



The Effects of Self Correction on EFL Students' Comprehension Ability

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Abstract

This study investigates the impact of self-correction on English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students' comprehension ability. The research focuses on third-year students at the Faculty of Education at the Islamic University, examining their perspectives on self-correction, language proficiency, confidence levels, and prior learning experiences. The study aims to understand if self-correction leads to greater improvement in comprehension compared to relying solely on teacher correction. Strategies for identifying errors include comparing outputs with model answers, using grammar checkers, and fostering a learning culture. The study explores students' perceptions of self-correction, focusing on how it helps them learn a language independently. While many views self-correction as a way to improve, some students feel insecure due to fear of not understanding their mistakes or repeating them. This is particularly true for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students who may struggle with self-correction due to their lack of knowledge about grammar or syntax, fear of teacher feedback, and cultural expectations. To address these issues, the study suggests teaching students how to identify mistakes, using dictionaries and grammar checks, creating an environment where mistakes are seen as opportunities for learning, and praising students for their efforts. The study suggests starting with guided self-correction and gradually reducing reliance on prompts to encourage independence.

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Keywords: English Foreign Language, self-correction, student's comprehension

1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

Language learning is a multifaceted process involving the development of various skills such as reading, writing, listening, and speaking, all of which are interconnected through the learners' comprehension abilities. Comprehension is a foundational element that underpins effective language use, as it enables learners to interpret and respond accurately to language input. According to Brown (2007) ^[2], comprehension skills are critical because they allow learners to engage meaningfully with the target language, thereby fostering a deeper understanding and retention of language structures. As learners progress in their studies, they encounter increasingly complex linguistic forms that challenge their comprehension abilities, making error correction an essential tool in their language learning journey.

Traditionally, teachers have assumed the primary role of correcting students' errors, often providing immediate feedback to prevent the reinforcement of incorrect language patterns. However, recent research has shifted attention towards self-correction, where learners take an active role in identifying and amending their mistakes. Studies by Ferris (2002) and Truscott (1999) ^[24] highlight that while teacher-led correction is effective, self-correction may offer additional cognitive benefits by engaging learners in the error recognition and correction process. Self-correction encourages learners to reflect on their own language use, promoting a sense of accountability and ownership that is less prominent in traditional, teacher-centered correction methods.

Self-correction is closely related to the concept of learner autonomy, a key principle in language education that emphasizes students' responsibility for their own learning. According to Little (1991) ^[17], autonomy in language learning enhances students' motivation and self-efficacy, as they feel empowered to take control of their progress. When students engage in self-correction, they are not only improving their language skills but are also developing metacognitive abilities such as self-monitoring and self-assessment (Anderson, 2002) ^[1]. These skills are essential for language retention and comprehension, as they encourage learners to actively process linguistic input rather than passively receiving it. This aligns with the constructivist approach to learning, which advocates for active engagement and reflection as pathways to meaningful knowledge acquisition.

The focus of this study is on the impact of self-correction on the comprehension abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. Comprehension in this context refers to learners' ability to understand and interpret language across different modalities, including reading, listening, and conversational interactions in the target language. Research by Swain and Lapkin (1995) ^[23] suggests that self-correction can enhance comprehension by encouraging learners to engage in deeper cognitive processing of language structures. When learners correct their own errors, they are required to understand the underlying grammatical or syntactic rules they may have violated, which reinforces their comprehension and overall language awareness.

This study aims to build on existing research by exploring how self-correction can improve EFL student's comprehension abilities. By fostering metacognitive skills and promoting learner autonomy, self-correction may serve as an effective tool for language acquisition, especially in comprehension-focused tasks. As learners become more adept at identifying and correcting their own errors, they may develop greater confidence and competence in the target language. Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the ongoing discussion in language education regarding effective error-correction methods, with the hope that it will inform teaching practices and provide insights into how EFL learners can achieve higher levels of comprehension and autonomy in their language studies.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

The problem of this study lies in EFL student's difficulty with comprehension, which stems from their reliance on teacher correction. This dependence limits their ability to develop critical thinking and self-learning skills, leaving them passive in their learning process. Such reliance hinders their capacity to internalize language rules independently. Given the limited empirical evidence on the role of self-correction in improving comprehension, this study seeks to investigate how self-correction can promote learner autonomy, enhance confidence, and ultimately improve comprehension skills.

