

# **Effectiveness of Indirect Error Correction on the Writing of Higher National Diploma Students of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri**

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**Abstract:** *This work investigates the effectiveness of indirect error correction on the writing of Higher Diploma one (HND1) students of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri. Fifty HNDI Students from Agricultural Extension and Management, Animal Health production, Soil and Water Engineering, Post-Harvest Technology and Farm Power and Machinery departments were randomly selected for the study. They were administered two types of test in form of pre-test and post-test to write an expository composition. The error types identified in the composition are in vocabulary/ grammar, stylistic technique, organization and content. The frequencies of their occurrences are recorded before and after the indication of error using the indirect error correction. The work reveals that there is slight reduction of error in the written composition of HNDI students. Therefore, it is concluded that indirect error correction is effective in giving corrective feedback in the written composition of HNDI students of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri.*

**Keywords:** *Correction, Error, Indirect, Students & Grammar*

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## **Introduction**

Error is indispensable in language learning and the need to correct an error as it occurs in the learning process is paramount. Students are expected to learn and communicate effectively using the English language and their communication should be devoid of any error that will hinder the process of learning language effectively. It is important for the teacher to give corrective feedbacks in order to improve their ability to communicate accurately and effectively. Therefore, this study is designed to examine the effect of indirect error correction technique administered to written compositions of Higher Diploma students of Ramat Polytechnic, Maiduguri.

The objective of learning a second language for students is for them to achieve proficiency in the use of the language and to communicate effectively. But most students have problems in communicating effectively as result of the errors they make as they learn the language.

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of indirect error correction technique in the composition of HNDI with the specific objectives of identifying the errors in their written compositions and to determine the effect of indirect error correction technique of HNDI students.

The study is based on the behaviourist theory of B.F Skinner in form of positive and negative reinforcement for learners' behaviour and discouraging undesired behaviour. According to this theory, language learning involves the formation of habit: this perspective stems from work in psychology that viewed the learning as kind of behaviour and being based on the notions of stimulus and response (Ellis 199; Mitchell and Myles 2004). In order words, the theory is based on the assumption that humans are exposed to many language stimuli in their environment and their repeated response to these stimuli will lead to the formation of habits. The view of the behaviourist theory when applied to language learning implies that the learning of language progresses when the learner makes active and repeated responses to stimuli (Skinner 1957). These responses are reinforcement when repeated for over a period of time, it will lead to the formation of habit that consist automated responses elicited by given stimuli. There it supposes that positive motivation will yield positive response. This means that teacher provides meaningful motivating and encouraging feedback to students' written composition; it will trigger them to response to teacher's suggestion for correction rather than emphasizing on the correction.

## **Methodology**

Testing method is used to collect data for this work. The test is based on the pre-test and post –test design. Fifty HNDI students were randomly selected from Agricultural and Extension Management, Animal Health Production Soil and Water Engineering, Post-Harvest Technology and Farm Power and Machinery that registered for the session. They were assigned to write an expository essay on one of the topics 'how to prepare a land for cultivation' and "the effects of drug abuse" for their pre-test. The duration of forty minutes was given to them to write the pre-test. The errors to be indicated include vocabulary and grammar, stylistic technique, organization and content. The indirect error corrections were used to indicate errors in the written composition. These include the use of circling, underlining and using cursor to indicate missing words. The pre-test composition was returned to the students in order to see the corrective feedback on their written compositions.

Another expository essay was assigned to them for their post-test. The essay was based on topic such as the ‘effects of drug abuse’ and ‘politics in Nigeria.’ They were also given forty minutes to write the composition in order to find out the effectiveness of indirect error correction technique applied to the pre-test composition

## **Literature Review**

### ***Error and error correction***

Error is an unintended deviation from the rules of language. Most of these errors are made by second language learners who lack the knowledge of the target language. Richard (2000), Norrish (1983) and Cunningsworth (1987), view an error as systematic deviation that happens when a learner has not learnt something and consistently gets it wrong. For Hendrickson (1987) and Corder (1982) errors are essentially part of the learning process; they provide the teacher with an insight into what kind of feedback the learner may require and what strategies to be taken for appropriate correction of the learners’ error.

However, Corder (1982) is also of the view that one of the most important tasks of a teacher in a language classroom is to decide when correction is necessary. Allwright and Long (1997) claim that Teachers should not correct immediately rather giving clues (i.e. using codes) to learners will be more useful for them to achieve their linguistics competence and correct their errors (Mikano 1993:340). Also, Khansir and Pakdel (2018) and Richard (1975) as well posit that learners’ error is an integral part of learning a target language. For them the best strategy to correct language learners’ error is to let the learners correct their own errors in the target language.

Furthermore, there are different types of error correction which include evaluation, error identification, teacher correction, peer response Hendrickson (1978). The most conventional technique is the teacher correction. The teacher correction technique can be further classified into two: the direct and the indirect type of error correction (Ferris 2006). The direct type of error correction is an overt correction technique in which the error is indicated by underlying or over striking the error to provide the correct form to the learner. The indirect type of error correction on the other hand is provided by indicating the location of error by underlining, circling and indicating the location of the error with a cursor or by using

codes. For this study, the indirect type of error correction is adapted to correct student error in order to find its effectiveness in their written composition.

