Learner Contributions to Language Learning: New Directions in Research* (pp. 12-24). Harlow, Essex: Pearson Education Limited.

Lee, I. (2008). Understanding teachers' written feedback practices in Hong Kong secondary classrooms. *J. Second Lang Writ.*, *17*, 69-85.

Lee, I. (2009). *Ten mismatches between teachers' beliefs and written feedback practice*. ELT.

Lee, I. (2012). Corrective feedback preferences and learner repair among advanced ESL students. *System*, *41*, 217-230.

Long, M. H. (1996). The role of the Linguistic Environment in Second Language Acquisition. In W. C. Ritchie, & T. K. Bhatia (Eds.), *Handbook of Second Language Acquisition*. San Diego, CA: Academic Press.

Lyster, R., & Panova, I. (2002). Patterns of corrective feedback and uptake in an adult ESL classroom. *A Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL) Quarterly*, *36*(4), 573-595.

MacKey, A., Gass, S., & McDonough, K. (2000). How do learners perceive implicit negative feedback? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *22*, 471-497.

Montgomery, J. L., & Baker, W. (2007). Teacher-written feedback: Student perceptions, teacher self-assessment, and actual teacher performance. *J. Second Lang. Writ.*.

Oxford, R. L. (2001). "The belached bones of a story": Learners' construction of language teachers. In M. P. Breen (Ed.), *Learner Contributions to Language Learning: New Directions in Research* (pp. 87-111). Pearson Education Limited, Harlow, Essex.

Polio, C., Fleck, C., & Leder, N. (1998). If I only had more time: ESL learners' changes in linguistic accuracy ones say revisions. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *7*, 43-68.

Robb, T., Ross, S., & Shortreed, I. (1986). Salience of feedback on error and its effect on EFL writing quality. *TESOL Quarterly*, *20*, 83-93.

Russell, J., & Spada, N. (2006). The effectiveness of corrective feedback for second language acquisition: A meta-analysis of the research. In J. Norris, & L. Ortega (Eds.), *Synthesizing*

research on language learning and teaching (pp. 133-163). Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Sadler, D. R. (1998). Formative assessment: Revisiting the territory. *Assessment in Education: Principles, Policy and Practice*, *5*(1), 77-84.

Salimi. (2011). Teachers' Intentions and Learners' Perceptions about Recasts, Prompts and Models. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *29*, 1380-1389.

Schmidt, R. (1990). The role of Consciousness in Second Language Learning. *Applined Linguistics*, *11*, 129-158.

Schulz, R. A. (2001). Cultural differences in student and teacher perceptions concerning the role of grammar instruction and corrective feedback: USA-Colombia. *Mod. Lang. J*, *85*(2), 244-258.

Semke, H. (1984). The effects of the red pen. *Foreign Language Annals*, *17*, 195-202.

Sheen. (2007). The effect of Focused Written Corrective Feedback and Language Aptitude on ESL Learners' Acquisition of Articles. *Tesol Quarterly*, *41*, 255-283.

Spada. (2008). Developing a questionnaire to investigate second language learners' preferences for two types of form-focused instruction. *System*, *37*, 70-81.

Storch, N. (2010). Critical feedback on written corrective feedback research. *International Journal of English Studies*, *10*(2), 29-46.

Swain M. (1995). Three Functions of Output in Second Language Learning. *Principles and Practice in Applied Linguistics: Studies in Honor of H.G.*. Widdowson, Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Truscott, J. (1996). The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes. *Language Learning*, *46*, 327-369.

Truscott, J. (1999). The case for "The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes": A response to Ferris. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *8*(2), 111-122.

Appendix

Please answer the following questions about your beliefs and preferences about English writing. This will help us better understand English writing issues. This is not a test, so there is no "right" or "wrong" answers. All responses will be kept confidential.

Thank you very much for your help!

Section 1 : Personal information

Name: Age: country of origin: home language:

Section 2: The following are a number of statements about English writing issues. Please indicate your opinion by circling a number **1-5**(**strongly disagree---strongly agree**).

1. The most frequent errors occur in my English writing are grammatical mistakes.

1   2   3   4   5

2. The sentences in my English writing are too simple.

1   2   3   4   5

3. My teacher made specific GC in my English writings.

1   2   3   4   5

4. Teachers' negative comments on my English writing discouraged writing enthusiasm and interests.

1   2   3   4   5

5. Teachers' positive comments on my English writing strengthened my writing enthusiasm and interests.

1   2   3   4   5

6. I wish my teachers to spend most time on correcting the grammatical in of my English writings.

1   2   3   4   5

7. I wish my teachers to correct my grammatical mistakes as my teacher did so.

1   2   3   4   5

8. Students would feel helpless when their grammatical mistakes are left uncorrected.

1   2   3   4   5

9. Grammar instruction is indispensable in English writing class.

1   2   3   4   5

10. Students would make more progress without GC.

1   2   3   4   5

11. Students would feel helpless when their grammatical mistakes uncorrected.

1   2   3   4   5

12. I would use simple sentences to avoid making grammatical mistakes.

1   2   3   4   5

13. GC would distract my attention on the overall organizing of my writing.

1   2   3   4   5

14. Mastering grammatical knowledge is not enough for improving my writing ability.

1   2   3   4   5

15. GC has obvious effects on my English writing.

1   2   3   4   5

16. GC can improve students' accuracy in writing.

1   2   3   4   5

17. I make the same grammatical mistakes in my writing corrected previously.

1   2   3   4   5