

The Effects of Two Types of Direct Corrective Feedback on EFL University Students' Writing

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Abstract

The present study investigated the effects of two types of direct corrective feedback (DCF) on writing by a group of Thai EFL learners. Twenty-five university students majoring in Languages, Communication, and Business at Prince of Songkla University, Surat Thani Campus participated in the pre, post- test designed investigation. The subjects were given a pre-test prior to attending a 13-week course on Paragraph Writing during which they were assigned to write a weekly narrative paragraph. Upon finishing each task, twelve of them received DCF with written meta-linguistic explanation (WME) and the rest received the DCF with oral meta-linguistic explanation (OME). A post- test was administered after the last session of the treatment. Scores of the pre and post tests were statistically analyzed to identify the percentage of correct usage of the two targeted grammatical features: regular past tense *-ed*, and fragment. Then the percentages of accurate scores between groups were compared. The results showed that the DCF with WME was as effective as the DCF with OME in reducing the errors of the two targeted linguistic forms.

Keywords: Direct corrective feedback, Written corrective feedback, Grammatical accuracy, Student's writing

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ผลการให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับแบบตรงสองประเภทในการเขียนของนักศึกษา มหาวิทยาลัยที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

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บทคัดย่อ

การวิจัยนี้ศึกษาผลของการให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับแบบตรงสองประเภทที่มีต่อการเขียนของผู้เรียนชาวไทย ที่เรียนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ กลุ่มตัวอย่างเป็นนักศึกษาหลักสูตรภาษาการสื่อสารและธุรกิจจำนวน 25 คนซึ่งได้เข้าร่วมในการศึกษาแบบมีการทดสอบก่อนและหลังเรียน กลุ่มตัวอย่างเข้ารับการทดสอบก่อนเรียนการเขียนอนุเฉทเป็นระยะเวลา 13 สัปดาห์ ในระหว่างการเรียนนักศึกษาได้รับมอบหมายให้เขียนอนุเฉทเป็นรายสัปดาห์ โดยกลุ่มตัวอย่างจำนวน 12 คนได้รับข้อมูลย้อนกลับแบบตรงกับการให้คำอธิบายการใช้ภาษาแบบเขียน (Direct corrective feedback with written meta-linguistic explanation) และกลุ่มตัวอย่าง 13 คนได้รับข้อมูลย้อนกลับแบบตรงกับการให้คำอธิบายการใช้ภาษาแบบวาจา (Direct corrective feedback with oral meta-linguistic explanation) หลังการเขียนงานแต่ละชิ้นมีการทดสอบหลังเรียนหลังการสอนครั้งสุดท้าย แล้วนำคะแนนที่ได้ก่อนและหลังเรียนมาวิเคราะห์ทางสถิติเพื่อหาร้อยละของความถูกต้องของการใช้ไวยากรณ์ในเรื่อง อดีตกาลแบบปกติที่ลงท้ายด้วย -ed (regular past tense- -ed) และประโยคไม่สมบูรณ์ (fragment) จากนั้นจึงนำคะแนนความถูกต้องที่เป็นร้อยละไปเปรียบเทียบระหว่างกลุ่มผลการวิจัยแสดงให้เห็นว่าการให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับแบบตรงกับการให้คำอธิบายการใช้ภาษาแบบเขียนให้ผลเท่ากับการให้ข้อมูลย้อนกลับแบบตรงกับการให้คำอธิบายการใช้ภาษาแบบวาจาในการลดข้อผิดพลาดของไวยากรณ์ที่เป็นเป้าหมายทั้งสองเรื่อง

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Introduction

Since Truscott claimed that written corrective feedback is futile, harmful, and should be abandoned in L2 writing classes, the role of DCF in improving the accuracy of ESL/EFL students' writing has been a matter of considerable controversy (See Truscott, 1996; 1999). Many researchers have conducted studies to shed light on whether DCF promotes mastery over the use of certain linguistic features. However, the findings are still inconclusive. Therefore, it is essential to carry out further research to determine whether some types of CF have greater merit than the others. The present study investigated the effect of combinations of DCF with written meta-linguistic explanation and DCF with oral meta-linguistic explanation in an EFL Thai context.