### ***Studies on Error Correction***

Katayma, (2007) and Erel and Bulut, (2007) longitudinal studies using pre-test and post-test design reveal that students corrected using indirect coded feedback committed few errors than the direct coded feedback. Ashwell (2000) states that teachers believe that correcting the grammar of student written composition will help them to improve the accuracy of their subsequent writing. This statement above is based on the outcome of a study carried out by Ferris and Robert (2001), Chandler, (2003); Leki, (1991) are also of the opinion that students who receive error feedback from teachers will improve in accuracy over time.

Furthermore, another similar study conducted by Shivaji, (2012), Chandler (2003) and Greenslade and Felix-Brasdefer, (2006) investigated the effect of direct and indirect error correction feedback on the written composition of undergraduates. Shivaji's study reveals that the two types of feedback have a positive impact on improving the student's grammatical accuracy. While Chandler (2003), findings of the study reveal that indirect error correction with student editing their work contributes to accuracy more than direct error correction. For Greenslade and Felix-Brasdefer, (2006), the coded feedback was more effective than the underlining feedback that is the uncoded feedback. Almost all recent studies found a positive and significant effect on error correction except Truscott and Hsu, (2008); Liu, (2008); Hartshorn et al., (2010). They believe that error correction as a form of feedback is ineffective in improving the ability of the learners to write accurately. This work is different from the studies above because it attempts to determine the effectiveness of the indirect error correction by the teacher on the written composition of HNDI students of Ramat Polytechnic Maiduguri.

### **Data Analysis and Discussion**

The data for this work is presented in two tables. Table one is for pre-test results and post-test results in table two. Each table comprises of five columns and each column consists of five headings.

**Table1.**Pre-test score

Error type	Number of students	Total frequency	Mean	percentage
Grammar/vocabulary	50	588	11.8	47%
Stylistic technique	50	503	10.1	40%
Organization	50	488	9.8	39%
Content	50	580	11.6	47%
Total		2159	43.2	

**Table2.**Post-test score

Error type	Number of students	Total frequency	Mean	Percentage
Grammar/vocabulary	50	418	8.36	35%
Stylistic technique	50	385	7.7	31%
Organization	50	415	8.3	33%
Content	50	403	8.1	32%
		1621	32.4	

The findings are based on the outcome of the post- test which reveals that there is significant improvement on the number of errors found in the written composition of HND I student when compared with the pre-test result. The pre-test recorded the overall frequency of 588 errors in grammar and vocabulary with the mean of 11.8 grammar/ vocabulary per student and the percentage of 47.while the post-test result recorded the reduction of error to 418 with mean of 8.4 and the percentage of 35 For example, students commit error of spelling, omission,

capitalization, mechanical accuracy and tense in this category. Some of the error of spelling include 'crauption' instead of 'corruption,' 'west' for 'waste', 'experance' for experience, 'catilass' for cutlass and "blest" for blessed. While that of tense include use of future progressive tense instead of future tense in this sentence: 'you will be dismissing from school.' instead of 'you will be dismissed from school'. Other error in this category is the use of capitalization. Most of the students have problem with the use of capital letter to start a sentence. However, after they were given their pre-test paper with indirect corrective feedback, there is slight improvement in this category. Similarly, the stylistic technique also recorded reduction of error from the pre-test with frequency 503 errors to post- test frequency of 385. The mean for the pre-test stand as 10.1 per and 7.7 for the post-test. The percentage of 40 is recorded for pre-test and 30% for the post-test. This shows there is improvement in the use of stylistic technique such as use of transitional markers, varied sentences structure, conciseness and figurative language. For example, most of the students have problem with the use of transitional markers, For example, 'Many people start drug abuse...' and another with 'In some individual, the onset of...' a paragraph start without a transitional marker in the pre-test. But there is slight reduction of error in this category after using the indirect corrective feedback. Likewise, the organization also recorded a slight improvement in which most the composition written by student during the post test lacks organization, because most of the written the compositions were not organized into paragraph. But with the corrective feedback using indirect method the organization error recorded similar improvement in the post-test score. The frequency of error for the pre-test recorded 488 while that of post-test recorded 415. The mean for pre-test is 9.8 while that of post-test stand at 8.3 for each student. The last type of error analyzed is that of the content. The frequency of error is 580 for the pre-test and 403 for the post-test. The mean for the pre-test recorded the 11.6 against that of post-test which recorded the mean of 8.1. The percentage for both tests is 47 for pre- test and 32 for the post-test. This means that there is also reduction of error in content.

## **Conclusion**

From the findings above there is slight reduction in the number errors using the indirect error correction technique. This supports the findings of shivaji (2016); Erel and Bulut (2007) and Chandler( 2006) in which their studies favoured the indirect error correction by teacher. Therefore, it can be seen from this study that

student will improve in their errors if they were allowed to deduce from the feedback they were given by their teacher indirectly. This means that student can be able to correct their errors, even if they not given the correct form or use codes to indicate their errors. This can be seen from the reduction of errors in the post-test composition given to the student. For this study, the indirect error correction is effective in correcting the written composition of learners of English as a second language, therefore, it is suggested that similar studies should be carried out to ascertain the effectiveness of other types of error correction.

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