

Los efectos del feedback directo en las producciones escritas en lengua extranjera de niños de educación primaria

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Resumen

En los últimos años, ha habido una gran variedad de publicaciones informando sobre el papel de la corrección de errores. Este artículo intenta relatar un estudio empírico en el que se exploran los efectos del feedback directo en las producciones escritas de niños que están aprendiendo inglés como lengua extranjera. A estos se les pidió que se implicasen en una tarea de escritura durante tres semanas. Tras el análisis de los datos obtenidos, los resultados indicaron que algunos de los estudiantes fueron capaces de darse cuenta de las diferencias entre ambos escritos e incorporaron algunas de las formas corregidas.

Palabras clave: Enseñanza del Inglés, escritura, feedback, corrección de errores, educación primaria.

Title: The effects of direct feedback on primary education children's L2 written productions.

Abstract

In recent years, there have been various publications reporting on the role of error correction. This paper is an attempt to report on an empirical study where the effects of direct feedback on children's learning English as a foreign language writing productions were explored. They were asked to engage in a writing task for three weeks, involving data collection in three different moments. After the data analysis, the findings indicated that some of the learners were able to notice the differences between their writings and the revised writing, incorporating some of the targetlike forms after the post-test.

Keywords: English teaching, writing, feedback, error correction, primary education.

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1. INTRODUCTION.

Before writing existed, speech was the only way to communicate. However, oral words fade instantly. When writing was invented, the human condition changed, becoming the first technology making the spoken word permanent. Writing changed communication and allowed to share information without having to meet face to face (Schmandt-Besserat, 2010). Nowadays, our society keeps on using writing as a communication tool but the writing uses have changed. Why do we write? We can share our own experiences revealing our deepest thoughts in autobiographies, record moments over time in a diary, communicate with others and access to information (Hiemstra, 2001). Writing also serves to assess our students' gains.

Spaniards have difficulties when it comes to writing in English since, in our mother tongue, the phonics are corresponded to the written form, something not occurring in English. (Schwartz & Kroll, 2006). It is obvious that when learning a foreign language (FL), the skills' command cannot be perfect but students do not know how to properly write in English, not only because they are not taught how to do it but also because the activities proposed are, normally, far from reality, requiring the students to write when they have not been trained for that purpose.

My main concern is how children learning English as a FL can be better helped to produce some written quality pieces so their writing can be improved.

During recent years, FL teaching has been influenced by the communicative approach, having a great impact on the curricula with the increased implementation in the schools of CLIL (Content Language Integrated Learning) (Coyle, 2008). Not only are we asking our students to write but also to do it in a free way, without memorizing and not teaching grammar directly (Cassany, 1990). Also, the significant rise of English as a second language and, thus, research on second language writing has provided an answer to several questions regarding how students learn to write in FL contexts, the processes it

involves and how writing provides the students with opportunities for noticing the gap between their mother tongue and the second language (Cumming, 2001). On the same wavelength, second language acquisition theorists and researchers are interested in how learners learn or acquire a second language. Therefore, their focus is on how learners can correct the errors they make while learning the target language (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

Based on the assumption that learners need to be made aware of and receive information on their errors (Ferris, 2010 cited in Coyle & de Larios, 2014), the present study is an attempt to explore the effects corrective feedback (CF) and metalinguistic feedback have on Primary EFL students' written output. The following aspects will be addressed (i) differences when rewriting a text after feedback, (ii) collaborative writing vs individual writing benefits (iii) error categories uptaken by participants and (iv) metalinguistic explanations students are able to provide.

With this purpose in mind, CF and its implementation in FL teaching will be presented along with its theoretical underpinnings.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW.

2.1 Writing in second language.

When learning a FL, the learner also engages in writing as it conforms a fourth of the skills (Manchón & de Larios, 2007). But, does writing need to be taught as a product or as a process? It is the process of discovery and learning through the language which we should teach because it is an unfinished product. But this process goes through different stages in which the writer makes some mistakes, especially in FL (Murray, 1972). SLA research has claimed that for acquisition to take place, learners need to receive comprehensible input (Krashen, 1985). Others state that interaction needs to take place and thus output. If output does not occur, learners are not pushed to produce any language and are kept just as passive learners. With output, students will communicate using their interlanguage (a language system halfway between L1 and the target language) (Swain, 2000). Swain also claims that there are solid reasons to think that output leads to SLA. One of the reasons is noticing which occurs when the person generating an output realizes they do not know how to express their intended meaning (Adams, 2003). So, while output takes place, learners engage in meaningful interaction which is necessary for learners to acquire a second language (Long, 1996 cited in Adams, 2003).

