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**Process Writing and Effectiveness of Correction
Symbols in High School EFL Writing**

By

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Abstract

The study investigates the effectiveness of indirect error feedback, specifically the use of correction symbols, in High School EFL students' perception of writing errors. The study is based on the Macao context, where overt correction is the norm. An experiment has been set up to find out if students' competence in the five aspects of English grammar, namely articles, prepositions, grammatical number, verb tenses and spelling, is enhanced after the treatment. The instruments that are involved in the study include a pre-test, a post-test, two delayed post-tests and four essay samples.

Two Senior High One classes from a Chinese-medium school were selected as subjects of the experiment. The two classes were divided into a control group and an experimental group. The experimental group received indirect correction symbols as their writing feedback, while the control group received the overt correction with the teachers giving them all the right forms. The result of the study shows that the use of the correction symbols is partially effective in eliciting an improvement of the experimental students in grammar accuracy in their writing, thus suggesting that such corrective feedback is suitable to be implemented in the Macao EFL context.

Long abstract of thesis entitled “Process Writing and Effectiveness of Correction Symbols in High School EFL Writing”

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The issue of error feedback has been a hot debate among experts of L2 acquisition and writing scholars and professionals for more than two decades. There is a controversy over the value and effectiveness of providing error feedback to students, and from the results of different studies, the effectiveness of different types of error feedback has been compared. Despite the amount of research conducted, little research has been done on the selection of error feedback and the effectiveness of different error feedback on students’ writing errors in the Macao context. The present study aims at investigating the effectiveness of indirect error feedback, specifically the use of correction symbols, in students’ perception of writing errors when it is compared to the traditional explicit correction method that has long been adopted in the researcher’s school and the majority of schools in Macao. The study is based on an experimental design, with 2 groups of participants chosen and divided into an experimental group and a control group, with 20 members in each group.

Five specific types of errors, including spelling, prepositions, articles, verb tenses and grammatical number, had been selected as the main theme of the study. An indirect writing correction by means of underlining the errors and indicating the error type with the correction symbols was adopted in the experimental group, in which the participants had to self-edit their own errors picked up by the teachers. In

the control group, the long-adopted explicit correction was given to the students, which was practised with the aid of the teachers' direct identification of the error with its recommended correct forms. Students in this group did not have to make any correction. Participants' performance in the pre-test and the post-tests, the amount of the five types of errors made in the writing tasks (compared to all errors made), as well as the percentage of errors correctly edited among the subjects of the experimental group were taken for measurement and analysis in the study. T-tests and Chi-Square were used in data analysis. The results did not show a statistically significant difference between the performance of the control group and experimental group in their post-tests, but were evident enough to show an improvement of the experimental students in grammar accuracy in their writing. The study is expected to be significant in helping to find a better pedagogy for EFL writing in Macao and in providing suggestions to teachers on how to make students improve their own perception of writing errors as well as their grammaticality.