Background

The question regarding the merits of corrective feedback (CF) in the language classroom has been debated for almost two decades (Bitchener, 2008). The issue was ignited by John Truscott when he published his article 'The Case against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes' in *Language Learning* in 1996. He proposed that grammar correction has no place in writing and should be abandoned because of its ineffectiveness and harm (Truscott, 1996, 1999). Similarly, certain previous studies showed that corrections are not helpful (Semke, 1984; Kepner, 1991; Sheppard, 1992). Nevertheless, Ferris (1999) contradicted this notion. She pointed out that the research evidence was limited in terms of the number of studies that prove the efficacy of corrective feedback, as well as the drawbacks of research design. The debate between Truscott and Ferris aroused practitioners' interest.

A range of studies has investigated the effect of different types of corrective feedback. One feature arising among the issues is the necessity to compare between focused and unfocused CF. Ellis et al. (2008) investigated the effect of providing focused and unfocused CF in Japanese students' use of English definite and indefinite article to denote first and anaphoric reference in written narratives. The focused group received correction of only article errors on three written narratives while the unfocused group received correction for article errors altogether with other errors. No difference was found in the effect of the two feedback types. Conversely, Sheen (2007) studied the effect of written CF on the acquisition of English articles by investigating whether direct focused CF, or direct unfocused CF or writing practice alone produced a different effect on the accuracy of grammatical features of adult ESL learners. The results showed that written CF targeting a single linguistic feature improved learners' accuracy. Similarly, Sheen et al. (2009) found that students who received focused CF outperformed those who received unfocused CF.

Another issue which emerged is to compare the effects between different types of CF. Bitchener (2005) for instance, investigated the effect of different types of combination of CF with ESL advanced learners. The feedback provided included DCF plus oral meta-linguistic explanation in the form of one-on-one conferences, DCF, and no CF. It was shown that the group that received DCF plus oral meta-linguistic explanation outperformed

both group two and group three for the past simple tense and definite article, but no such effect was found for prepositions. Consequently, the researcher suggested that meta-linguistic explanation may have a greater effect in improving linguistic accuracy.

In order to continue on-going study on the efficacy of the CF, Bitchener (2008) investigated the efficacy of other CF combinations. In the study, the DCF was given to 75 low intermediate international ESL students in Auckland, New Zealand in a 2-month study. The participants were divided into 4 groups: DCF with written and oral meta-linguistic explanation in the form of 30 minute mini- lesson; DCF with written meta-linguistic explanation; DCF alone; the control group received no CF. Each types of feedback targeted two functional uses of the English articles system. The research findings revealed that students who received DCF with written and oral meta-linguistic explanation outperformed those who received no CF. Furthermore, the addition of written and oral meta-linguistic explanation to DCF significantly assisted learners to improve their writing accuracy. In addition, it indicated that oral meta-linguistic explanation in the form of a clearly focused mini-lesson (30 minutes) might be as effective as the more time consuming individual conferences that were included as oral meta-linguistic explanation in Bitchener (2005).

To extend the study, Bitchener and Knoch (2008) investigated the effectiveness of written CF on ESL writing over a two-month period. The study reported a two-month experiment with 144 international and migrant ESL students on the effects of different types of CF (DCF with written and oral meta-linguistic explanation (a 30 minute mini-lesson), DCF with written meta-linguistic explanation, DCF only, and no DCF) on the acquisition of two functional uses of the English articles system in new pieces of writing over time. In the pre-test-immediate post-test-delayed post-test designed study, students were required to describe what was happening in a given picture in each of the three tests. The results indicated that students who received written DCF significantly improved their accuracy in using the English articles system and the level of accuracy had been retained when writing new pieces of writing seven weeks later in the delayed post-test.

Bitchener and Knoch (2010) explored the extent to which CF could facilitate advanced ESL learners in acquisition of two functional uses of the English articles system and also discovered the extent to which there may be differential effects for different types of feedback. The participants were 63 advanced ESL learners at a university in the USA. They were formed into a control group (no CF provided) and 3 treatment groups (written meta-linguistic explanation, indirect circling of errors, and written meta-linguistic explanation with oral form-focused instruction (15 minute full class discussion of the written meta-linguistic explanation). The findings revealed that students who received written meta-linguistic explanation and students who received both written meta-linguistic explanation and an oral form-focused review could retain their accuracy gained across the 10 week period, while those who received indirect feedback in the form of circling errors could not retain the gains achieved in the immediate post-test. In addition, it found no difference between the 3 treatment groups on the immediate post-test. In short, the study suggested that the provision of clear, simple meta-linguistic explanation was beneficial for long term accuracy.