2.2 Feedback and error correction.

According to the Merriam-Webster dictionary, if you get *feedback*, someone tells you how well or badly you are doing. Applying this to SLA, feedback would be the opinion the teacher provides about your performance. Russell and Spada (2006) defined CF as "any feedback provided to a learner, from any source that contains evidence of learner error of language form". This can be also known as error correction -depending on the approach; CF is found in L2 language while *error correction* is used in SLA (Coyle & Roca de Larios, 2014)-. In this study, both of the terms will be used to address to the provision of written feedback.

The effectiveness of CF on learners' written texts has been the focus over the last decades (Ibarrola, 2009). It has gained prominence in ESL and L2 as researchers have tried to look at the role CF plays in the target language acquisition (Panova & Lyster, 2002). Such was the importance of error correction that Ellis (2009) published a typology of written corrective feedback types. On it he drew a distinction between the strategies for providing CF and the students' response to feedback but we shall then focus on the strategies and on previous research carried out; (i) Direct CF -Robb *et al* (1986) explored the effects direct CF had on improving the overall writing quality of a group of Japanese high school EFL students-, (ii) indirect CF -Chandler (2003) tried to prove the advantages of indirect vs direct error correction-, (iii) metalinguistic CF -Sheen (2007) compared the differences of direct CF and the combination of direct CF and metalinguistic CF in international and immigrant EFL students-, (iv) unfocused and focused CF -Ellis *et al* (2008) explored the accuracy of the use of articles in Japanese EFL university students- (v) electronic feedback (Milton, 2006 cited in Ellis, 2009) and (vi) reformulation -several studies compared the effects of reformulation against the use of error correction (Coyle & de Larios 2014; Adams, 2003; Sachs and Polio, 2007).

2.3 Direct and metalinguistic feedback.

Direct feedback (DF) takes place when the teacher identifies an error and provides the correct form (Bitchener *et al* 2005). Bitchener & Ferris (2012) define it as “that which provides some form of explicit correction of linguistic form or structure above or near the linguistic error and usually involves the crossing out of an unnecessary word/phrase/morpheme, the insertion of a missing word/phrase/morpheme, and/or the provision of the correct structure”. Meanwhile, metalinguistic feedback (MF) can be provided in two ways; (i) the teacher gives a metalinguistic clue for the error; (ii) the teacher numbers the total of errors and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error (Ellis, 2009).

The effects of those two feedback types have been explored by different empirical research. Bitchener *et al* (2005) conducted a study with a group of 53 adult migrant learners over a 12 week period to study whether DF resulted in improved accuracy. The study found a significant effect for the combination of written feedback on accuracy levels in the use of the past simple tense and the definite article in new pieces of writing (Bitchener *et al*, 2005). In their study, Robb *et al* (1986), contrasted with indirect feedback (IF) and DF the changes produced on four different error types. Their participants were Japanese EFL college freshmen and the results concluded that EFL students can assimilate only a small proportion of CF (Robb *et al*, 1986). Qi & Lapkin (2001) carried out a study with two Mandarin EFL adults to explore the relationship of noticing. The findings claimed that composing promotes noticing and improves the writing process of students with different proficiency levels. (Qi & Lapkin, 2001). The study conducted by Storch (2005) researched the effects of collaborative vs individual writing with 23 Asian ESL adult students. He compared texts produced by pairs with those produced by individual learners and found that pairs produced shorter but better texts in terms of task fulfilment, accuracy and complexity (Storch, 2005). Regarding MF, Swain *et al* (2009) explored the process and product of languaging in the learning of the voice concept (active, passive, and middle) in French. They examined the amount and type of languaging produced by a sample of university students. High achievers learnt about the grammatical concept with greater depth of understanding than low achievers. They demonstrated the relationship between the quality and quantity of languaging (Swain *et al*, 2009). Finally, as for error types, Ferris (2006) tried to give an answer to error categories affected by error treatment. The research was carried out over 15 weeks with 92 ESL students at a US university. The results indicated that students were successful at verb category and at sentence structure (Ferris, 2006).

2.4 Limitations of previous studies.

Given the insights mentioned, it is clear that EC can provide benefits for L2 learners engaged in writing activities. However, most research up to date have a common denominator: the participants. All of the students taking part are adults enrolled at higher education. Besides, the majority of the individuals’ mother tongue is an Asiatic language and we do not find any studies based on Spanish EFL students. Still, there has not been any study exploring the combination of DF and MF, error types, proficiency levels and collaborative and individual writing. Bearing those in mind, the effects these types of feedback and groupings can have on Spanish EFL Primary children written performance still remain unexplored.