1.3. Aims of the Study

This study aims to explore the effect of self-correction on EFL students' comprehension ability. In this context, comprehension ability refers to student's ability to accurately

comprehend and interpret written and spoken English. The study will investigate whether students who engage in self-correction activities show greater improvement in comprehension compared to those who rely solely on teacher correction.

The importance of this study stems from the lack of research on the effect of self-correction on the development of EFL student's comprehension abilities, as most current research focuses on teacher-led error correction. Therefore, this study contributes to providing a better understanding of how self-correction can encourage students to internalize language structures and improve their teaching practices.

The study will use a combined quantitative and qualitative approach, where a sample of EFL students will be observed while performing self-correction tasks. Comprehension tests will be administered before and after implementing these activities, and the results will be analyzed to assess the effect of self-correction on students' language comprehension.

The results of this study will be of great benefit to several parties; teachers can benefit from new strategies to enhance self-learning in the classroom. Students will also benefit from improving their ability to identify and correct their own mistakes, which will enhance their comprehension skills. Additionally, curriculum developers can use the results to incorporate self-correction practices into teaching strategies to achieve better and more independent learning.

1.4. Research Questions/Hypotheses

1. What are the students' perspectives towards self-correction
2. What are the challenges that EFL students face when implementing self-correction?

1.5. Limitations and Delimitations

This study is subject to certain limitations and delimitations that define its scope and influence its findings. The primary limitation lies in the small sample size, drawn from a single institution, which may affect the generalizability of the results to broader EFL populations. Additionally, the study's short duration focuses on immediate outcomes, leaving long-term effects unexplored. Another limitation is the varying levels of student motivation and preparedness for self-correction, which may influence the effectiveness of the strategy. As for delimitations, the study specifically targets comprehension skills (reading and listening) rather than other language skills such as speaking or writing. It also focuses on intermediate-level EFL students, ensuring consistency but excluding younger or more advanced learners. The study emphasizes self-correction as the primary learning strategy, excluding other feedback methods like peer correction or digital tools. These delimitations allow the research to maintain a clear focus while acknowledging the boundaries of its findings.

2. Review of Related Literature

2.1. Overview

Academic writing is one of the most critical skills that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students must acquire, as it poses significant challenges due to its demand for advanced linguistic proficiency and structured thinking. This skill requires mastery of grammatical accuracy, appropriate vocabulary, and a consistent academic style, all of which are

challenging to achieve without targeted teaching strategies (Hyland, 2016) ^[12].

Recent studies highlight the gap between students' linguistic competence and the requirements of academic writing, which often leads to frustration when dealing with complex tasks such as research writing (Rezaei & Jafari, 2014). Fareed, Ashraf, and Bilal (2016) ^[4] identified key obstacles faced by EFL learners, including poor grammatical skills, weak written expression, and insufficient training in academic writing. Their study emphasizes the need for integrating collaborative and innovative teaching strategies to improve students' performance in writing.

Additionally, research by Leki (2007) ^[15] underlines that EFL learners often struggle with transitioning from informal to formal academic writing styles, which adds another layer of difficulty. These challenges are further compounded by limited feedback opportunities, which restrict students' ability to refine their writing skills. According to Ferris (2009) ^[7], constructive feedback plays a vital role in guiding students towards improving their writing quality, yet many EFL students lack adequate support in this area.

By reviewing existing literature, it becomes evident that a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by students, as well as the strategies employed by teachers and learners to overcome them, is essential. Therefore, this chapter provides a comprehensive framework to address these issues, focusing on the core challenges and the strategies that form the cornerstone of developing academic writing skills for EFL students.

