The CATESOL Journal

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Developing Autonomous Self-Editors: An Alternative Approach to Written Corrective Feedback

Written corrective feedback has been a long-standing practice among second language writing instructors, yet the efficacy of this practice for long-term development of students' writing remains uncertain. In the field of writing research, error correction in second language writing continues to be a topic of much controversy. While numerous studies have investigated the long-term effect of written corrective feedback, no consensus has been reached. Challenging the deep-rooted conviction that instructors' correction is beneficial, this article (a) argues that the role of a writing instructor is not to serve as an editor but to help students to become autonomous self-editors of their own work, and (b) proposes an alternative approach that is designed to develop students' self-editing skills. Through effective scaffolding and strategy training, writing instructors can develop in second language writers a habit of mind to critically read and edit their own work.

How can I help my students to become better and more autonomous writers without discouraging them? This has been an important pedagogical question I have often pondered throughout my career of teaching second language (L2) writing and composition. To students for whom English is not their first language, developing writing proficiency is an endeavor that requires a considerable amount of time and relentless effort. Many of these students are discouraged and have a lack of confidence in their ability to write well in an academic setting. In fact, "I hate writing" and "My writing is really bad" are two very common expressions I hear from my L2 students across different levels. This lack of enthusiasm and confidence is associated, at least in part, with how we read, react, and respond to the written works of L2 writers.

Responding to L2 students' papers that have serious rhetorical weak-

nesses and a multitude of linguistic errors is a tedious and challenging task for a writing instructor, but what is more trying is finding a systematic and effective method of response to actively engage students in their writing and editing processes. The fact that the nature, frequency, and types of errors L2 writers make differ significantly from one student to another magnifies the challenge of finding a systematic approach to treat errors. (In this article, I am using *errors* in a broad sense, referring not only to errors in grammar, usage, and mechanics but also to stylistic and syntactic issues.) While attending to errors in grammar, syntax, usage, and mechanics is critical (Connor, 1996; Ferris, 2003, 2009), heavily focusing on local issues related to language "can be counterproductive in that students become hyperconscious about writing for fear of making errors" (Beach & Friedrich, 2006, p. 230). Thus, considering how we can address and respond to language-related errors without discouraging our students is a matter of paramount importance.

A common response practice among L2 writing teachers is the provision of direct and indirect written corrective feedback (WCF). Truscott (1996), in this regard, stated that error correction is a practice that almost all teachers of L2 writing engage in. As Truscott points out, the conviction that written correction should be an integral part of L2 writing courses is deep-rooted and ubiquitous among practitioners and researchers. Empirical evidence is provided by Evans, Hartshorn, and Tuioti (2010), whose study involving 1,053 teachers of L2 writing in 69 countries reported that "99% of all respondents indicated that they do provide at least some error correction on student writing" (p. 57). In addition, a national survey given to middle- and high-school English teachers about their teaching practice revealed that teachers believed correcting students' papers was important (Applebee & Langer, 2013).

However, providing WCF is a time-consuming, tedious, and at times frustrating endeavor that many teachers, especially those who work with multilingual students, are obligated to engage in. On average, writing instructors spend about 20 to 40 minutes to write comments and make corrections on a single paper (Sommers, 1982). For an instructor who teaches several writing classes and assigns multiple writing assignments that require several drafts, it is a tremendous workload. Ferris (1999) noted, "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" (p. 1). At conference presentations and around lunch tables, my colleagues unanimously tell me that one thing they dislike about teaching writing is grading and correcting papers. This is especially true for those of us who approach the pile of papers as editors or what Sommers (2013) calls "grammar guardians" and "comma cops." Serving as editors to our students is perhaps the most unappealing part of our profession, yet

many of us do it intuitively and religiously as we believe that our painstaking effort is necessary and valuable to our students.

A question of pedagogical import, then, is whether an instructor's correction is an efficacious approach to address and treat issues related to language use and how it affects the long-term writing development of L2 students. Given the amount of time and effort, it is unfortunate if the instructor's correction does not serve the students well and does not yield long-term writing improvement. In fact, "an obsession with error might undermine the broader effort to support students' writing development as competent writers" (Wilcox, Yagelski, & Yu, 2013, p. 1088). This, therefore, calls for the need (a) to reflect on our practice of providing WCF, (b) to seek an alternative method of response that is efficient and effectual, and (c) to develop response/feedback strategies that will help our students to become autonomous writers who are able to recognize and correct their own errors and analyze their linguistic choices.