Another study worth reviewing here is Sheen (2010). The study investigated the differential effects of oral and written CF on learners' accuracy improvement of English articles in an ESL classroom. The study employed a pre-test, treatment, post-test, and delayed post-test design with 177 intermediate ESL adult learners. Five groups (oral recast, oral meta-linguistic, written direct correction, written direct meta-linguistic, and none feedback control group) were formed to participate in the study. The findings revealed that the written direct group outperformed the oral recast group or the control group in terms of total test scores. Nevertheless, there was no significant difference between the recast and the control group in the immediate and delayed post-tests. Further, it was found that there were no significant differences among all groups' scores on the pre-test, whilst there were significant group differences in both the immediate post-test and the delayed post-test. Moreover, the results indicated that in both post-tests, the oral meta-linguistic group and the written meta-linguistic group outperformed the control group. In addition, in the delayed post-test, both treatment groups outperformed the control group. Additionally, the findings in the study indicated that both oral and written meta-linguistic feedbacks were equally effective in promoting acquisition. Thus, the study suggested that the crucial factor for the effectiveness of DCF was how noticeable the feedback was.

In sum, all of the studies reviewed above report similar results of the effectiveness of meta-linguistic feedback, indicating that the addition of meta-linguistic explanation is helpful in the reduction of error rates in students' writing.

Research Questions

What are the effects of the DCF with written meta-linguistic explanation and DCF with oral meta-linguistic explanation on the performance of English writing tasks of high and low proficiency EFL learners on two targeted grammatical features?

What are the differences in performance between the two groups who experienced the two different types of DCF?

Methodology

1. Participants

Eighty-three third-year EFL Thai learners aged 19-23 participated in this study. The participants were majoring in Languages, Communication and Business, enrolled in a paragraph writing course in the first semester of the 2011 academic year at Prince of Songkla University, Surat Thani Campus, Thailand. 25 were selected from the population of 83. Based on the results from a proficiency test, 12 were assigned to the DCF with WME group (5 high proficiency, and 7 low proficiency). The other 13 were assigned to the DCF with OME group (5 had high proficiency, and 8 had low proficiency). The students in group 1 were treated with the DCF with WME and group 2 was given the DCF with OME.

2. Research Instruments

Three sets of instruments were administered to the research participants: English

proficiency test, identical pre-and post-tests and writing tasks.

A 60-item proficiency test consisting of 4 multiple choice test items was administered to identify students' English proficiency level. The test items were adapted from different versions of the TOEFL test, aimed particularly to measure the subjects' awareness and knowledge of 12 grammatical features. The same instrument was a pre-and post-test consisting of a set of pictures (displayed in serial sequence). The pictures were selected from Picture Stories for Beginning Communication (Heyer, 1989). The last instrument was 10 writing tasks.

3. Data Collection and Data Analysis

Before the first session of the 13-week-writing course, the students were given the proficiency test. Next, the pre-test was administered, one week later. Both tests were rated by a native speaker and the researcher. A writing task was given to the students every week for ten weeks. Feedback on each writing was given to the students one week after each assignment. The DCF with WME group was given a written meta-linguistic explanation, attached to the students' writing. In the following class, the students had 10 minutes to review the written explanations before doing a new piece of writing assignment. The DCF with OME group, on the other hand, after spending 10 minutes to look at the teacher feedback, received a 30-minute mini-lesson consisting of spoken meta-linguistic feedback for the whole class before doing a new piece of writing. The post-test was administered after the tenth writing task.

Upon finishing the course, a post-test was administered. Like the pre-test and post-test, the writing was rated by two raters, a native speaker and the researcher. The scores sought from the two raters consisted of scores for correct use of the linguistic forms in question. The raw scores were converted into percentages. The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) Program was employed to identify the difference between the mean scores of the two groups.

Then the students' scores from the pre-and post-test were collected to analyze writing accuracy on the targeted errors-regular past tense *-ed* and fragment, after receiving the feedback. In doing this, test scores from the pre- and post- tests were calculated in percentages of accuracy. After that, writing accuracy scores sought from the two feedback groups were compared. The differences in scores of the pre- and post-test on each error category (both in high and low level of proficiency in the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME group) were compared to determine whether the students in either group gained a greater improvement than the other group.

Findings

Statistical analyses were performed to answer the following research questions.

1. What are the effects of DCF with written meta-linguistic explanation and DCF with oral meta-linguistic explanation on the performance of English writing tasks of high and low proficiency EFL learners on two targeted grammatical features?