2.2. Common Challenges in Writing Skill

Writing challenges in EFL contexts have been a subject of considerable research. Studies consistently highlight several key issues:

Linguistic Challenges: Many learners struggle with grammar, syntax, and word choice, which are fundamental to producing coherent and grammatically accurate writing. Common errors include inappropriate verb tense usage, sentence fragments, and incorrect word forms (Richards & Renandya, 2002) ^[20]. These errors hinder students' ability to express ideas clearly and professionally.

Limited Vocabulary: A restricted vocabulary is a frequent obstacle that affects both the depth and variety of expression. Learners often resort to repetitive language, which reduces the quality and persuasiveness of their writing (Nation, 2001) ^[18].

Organization and Coherence Issues: Organizing ideas logically and maintaining coherence throughout a text is particularly challenging. Many students face difficulties in structuring essays, developing arguments, and linking ideas effectively using cohesive devices (Ferris & Hedgcock, 2014) ^[8].

Cultural Differences: Writing conventions vary significantly across cultures. Students from non-Western educational backgrounds may find it difficult to adapt to English rhetorical styles, such as argumentation and directness, which differ from their native writing traditions (Kaplan, 1966) ^[13].

Psychological Barriers: Low confidence and fear of criticism are additional hurdles that discourage students from practicing writing. Anxiety about making mistakes often leads to avoidance, which limits opportunities for improvement (Horwitz *et al.*, 1986) ^[9].

2.3. The Strategies Followed by Students

Students use a variety of strategies to overcome writing challenges. The most notable include:

Self-Correction: Revising their own work allows students to identify and address errors independently. Research suggests that self-correction fosters metacognitive awareness, which is critical for language learning (Anderson, 2002) ^[1].

Peer Review: Engaging with peers to review and critique each other's writing provides valuable feedback and exposes students to different perspectives and ideas (Rollinson, 2005) ^[21]. This collaborative approach enhances learning and improves writing quality.

Extensive Reading: Reading widely in English is another effective strategy. Exposure to authentic texts improves learners' understanding of grammatical structures, vocabulary, and rhetorical patterns (Krashen, 1984) ^[14].

Daily Writing Practice: Keeping journals or writing essays regularly allows students to refine their skills over time. Research indicates that frequent writing practice leads to gradual improvement in fluency and accuracy (Hyland, 2011) ^[10].

Technology Use: Online tools such as Grammarly and language-learning apps provide immediate feedback on grammar, spelling, and style, which helps students refine their writing (Li & Hegelheimer, 2013) ^[16].

2.4. The Strategies Followed by Teachers

Teachers play an essential role in developing students' writing skills. Effective pedagogical strategies include:

Explicit Grammar Instruction: Teachers often focus on teaching grammatical rules and sentence structure explicitly to address the linguistic challenges faced by learners. This approach provides a solid foundation for accurate writing (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999) ^[3].

Constructive Feedback: Providing specific and actionable feedback on students' writing helps them identify their weaknesses and work on improvement areas (Ferris, 2011) ^[5]. Constructive feedback encourages students to take corrective actions rather than fear criticism.

Model Writing: Teachers often demonstrate writing processes by creating outlines, drafting essays, and revising them in class. This modeling helps students understand the stages of effective writing (Hyland, 2007) ^[11].

Task Scaffolding: Breaking writing tasks into smaller, manageable steps, such as brainstorming, outlining, and drafting, allows students to approach writing systematically and reduces cognitive overload (Vygotsky, 1978) ^[25].

Collaborative Writing Activities: Pair or group writing tasks encourage students to share ideas and learn from each other. Such activities promote teamwork and allow less proficient writers to benefit from the strengths of their peers (Storch, 2005) ^[22].

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design

In order to find out what effects self-correction has on the comprehension skills of EFL students, the study uses a quantitative method questionnaire to find out what effects self-correction has on Iraqi EFL learners.

3.2. Participants

The third-year English majors in the Islamic University's Faculty of Education serve as the research sample. They were between the ages of 21 and 24. To reflect the study sample, the researcher chose 35 male and 15 female students at random.

3.3. Instruments

A questionnaire was the only tool the researcher used to gather information. This tool was used to find out more about how students saw things and what problems they were having, so that we could better understand their experiences with use. How self-correction affects the ability of EFL students to understand.