The State of Written Corrective Feedback

Numerous studies have been published on the subject of WCF, and most of them investigate short- and long-term effects of WCF in an attempt to either prove or disprove its value. However, in the field of research, the responses to the inquiry into the long-term efficacy of WCF are conflicting, and the evidence remains inconclusive (Liu & Brown, 2015). Ferris (2004), a leading researcher in this subfield, acknowledges the controversy surrounding the long-term benefit of WCF and asserted, "The research base on the 'big question'—does error feedback help L2 student writers?—is inadequate, [incomplete, and inconsistent]" (p. 50). It is, then, reasonably safe to say that there is no solid and convincing empirical evidence to corroborate the claim that the provision of direct and indirect WCF is categorically advantageous to the long-term development of writing and language acquisition in general. While the deep-rooted belief that our correction is beneficial to students' writing development has not been confirmed by research, practitioners are also uncertain about the efficacy of WCF. More than three decades ago, Sommers (1982) remarked, "We do not know in any definite way what constitutes thoughtful commentary or what effect, if any, our comments have on helping our students become more effective writers" (p. 148). This remains true today, not only in the area of response in general, but more specifically in the practice of error correction. The fact that we are unsure of the success of this practice is evidenced in a study undertaken by Evans et al. (2010), in which L2 practitioners who correct their students' errors reported they only somewhat agree that the correction helps students improve their writing.

A common pitfall of WCF is the widespread inconsistency in the types of response different teachers use and in the nature of written correction an

individual teacher makes. There is no well-established, systematic approach to respond to language errors, syntactic problems, and stylistic weaknesses, and L2 writing instructors use inconsistent and discrete forms of WCF; while some provide comprehensive WCF, others use a more narrowly focused approach to respond to language issues. Some varieties of correction are scattershot, haphazard, and poorly done (Truscott, 1999). Furthermore, there is a notable inconsistency in the nature of WCF an instructor provides to students. Studies have found that teachers' feedback on, and correction of, errors is imprecise and inconsistent (Lee, 2004; Zamel, 1985). In a study that examines ESL teachers' responses to errors, Zamel (1985) found, "ESL writing teachers misread student texts, are inconsistent in their reactions, and make arbitrary corrections" (p. 86). It is evident that we make errors in correcting errors, especially when we are overcome with grading fatigue.

Arguments against WCF and general skepticism toward the value of direct correction and indirect corrective feedback are grounded in two recurrent phenomena that teachers observe in their classrooms:

1. Some students fail to respond to error correction and feedback by either utterly neglecting or misinterpreting them;
2. Some students, regardless of their teachers' painstaking effort, "commit the same errors or types of errors from one essay to the next" (Lalande, 1982, p. 140).

In such cases, it is easy to label students "lazy" or "inattentive," but more often than not, the culprit is correction itself. Even Ferris (2011), a proponent of WCF, observes greater variability in how students respond to error correction and admits that "[some] students will simply look at it (or not) and forget it" (p. 31). It is apparent that while some students, especially those who have a strong motivation to improve their writing, are receptive to teacher correction, others are not. Our well-intentioned error correction is viewed as favorable intervention for some, but it is an unwelcome intrusion for others. The level of attention different students give to error correction is closely linked to the internal and external factors associated with the individual differences of L2 writers (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Ferris, Liu, Sinha, & Senna, 2013; Kormos, 2012). It is, however, unrealistic for instructors to gain thorough knowledge of these factors within a short amount of time and tailor their response methods to these individual differences. One aspect, however, that is clear in research and pedagogy and that is confirmed by several second language acquisition (SLA) theories is the fact that correction is useless if learners do not pay attention to it (Polio, 2012).