To answer the research question, a series of the tests were performed to identify the effect of the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME on the grammatical features in question. Performance by the high proficiency students, the low proficiency students and the whole group in each feedback type group was compared. Four tables (Tables 1 to 4 below) showed the improvement achieved by the DCF with WME group and the DCF with OME group on the regular past tense *-ed* and fragment. Tables 1 to 2 showed results from the two-independent sample tests: Mann Whitney U, performed to find out the different effects between means of the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME.

Table 1: The use of past tense verbs by the DCF with WME group

Levels of proficiency	Regular past tense <i>-ed</i>				Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed rank test	p-value
	Pre-test		Post-test			
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD.		
High (<i>n</i> =5)	73.19	24.61	94.01	5.11	2.023*	.043*
Low (<i>n</i> =7)	57.78	21.31	65.67	9.97	0.845	.40
The whole (<i>n</i> =12)	64.20	23.04	77.48	16.64	1.804	.07

* Significant at .05

** Significant at .01

Table 1 showed the mean (\bar{x}) of the DCF with WME group subjects' mean scores on accuracy of the use of past tense verbs. It was found that the high proficiency students in this group scored 73.19 in the pre-test. Results from the statistical tests, showed significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test ($p=.043$), indicating that the high proficiency students in the DCF with WME group gained significant improvement on the accuracy of regular past tense *-ed*.

Different findings were found in the low proficiency students receiving the DCF with WME. Their mean score was 57.78 in the pre-test, and 65.67 in the post-test. No statistically significant improvement ($p=.40$) was found. Regarding the whole group, it was found that the mean score in the pre-test and post-test were 64.20, and 77.48, respectively. Similar to the results of each subject group, no statistically significant improvement on the targeted feature ($p=.07$) was found.

Table 2: The occurrence of fragment found in the DCF with WME group writing

Levels of proficiency	Fragment				Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed rank test	p-value
	Pre-test		Post-test			
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD.		
High (<i>n</i> =5)	89.62	6.56	96.20	3.58	1.836	.068
Low (<i>n</i> =7)	76.36	8.13	89.15	4.68	2.197*	.03*
The whole (<i>n</i> =12)	81.88	9.92	92.09	5.46	2.756**	.01**

* Significant at .05

** Significant at .01

Table 2 showed the \bar{x} of the subjects' mean score on fragment in the DCF with WME group. It was found that the high proficiency students gained 89.62 in the pre-test. Regarding the post-test, the students performed 6.58 % better, \bar{x} being 96.20. Results from the statistical tests, however, showed no significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test ($p=.68$).

In contrast, the low proficiency learners gained 76.36 in the pre-test, and 89.15 in the post-test. The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed Rank Test showed a statistically significant difference on the accuracy of fragment at .03. Considering the whole group, they gained 81.88 in the pre-test, and 92.09 in the post-test. Statistically, the scores were significantly different at .01.

An analysis of the Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed rank test in Table 1 and 2 indicated that the whole group receiving the DCF with WME gained no statistically significant difference in regular past tense *-ed*, at .043, .40, and .07, respectively. Likewise, the high proficiency students gained no statistically significant difference in fragment ($p=.068$). However, the low proficiency students receiving the DCF with WME and the whole group receiving the DCF with WME, showed statistically significant difference in fragment at .03 and .01, respectively.

It can be inferred that the DCF with WME could help to reduce errors of regular past tense *-ed* only in high proficiency learners, but could not help the low proficiency learners in this study. Moreover, this type of feedback was ineffective with the whole group, as well. In addition, no significant improvement in fragment was found in the high proficiency learners receiving the DCF with WME. Nonetheless, the DCF with WME had merits in reducing fragment errors among the low proficiency students and in the whole group.

Table 3: The use of past tense verbs by the DCF with OME group writing

Levels of proficiency	Regular past tense <i>-ed</i>				Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed rank test	p-value
	Pre-test		Post-test			
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD.		
High ($n=5$)	81.00	4.24	88.92	5.43	2.203*	.043*
Low ($n=8$)	53.66	29.06	79.78	11.12	2.521**	.01**
The whole ($n=13$)	64.17	26.27	83.30	10.17	3.180**	.01**

* Significant at .05

** Significant at .01

Table 3 showed the \bar{x} of the subjects' scores on accuracy of the use of past tense verb in the DCF with OME group. It was found that the high proficiency students gained 81.00 in the pre-test. In the post-test, the subjects performed 7.92 % better, \bar{x} being 88.92. Results from the statistical tests, showed significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test ($p=0.05$).