3.4. Procedure

This study uses quantitative to look at things, and the students it looks at are third-year English students in the Faculty of Education at the Islamic University. One tool was used by the researcher to gather information. This tool was a questionnaire that was meant to be given to students and gathered their answers. The survey was given to 50 students, both male and female, in the English Department at an Islamic university. Use statistical methods to look at the answers to the questions. This way of looking into How self-correction affects the ability to understand of the EFL students.

4. Results

4.1. Overview

In this chapter, the researcher retrieved the results of the questionnaire on the research topic. Then the researcher discussed these results by using a table for each question to show the answer of each variable to all the questionnaire questions.

4.2. Questionnaire Data

The responses of the participants of the current study to questionnaire items are presented below.

4.2.1. The first items in the questionnaire ask the participants about to their feelings and their self-confidence to comprehend language skills when use self correction.

Table 1

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	14	13	11	7	5

As shown in table 4.2.1, that most of the students who answered 14 always, 13 often feel confident most of the time after using self-correction.

There is, however, a large group that 11 only sometimes, 7 rarely, or 5 never feels confident, which shows that self-correction methods need to be improved.

4.2.2. The second items in the questionnaire ask the participants about investigate if self-correction aids participants in identifying mistakes more effectively.

Table 2

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	17	11	6	10	6

This distribution shows that a lot of students, 17 always and 11 often gain most of the time from self-correction. However, 16 of the respondents say they rarely, 6 sometimes and 6 never find it helpful. This shows that self-correction can work very differently for different students.

4.2.3. The third items in the questionnaire ask the participants about the impact of self-correction on overall language comprehension.

Table 3

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	15	13	6	6	10

Based on this spread, it looks like most students, 15 always, 13 often feel better after self-correction. However, a significant minority, 6 sometimes, 6 rarely and 10 never do not see any significant benefits. This shows that the success of self-correction may rely on how each person learns.

4.2.4. The fourth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about if self-correction fosters independent learning.

Table 4

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	10	17	8	9	6

This chart shows that most students, 10 always and 17 often think self-correction is helpful for helping students learn on their own. Unfortunately, a big chunk of them say they feel, 8 sometimes 9 rarely, 6 never encouraged, which suggests that these students may need more than just personal learning.

4.2.5. The fifth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about examine any negative effects of self-correction.

Table 5

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	4	5	7	11	23

This distribution shows that most students, 7 sometimes, 11 rarely and 23 never have bad effects from self-correction. This suggests that it is usually a good way to understand

things. A smaller group, 4 always and 5 often does, however, experience some negative effects. This shows the need for customised methods to lessen these effects.

4.2.6. The sixth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about perceive self-correction as a time-consuming process.

Table 6

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	20	8	5	10	7

This graph shows that a lot of students, 20 always and 8 often think that self-correction takes a large amount of time. But 5 sometimes, 10 rarely and 7 never of the students who answered say it doesn't happen very often or at all. This suggests that self-correction is useful but might need to be streamlined to work better.

4.2.7. The seventh items in the questionnaire ask the participants about explore participants' preference for self-correction versus teacher correction.

Table 7

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	23	10	9	3	5

This chart shows that most students, 23 always and 10 often would choose self-correction either all the time or most of the time. A smaller group, 9 sometimes, 3 rarely and 5 never chooses self-correction, though. This suggests that even though self-correction is popular, some students still prefer teacher correction to help them understand better.

4.2.8. The eighth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about if self-correction enhances participants' retention of new vocabulary.

Table 8

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	17	13	8	9	3

Based on this distribution, a big chunk, 17 always and 13 often of students can remember new words better when they fix themselves, either all the time or often. Still students say they 8 sometimes, 9 rarely and 3 never find it helpful. This suggests that while self-correction works for most students, it might need to be combined with other learning methods for these specific students.

4.2.9. The ninth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about if self-correction aids in developing problem-solving skills in language learning.

Table 9

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	11	19	10	3	7

This chart shows that most students, 11 always and 19 often think self-correction helps them solve problems either all the time or a lot of the time. But a smaller group, 10 sometimes, 3 rarely and 7 never sees these benefits. This suggests that self-correction may help some learners solve problems better than others.