A Need for an Alternative Approach in Lieu of WCF

My argument against direct correction and indirect WCF that appear

in a form of confusing markings and cryptic correction symbols is primarily grounded in the principles of sociocultural theory (SCT) and operates under the assumption that the primary role of L2 instructors in the area of error treatment should be to help their students to become autonomous self-editors who are able to identify and correct their own errors. The role of a teacher is to engage, scaffold, guide, and monitor students' learning in their effort to think, write, revise, and edit their own work. It is crucial for writing instructors to provide thoughtful, encouraging, and systematic feedback on language errors (more effective in a dialogic form), as well as on global issues concerning strength, organization, and development of ideas and quality of interpretation. In this effort, however, WCF is counterproductive and has several detrimental effects. It may divert instructors from providing thoughtful feedback on more global issues, and it cultivates in students an expectation that their teachers will edit their work. More often than not, such practice discourages students and further alienates them from their writing (Macklin, 2016). "Experts in L2 writing are unanimous that students need to develop self-editing skills" (Ferris, 2011, p. 130). However, instructors' provision of direct and indirect WCF is antithetical to the principles of developing autonomous writers and ineffectual in training students to become self-editors because not only does it take away "the opportunity for students to recognize and resolve their own mistakes" (Sommers, 2013, p. 32), but it fails to develop a habit of mind in L2 writers to critically read and analyze their linguistic choices.

From a sociocultural perspective founded on Vygotsky's theory of learning (1986), critical assistance, active engagement, and effective scaffolding are essential to L2 writers' development of autonomy and self-regulation. According to SCT, novice learners develop autonomy or self-regulation "by carrying out tasks and activities under the guidance of other more skilled individuals" (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 145). The mediation is a crucial component in guiding L2 writers to become critical self-editors, but a more important factor is whether it promotes active engagement of L2 students in their writing and editing processes. Oftentimes, instructors' error correction does not effectively engage students in their editing process. What is there to engage in, besides mechanically transcribing, when the teacher has corrected errors for the students? How would students learn to identify errors when teachers have found the errors for them? In fact, active engagement comes with giving students responsibility for their learning and providing them with an opportunity to practice. In this regard, Ferris (2011) pointed out, "Students recognized that they were likely to learn more and become more independent as writers and editors if they had some investment in the process, rather than simply copying or noting direct corrections the teachers had made" (p. 45). Teachers' correction promotes the passive act of receiving, and a grave consequence of such practice is a diminution of students'

commitment to become critical readers and editors of their own work. Students become autonomous self-editors who are able to recognize, analyze, and correct their errors when they are given the opportunity to do so and when they are encouraged to be active participants, not passive recipients, in the entire process.

Teachers' correction is akin to spoon-feeding students with "correct" forms, and therefore, it is not an effective form of scaffolding L2 students' writing development. For scaffolding to be effective, a teacher "provides guided practice in strategies that enable students to approach and complete the task successfully" (Olson, 2011, p. 41). Effective scaffolding is often instructional and involves strategy training and guidance to direct learners' attention to identifying, analyzing, and correcting errors. Langer and Applebee (1986) claim that one of the important components of instructional scaffolding is giving students ownership or "the room" to complete a task on their own (p. 185). But by providing WCF, teachers fail to provide the ownership and the opportunity for students to actively engage in the process of editing. As a result, students develop a habit of handing over to teachers the responsibility to identify and correct errors. Lindemann (2001) contends that if the L2 writing instructors hold themselves accountable for finding and correcting mistakes, students "can easily conclude that [they] have no responsibility for finding problems" (p. 236). Instructors, as experts, should "provide assistance that is not simply aimed at helping the learner complete the task at hand, but that encourages the learner to take an increasingly greater responsibility for the activity" (Bitchener & Storch, 2016, p. 71). Thus, if our job is to help students to become autonomous self-editors, we should guide them in their effort to edit their own work rather than feed them with "correct" forms.

The case against WCF calls for an alternative approach to respond to errors. My argument, while it refutes the value of WCF, does not suggest that instructors should abandon the crucial task of providing feedback and responding to students' linguistic errors and stylistic weaknesses. It rather maintains that the response and feedback do not have to be furnished in a manner of commanding, cryptic, and often confusing written comments and should not be in a form of correcting errors. Instead, we can use a facilitative approach of response that engages students in critical reading and thinking and that encourages students to participate actively in revision and editing processes while allowing them to retain ownership and responsibility for their written work.