Likewise, the low proficiency students gained 53.66 in the pre-test, and 79.78 in the post-test. This indicates statistically significant improvement on this linguistic form at .01.

Furthermore, the whole group gains of 64.17 in the pre-test and 83.30 in the post-test revealed statistically significant improvement on the targeted feature at .01.

Table 4: The occurrence of fragment found in the DCF with OME group

Levels of proficiency	Fragment				Wilcoxon matched-pairs signed rank test	Sig
	Pre-test		Post-test			
	\bar{x}	SD	\bar{x}	SD.		
High (n=5)	94.47	3.73	98.75	2.80	1.461	.144
Low (n=8)	81.57	11.37	97.33	3.93	2.240*	.03*
The whole (n=13)	86.53	11.08	97.88	3.48	2.589**	.01**

* Significant at .05

** Significant at .01

Table 4 showed the \bar{x} of the OME group's percentage of correct use of fragment. It was found that the high proficiency students gained 94.47 in the pre-test. For the post-test, the subjects performed 4.28 % better, \bar{x} being 98.75 in the post-test. Results from the statistical test showed no significant difference between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test (p=.144).

However, the low proficiency students gained 81.57 in the pre-test, and 97.33 in the post-test. This indicates that they gained statistically significant more accuracy on this category at .03. Additionally, the whole group gained 86.53 in the pre-test, and 97.88 in the post-test. The results showed statistically significant improvement between the mean scores of the pre-and post-test on this linguistic form at .01.

An analysis of the Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Signed Rank Test in Table 3 and 4 revealed that the whole group receiving the DCF with OME gained statistically significant improvement on regular past tense -ed at .043, .01, and .01 respectively. Furthermore, the low proficiency students and the whole group gained statistically significant improvement on fragment (p=.03 and .01 respectively). Nevertheless, the high proficiency students in the DCF with OME group gained no statistically significant difference on fragment (p=.144).

In sum, the DCF with OME was effective in reducing regular past tense -ed errors for all of the subjects in this group. Additionally, this type of feedback was beneficial for the low English proficiency and the whole group in reducing fragment errors. However, such feedback was ineffective to facilitate the high proficiency students' improvement of fragment.

In order to answer the research question 2, the analysis of the subjects' mean scores were compared between the two feedback groups to find out the different effect between the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME on each linguistic feature in question. In doing this, the Two-Independent Sample Tests: Mann Whitney U was performed.

2. What are the differences in performance between the two types of DCF?

Table 5: Comparison of the use of regular past verbs by the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME group

Levels of proficiency	Regular past tense -ed						Mann Whitney U	p-value
	The DCF with WME			The DCF with OME				
	\bar{x}	SD	N	\bar{x}	SD.	N		
High	7.89	22.69	7	26.12	20.05	8	15.00	.066
Low	19.31	22.51	5	7.92	3.61	5	7.00	.125
The whole	12.65	22.36	12	19.12	18.00	13	64.00	.223

* Significant at.05

** Significant at.01

Regarding the regular past tense *-ed*, it was found that the high proficiency students in the DCF with WME group gained 7.89. In the DCF with OME group, the subjects in this group performed almost 20% better, \bar{x} being 26.12. However, no statistically significant difference was found between the high proficiency students in the DCF with WME group and those in the DCF with OME group in the linguistic form ($p=.066$).

In the same manner, there was no statistically significant difference between the low proficiency students in the two groups ($p=.125$). Likewise, no statistically significant difference was found in the whole group between the DCF with the DCF with WME group and the DCF with OME group ($p=.223$).

Table 6: Comparison of the use of fragment by the DCF with the DCF with WME group and the DCF with OME group

Levels of proficiency	Fragment						Mann Whitney U	p-value
	WME			OME				
	\bar{x}	SD	N	\bar{x}	SD.	N		
High	12.80	8.64	7	15.76	13.75	8	26.00	.408
Low	6.58	5.78	5	4.28	5.09	5	10.50	.337
The whole	10.21	7.95	12	11.35	12.36	13	77.50	.489

* Significant at .05

** Significant at .01

Regarding fragment, it was found that the high proficiency students in the DCF with WME group gained 12.80. In the DCF with OME group, the subjects in this group performed 2.96 % better, \bar{x} being 15.76. However, no statistically significant difference was found between the high proficiency students in the DCF with WME group and those in the DCF with OME group in the linguistic form ($p=.408$).