4.2.10. The ninth items in the questionnaire ask the participants about explore whether self-correction enhances participants' self-awareness of their language abilities.

Table 10

Participants	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
Third-Year University students	22	12	4	8	4

This chart shows that most students, 22 always and 12 often think that self-correction makes them more self-aware, either all the time or most of the time. 4 sometimes, 8 rarely and 4 never experience this benefit, though. This suggests that while self-correction works for most students, it might need to be combined with other methods for some.

5. Overview

The researcher talked in this chapter is about divided into two parts: the first part is a discussion of the research results and the second part is the conclusions reached by the researcher.

5.1. Discussion

The first study question asked students what they thought about self-correction. Students often have different ideas about self-correction depending on how well they speak a language, how confident they are, and what they have learnt in the past. A lot of students think that self-correction is a way to help them learn a language on their own. It gives people control over their own learning and makes them feel good about what they've accomplished. Some students feel insecure when they are self-correcting because they aren't sure they can find and fix their mistakes. When students understand how important mistakes are for language learning, they usually see self-correction as a good way to get better. Beginners might not know enough about grammar or syntax to spot mistakes. Students who are used to getting

feedback from a teacher might find it hard to get used to self-correction. Students may not make changes because they are afraid of not understanding their mistakes or repeating them. Learners may feel like they can't pause and correct themselves during speaking tasks without stopping the flow of communication.

The second study topic looked at the problems that English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students have when they try to use self-correction. People who are just starting out may not know enough about grammar or syntax to spot mistakes. Students who are used to getting feedback from a teacher might find it hard to get used to self-correction. Students may not try to fix their mistakes because they are afraid of not fully understanding them or repeating them. Learners may feel like they can't pause and correct themselves during speaking tasks without stopping the flow of communication. In some cultures, the teacher is seen as the most important person, which might keep students from taking responsibility for their mistakes. Students should be taught how to find mistakes, such as by comparing their answers to model answers and focussing on common trends in their mistakes. Encourage people to use tools like dictionaries and grammar checks. Create an atmosphere in the classroom where mistakes are seen as chances to learn. Students should be praised for their efforts to improve their confidence through self-correction. Start with guided self-correction, in which the teacher gives you feedback. Lessen your reliance on prompts over time to encourage independence.

5.2. Conclusion

This study aims to explore the effect of self-correction on EFL students' comprehension ability. In this context, comprehension ability refers to student's ability to accurately comprehend and interpret written and spoken English. The study will investigate whether students who engage in self-correction activities show greater improvement in comprehension compared to those who rely solely on teacher correction. The problem of this study lies in EFL students' difficulty with comprehension, which stems from their reliance on teacher correction. This dependence limits their ability to develop critical thinking and self-learning skills, leaving them passive in their learning process. Such reliance hinders their capacity to internalize language rules independently. A questionnaire was the only tool the researcher used to gather information. This study uses quantitative to look at things, and the students it looks at are third-year English students in the Faculty of Education at the Islamic University. The research explores students' perspectives on self-correction, focusing on language proficiency, confidence levels, and prior learning experiences. While many view self-correction as a tool for autonomy, some feel insecure due to fear of not accurately identifying mistakes. Beginners may struggle to transition to self-correction, and some cultures may discourage students from taking ownership of their errors.

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Table 11: Appendix

Items	Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely	Never
1. Do you feel more confident in your comprehension skills after using self-correction?					
2. Does self-correction help you identify your mistakes more effectively?					
3. Do you believe self-correction improves your overall language comprehension?					
4. Does self-correction encourage independent learning?					
5. Are there any negative effects of self-correction on your comprehension abilities?					
6. Do you find self-correction to be a time-consuming process?					
7. Do you prefer self-correction over teacher correction for improving comprehension skills?					
8. Does self-correction improve your retention of new vocabulary?					
9. Do you think self-correction helps you develop better problem-solving skills in language learning?					
10. Does self-correction lead to higher levels of self-awareness in your language abilities?					