An Alternative Approach: Scaffolding L2 Writers Through Guided-Editing Lessons

As a facilitative approach to respond to and treat students' linguistic errors and stylistic weaknesses, I propose a heuristic model of guided editing

that promotes critical reading and self-editing skills. This model is based on the notion that the primary role of a writing instructor is that of a coach who guides novice writers through the writing process. It is designed to effectively scaffold students to identify and correct their errors while raising their awareness of linguistic accuracy and editing strategies. It is a heuristic as it actively engages L2 writers in problem solving and encourages them to discover problems and find solutions on their own. In that respect, Lalande (1982) argued that "the process of guided learning and problem solving may better serve the long-term objective of fostering student autonomy in monitoring their own writing" (p. 140).

The guided-editing approach I use in my writing classes follows six sequential stages (see Table 1). The primary goal of this practice is "to keep the focus on learning and on building skills, one lesson at a time" (Sommers, 2013, p. 32). With this objective in mind and following the heuristic model,

Table 1
Six Stages of a Guided-Editing Lesson

A heuristic model for error treatment: Guided-editing practice	
Stage 1: Analysis of target structure using model/ anchor text	• Teachers' use of model text within the same genre as the writing assignment to analyze the target structure and the effect of the target structure in constructing meaning. • Example: If students are assigned to write a memoir, use model memoir to analyze a specific stylistic element (e.g., syntactic variety) or a specific grammatical form (e.g., verb tense and form). • Objective: To scaffold students in noticing the use of target structure.
Stage 2: Explicit grammar instruction/review of the target structure	• Teachers employ explicit instruction and comprehensive review of the target structure. • Example: Teachers can use different forms of delivery—short grammar lesson in class, grammar lesson using flipped-classroom model, handouts, video tutorial, and so on. • Objective: To promote L2 writers' metalinguistic awareness and/or to retrieve declarative knowledge from their long-term memory.
Stage 3: Self-analysis and self-correction	• Students closely read their own drafts focusing on the target structure and make corrections. • Example: Teachers can ask students (a) to underline all target forms (b) to write comments and make corrections in marginal space. • Objective: To scaffold students in noticing errors on, as well as correct use of, the target structure.

Stage 4: Collaboration and consultation	• Students collaborate with peers and consult with instructors to go over the errors that they have identified and the ones that they have not been able to identify. One-on-one conference facilitates further scaffolding. • Example: Students work with peers or in groups to discuss the use of the target structure in their writing while the teacher goes around to monitor and provide consultation. • Objective: To promote metalinguistic awareness and analyze linguistic choices in a collaborative environment.
Stage 5: Reflection	• Students write a brief reflection on the process of editing. • Objective: To raise students' consciousness about their linguistic knowledge and editing skills.
Stage 6: Monitoring, responding, and conferencing	• Teachers observe and monitor the process of editing to see if students have been successful in identifying and correcting their errors. • Teachers respond to students with brief comments. If students have been successful, it is important to communicate it to encourage students and build confidence. If students have not been successful, a more robust intervention might be necessary. One-on-one conferences are effective and perhaps necessary for those who need robust intervention.

I incorporate a series of lessons that target common patterns of errors found in my students' writing. For this approach to be effective, it is important for L2 writing instructors to closely read and systematically examine students' papers for patterns of errors and select several common and key structures to target. It is equally important for students to understand that these guided-editing lessons serve as a form of feedback on their linguistic and stylistic issues. Furthermore, these lessons should never be randomly selected and decontextualized grammar lessons, but they need to be carefully devised and conscientiously tailored to the needs of the L2 writers based on the most serious patterns of errors they make in their writing. Figure 1 shows syntactic and grammatical points I focus on in my academic writing course. The selection of particular forms and structures to target is dependent on and derived from common patterns of errors and weaknesses identified in students' writing.

In the proposed model for guided editing, instructors walk students through interrelated activities following the six stages shown in Table 1. In the first stage, I use model texts within the same genre of the writing assignment to help students notice and analyze specific target structures. The idea of using model texts is to prompt students to observe and analyze linguistic and stylistic choices professional writers make and to discern if their own