Likewise, there was no statistically significant difference between that the low proficiency students in the two groups ($p=.337$). In addition, there was no statistically significant difference in the whole group between the DCF with WME group and the DCF with OME group ($p=.489$).

The results in Table 5 and 6 showed that there was no statistically significant difference between the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME on the improvement of both targeted linguistic forms. Thus, it can be concluded that the DCF with WME and the DCF with

OME had the equal effect in reducing errors of regular past tense *-ed* and fragment on the students' writing in the present study.

Discussions

Findings in Tables 1-4 showed that the DCF with WME could significantly reduce errors in the regular past tense *-ed* only in the high English proficiency group. In contrast, the DCF with OME was found to significantly facilitate the acquisition of the same linguistic feature in both high and low English proficiency and the whole group of the students. This indicated that the DCF with OME had a greater effect in promoting the acquisition of regular past tense *-ed*. It is congruent with the previous scholars who maintained that a combination of DCF with conferencing is more effective than written DCF, as it supplies the learners with an opportunity for discussion, negotiation, and clarification (Ferris, 2002; Ferris & Hedgcock, 1989, cited in Bitchener et al, 2005).

In addition, the results showed that the high proficiency students in both the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME gained no significant improvement on fragment ($p=.068$ and $.144$ respectively). The reason proposed for this was that the high proficiency students might have already mastered the linguistic form, so they produced a relatively similar number in both the pre-and post-test. Therefore, the feedback given neither written nor oral had effect to them.

Moreover, a significant improvement on the accuracy of fragment was found in the low proficiency students and the whole group of the students receiving the DCF with WME ($p=.03$ and $.01$ respectively). However, no significant improvement on the accuracy of regular past tense was found in the low English proficiency and the whole group. It can be assumed that fragment avoidance consisted of a few simple rules which are easier for the low proficiency students to acquire. Conversely, the use of past tense consisted of more complicated rules. Therefore, the low proficiency group failed to reach accuracy on this linguistic feature. In other words, the errors of fragment were more treatable than the errors of the regular past tense. Findings in the present study also added to the literature in that identifying fragment requires only a few rules compared to regular past tense *-ed*. Thus, it is easier to understand and master the rules. More complicated rules like past tense verbs, in contrast, were more difficult to acquire than the less complicated ones (see DeKeyser & Sokalski, 1996, cited in DeKeyser, 2009).

All in all, the findings demonstrated that the DCF with WME was as effective as the DCF with OME in promoting the acquisition of the regular past tense *-ed* and fragment. This supports DeKeyser (2009) that based on Schmidt's noticing theory, the two kinds of the DCF had equal merits, because both of them were effective in facilitating the students' noticing and understanding the meta-linguistic information. This was also in line with Sheen (2010b), who indicated that the oral CF was as effective as the written CF in the acquisition of English articles. Further explanation could be that, both of them provided direct explicit feedback which facilitated the learners' interlanguage development. According to Sheen (2010b) the explicitness of meta-linguistic information is the key factor that helped to promote the learners' acquisition.

Conclusion

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the effects of two modalities of DCF on Thai EFL learners' accuracy in writing with reference to on two targeted linguistic features. The study sought to find out whether the provision of DCF facilitates the high and low English proficiency students' grammatical accuracy improvement, and, which type is more helpful for writing improvement. When considering each group and each linguistic feature, it was found that the DCF with WME could help only the high proficiency students to improve error of regular past tense, while the DCF with OME had merits in facilitating both the high and low proficiency language learners to gain improvement on the same error. Interestingly, when considering the effect of the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME on the improvement of the error of fragment, the results showed that both types of DCF did not help to improve the accuracy of such kind of error among the high proficiency students in their group. Furthermore, it reveals that both DCF had impact on the accuracy improvement in both the low proficiency students and the whole group of the students in their group. Additionally, the findings indicate that the DCF with WME and the DCF with OME had equivalent effectiveness in improving the accuracy of the two linguistic features.

Apart from the positive findings of the study, further research is encouraged to (1) investigate the effect of DCF in a larger sample size and (2) to include a controlled group to determine if there is any differential effect between the students who receive DCF and those who receive no DCF.

From a pedagogical point of view, the findings from this study reveal that the explicitness of the feedback which includes explanation of grammatical rules is beneficial for students to improve their linguistic accuracy. Nevertheless, as "one size cannot fit all", teachers should make decisions when choosing the type of feedback which best suits their students.

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