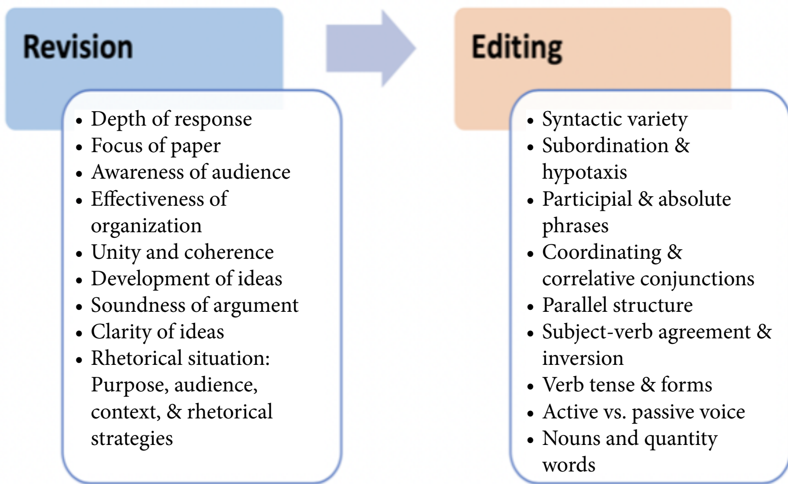

Figure 1. Syntactic and grammatical points of focus for the course.

choices are on par with academic standards. For example, I have observed that a common issue in the essays of novice L2 writers is lack of syntactic variety and overuse of basic coordinating conjunctions, such as *and, but, so*. An editing lesson on syntactic variety, which I often introduce early on, starts with analyzing sentence structure and variety in an academic text. I use color coding and highlight simple sentences red, coordinated sentences blue, and subordinated sentences green. In this particular example, I manipulate the model text, changing the sentence structures, to illustrate how the flow is disrupted and what effect less mature syntactic style creates. Figure 2 demonstrates an example of analyzing a model paragraph from an assigned reading, "Plight of the Little Emperors" by Taylor Clark. In this particular example, I manipulate the original paragraph in two different ways. In the first manipulated version, I change the original sentences into simple sentences to show how choppy, simple sentences cause lack of flow and stylistic weakness. The second manipulated version exhibits an example of depending heavily on coordinating conjunctions to show lack of variety and to point out the difference between coordination and subordination. By engaging in this activity, students notice that a common syntactic convention of argumentative writing is the use of hypotaxis, or subordination of clauses, for efficiency, complexity, and cohesion and that mature writers use a variety of sentence-combining devices. This also promotes an understanding of different linguistic choices and analyzing those choices based on genre conventions and audience expectations.

A Paragraph From "Plight of the Little Emperors" by Taylor Clark

Notice: The complex/subordinated sentences are green or underlined, compound/coordinated sentences are blue, and simple sentences are red or italicized. Coordinating and subordinating **conjunctions**, as well as participial phrases, are in bold.

Original Paragraph

For the frustrated, depressed, and anxious Chinese kids **buckling under the constant pressure**—the news agency Xinhua estimates there are 30 million Chinese under 17 with significant mental-health problems—finding someone to talk to can be tough. **Taught to strive and achieve from an early age**, they have never had the time for heart-to-heart chats. "It's not like American universities **where** you have many friends," says Yu Zeng. "At Chinese universities, you compete for limited resources, **and** everyone is concerned about themselves. And **if** you wanted to talk to your parents, they wouldn't understand. **When** they were your age, they were reading Mao's little red book." Plus, the conversation would be strained **even if** you did find a sympathetic ear. "*In the 20th century, the term 'depression' didn't even exist in China," Toni Falbo says.* "It couldn't be talked about **because** there was no vocabulary for it yet."

Notice: Below is a different version of the same paragraph. What do you notice? How does removing coordinating and subordinating conjunctions and devices change the paragraph?

Manipulated Version 1: Mainly simple sentences

For the frustrated, depressed, and anxious Chinese kids, finding someone to talk to can be tough. They are buckling under the constant pressure. The news agency Xinhua estimates there are 30 million Chinese under 17 with significant mental-health problems. Chinese kids are taught to strive and achieve from an early age. They have never had the time for heart-to-heart chats. "It's not like American universities where you have many friends," says Yu Zeng. "At Chinese universities, you compete for limited resources. Everyone is concerned about themselves. You wanted to talk to your parents. They wouldn't understand. They were your age. They were reading Mao's little red book." Plus, the conversation would be strained. You did find a sympathetic ear. "In the 20th century, the term 'depression' didn't even exist in China," Toni Falbo says. It couldn't be talked about. There was no vocabulary for it yet."

Notice: Here is another version of the same paragraph. Notice how I manipulated the paragraph, using mainly coordinating conjunctions. Overusing a few basic conjunctions, such as *and, but, so, when, because* is common in students' writing, but mature writers use a variety of devices.

Manipulated Version 2: Using mainly coordinating conjunctions (*who* and *when* are subordinating conjunctions)
Finding someone to talk to can be tough for frustrated, depressed, and anxious Chinese kids **who are** buckling under the constant pressure. The news agency Xinhua estimates there are 30 million Chinese under 17 with significant mental-health problems. Chinese kids are taught to strive and achieve from an early age, **and** they have never had the time for heart-to-heart chats. "It's not like American universities where you have many friends," says Yu Zeng. "At Chinese universities, you compete for limited resources, **so** everyone is concerned about themselves. You wanted to talk to your parents, **but** they wouldn't understand. **When** they were your age, they were reading Mao's little red book." Plus, the conversation would be strained. You did find a sympathetic ear. "In the 20th century, the term 'depression' didn't even exist in China," Toni Falbo says. "It couldn't be talked about, **and** there was no vocabulary for it yet."

Figure 2. Using a model paragraph to help students notice sentence style.

The second stage comprises explicit grammar instruction and review of the target structure in order to promote metalinguistic awareness. Graham and Perin (2007) contend that "teaching grammar in the context of students' own writing had positive effects on writing quality" (as cited in Wilcox et al., 2014, p. 1075). For those who have prior exposure to formal grammar instruction, it serves as a mediational approach to retrieve declarative knowledge stored in their long-term memory. For example, the editing activity on syntactic variety discussed earlier is followed by a grammar lesson on general use of subordination in academic writing. Because the number of subordinating conjunctions is vast, I provide a general overview, highlighting common errors students make in subordinating sentences, and then focus on the use of present and past participial phrases. My choice of focusing on present and past participial phrases is based on my observation that these structures, while common in mature, academic, and professional writing, often are absent in L2 students' writing. In the model text, the use of present and past participial are highlighted in bold, giving students a chance

to observe their use. I also include cases and examples of misplaced and dangling modifiers, which are common errors associated with the use of participial phrases. The first two stages of the model for guided editing serve as an input and a way of scaffolding to draw L2 learners' attention to target structures.

The next three stages are directed to self-analysis and self-correction and include collaboration with peers and the teacher. Before students work on their own drafts, I model close reading, underlining, self-editing, and commenting on a sample paragraph (either a paragraph I wrote or a student sample). Using the think-aloud strategy, I underline target structures and write corrected or rephrased versions in the margins. If I cannot think of ways to correct or rephrase on the spot, I bracket the sentence or structure and model writing marginal comments, such as *I will come back to this sentence/phrase later; I will have to look up how to use ... ; I don't know how to fix this, and I need help; I am not sure if this is correct*. This acknowledges the fact that self-editing is not an easy task and often requires further deliberation and exploration. After modeling on a sample paragraph, I ask students to closely read their drafts, underline the target structures, make corrections, and write marginal comments. For example, after the lesson on syntactic variety, students are asked to underline coordinating and subordinating conjunctions, highlight and combine simple sentences, find places where they can use participial phrases, branch and expand sentences, bracket sentences they need to rework, and write comments to themselves about their sentence style and variety. In this self-editing process, collaboration with peers and consultation with the teacher is a crucial component, especially for those who have difficulty with the task. I arrange one-on-one conferences with students to go over their self-editing and to provide further help.

In the final stage of this guided-editing process, students write a brief reflection responding to the prompt shown in Figure 3 and turn in the reworked draft, along with their reflection. In one reflection, for example, a student wrote, "I notice that I am using 'because' a lot. I can't believe I used 'because' 12 times on one page ... ." During a conference, we discussed the use of causal verbs and other connectives that convey causal relationships, and the student rewrote some of her sentences using causal verbs. Reading their reflections and examining students' reworked drafts not only help me to monitor their progress but also to assess how and whether the activities and lessons helped scaffold their self-editing. I provide feedback on their editing work and invite those students who have difficulty with the task to one-on-one conferences, during which we collaboratively work to identify errors/weaknesses and brainstorm ways to improve. The dialogic and collaborative nature of face-to-face conferencing is much more effective and helps me form a more in-depth understanding of the difficulty students have in their writing and editing processes.

In this activity, you took on a role of an editor—someone who closely reads to identify errors and weaknesses and make corrections. Do you think you were a successful editor of your own work? Why or why not? What activities were helpful and which ones were challenging? You may use the following questions to guide your response. Your reflection on your editing process, along with the comments and edits you made on your paper, will help me check your progress, determine if you need additional help, and modify activities and lessons that will help you in your editing process.

- Were you able to identify errors in your writing related to the grammatical structure/s that we have discussed?
- Were you able to make corrections of the errors you identified, and are you satisfied with your corrections?
- If you were not able to identify/notice errors or make corrections, what do you think would help you (e.g., "I need to learn more about grammar rules," "I need someone to help me identify errors") in becoming a critical editor of your own work?
- Were the activities helpful, not helpful, confusing, challenging in your effort to critically read your essay, identify weaknesses, and make corrections? Any suggestions are welcome.

Figure 3. The reflection prompt for the final stage of the guided-editing process.

It is important to keep in mind that not all errors can be treated with this approach. Idiomatic and idiosyncratic errors, including errors in word choice, preposition usage, and collocations are not rule governed (Ferris, 2011). These errors tend to be unsystematic and sporadic. Students also make unintentional and careless errors. Addressing these errors in one-on-one conferences is more effective than providing unsystematic and sporadic written corrections. During one-on-one conferences with students, I try to diagnose, by asking students to read out loud and pointing to their errors, if the errors they made are rather careless, if they are aware of the rules, and if they are able to correct idiosyncratic errors when I point them out. The diagnosis helps us brainstorm ideas for editing. Because conferencing takes a substantial amount of time, I devote some of the class time for individual or group conferencing. In addition, I use two different tools—collocation dictionary and corpus use—to assist students with their word choice, collocation, and preposition use. *Ozdic* (ozdic.com) is an online collocation dictionary that provides commonly collocated words, prepositions, and common idiomatic expressions. The *Corpus of Contemporary American English* (*COCA;* https://www.english-corpora.org/coca/) is also a useful tool students can use to find patterns of word use. For example, in an editing session, after a short grammar lesson on functions of prepositions, I model an editing strategy on a sample and ask students to underline all prepositions and circle the ones they are unsure about. Students then consult with either *Ozdic* or *COCA* to make corrections. If they cannot find the answer they are looking for, I suggest that they write a note, such as "Ask the teacher or tutor."

Conclusion

The guided-editing lessons have reduced the time I devote to reading and responding to students' papers. Using this model to address and treat systematic errors and weaknesses allows me to focus my written feedback on global issues related to quality, development, and organization of ideas, without getting sidetracked by local problems. But more important, they have helped my students to become critical readers of their own work while maintaining autonomy as writers. In an effort to identify their own errors, apply principles from input and instruction, and make corrections on their own papers, students develop a habit of mind to critically read and independently edit their own work.

Although I have used this approach mainly in my advanced L2 writing classes, I believe that we can start training L2 learners to be self-sufficient writers even from the very basic levels of proficiency. With clear instruction and sufficient input, L2 students can learn to identify and correct their errors and develop competence and confidence in their ability to self-correct. Some argue that L2 learners at lower proficiency levels are not able to recognize their errors and make corrections, and therefore, "They may benefit from direct correction—teacher providing the correct forms" (Ferris, 2011, p. 87). While I concur that students at the early stage of language acquisition do not yet have the knowledge and skills necessary to identify errors, I am hesitant to accept that this is a justification for instructors to correct their errors. Students who lack knowledge of grammar and rules more likely will mechanically transcribe the corrections in an effort to improve the subsequent draft. We have to give them an opportunity to try to scaffold their effort through meaningful activities before we grab a red pen to mark and make corrections. Instead of providing corrections that they may or may not understand, it is crucial to develop in them the habits of mind of reflective and analytical thinking and reading.

In my 15-year experience of teaching writing, I have learned that I have to be realistic and prioritize certain issues over others. I have learned to resist my temptation to mark and correct every error because I know that such effort, while well intentioned, is futile. I have come to realize that my job as a writing instructor is not to serve as an editor for my students, but to help them become self-sufficient editors of their own work. To accomplish this, I have to give them the room and an opportunity to practice. The guided self-editing model I use in my class is one approach that I feel much more confident about and content with. Using this approach is my attempt to help my students to become more autonomous writers and self-editors.

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