Given the lack of research, it is my intention to explore how DF and MF along with collaborative writing can improve learners’ written skills.

2.5 Research questions.

This study is an attempt to find out the effects a combination of DF and MF has on the writing skills of eighteen Spanish EFL children. It is assumed that these two feedback types would have a positive effect. Given the unusual combination of these two and the lack of research, the present study attempts to address this gap. In order to do so, the following research questions were formulated:

1. Are there any differences between *Text 1* -stage 1- and *Text 2* -stage 3-?
2. Can any differences be found between individual and collaborative writing? Does proficiency influence the changes?
3. What error categories are learners able to uptake in *Text 2* -stage 3-?
4. When provided with feedback, are the participants able to give metalinguistic explanations about the errors they made? Is there any relationship with the proficiency levels?

3. METHOD.

3.1 Context and participants.

This study was conducted at *Maestro Francisco Martínez Bernal* school, a state school located in Molina de Segura, Murcia (Spain). Eighteen Year 6 participants, ten males and eight females, were selected from a group of twenty-three students. The participants' age ranges from eleven to twelve years old and all of them have Spanish as their mother tongue. The children had been learning English in a traditional methodology for almost nine years. In their lessons, the emphasis is on grammar and vocabulary through rote learning. The students were selected and assigned to two groups: pairs and individual. Among those groups, they were classified according to their proficiency level -high, average and low achievers-.

3.2 Data collection.

The study was conducted in May 2015 and data was collected for a period of three weeks in three fifty-minute sessions -a session per week-. The children were asked to write a story in response to a frame picture prompt from the book *Skills Builder for Young Learners: Flyers 1* (Gray, 2000) –Appendix 1-. The reasons why this was selected were; (i) they do not provide any verbal hint and (ii) the pictures are opened and children can compose the story freely (Qi & Lapkin, 2001)

The research follows a three-stage task, using as a model Qi and Lapkin (2001) design. The task consisted of a pre- and post-test design. In the first session, students were explained the project and grouped by the teacher. After that, they were asked to write about the prompt. For them to not feel under pressure, they were told that the task would not be assessed. The researcher corrected the writings and, the following week, she handed them back to the students with the explicit error correction and commented on the errors. The inaccurate spelling, punctuations, verbs and anything that was wrong were crossed out and the corrections were written in red (Coyle & Roca de Larios, 2014). In the third session, the post-test was administered and then the children rewrote the story.

3.3 Data analysis.

3.3.1 Data coding.

For the sake of the study, two coding systems were used; (I) simple percentages to measure (i) the total errors in the pre-test, (ii) the errors they were able to uptake in the post-test after receiving the DF in stage 2 and (iii) the unchanged errors (errors which, after receiving the feedback, students kept on making). The measuring was done by counting the errors the students had, on the one hand, in the pre-test and, on the other hand, in the post-test and then comparing them to get the percentage of the uptaken and the unchanged errors.

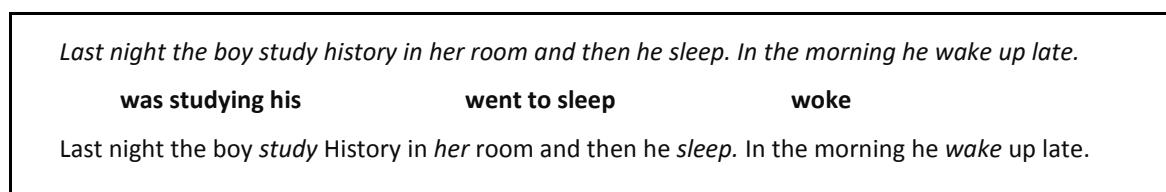


Figure 1. Example of direct feedback provided to a student

An adapted version of Ferris' (2006) error types was also used to mark the students output so accuracy could be objectively assessed. This coding uses a selected list of fifteen error categories (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). In that study, those categories are used to mark the students' productions but, contrary to Ferris, in this study explicit CF will be provided. The use of categories was useful to compare the errors in both stage 1 and stage 3 and to figure out which of those categories were corrected due to providing feedback.

1. Sentence structure	8. Word form
2. Word choice	9. Spelling
3. Verb tense	10. Run-ons
4. Noun endings (singular/plural)	11. Pronouns
5. Verb form	12. Subject-verb agreement
6. Punctuation	13. Fragments
7. Articles/determiners	14. Idiom

Figure 2. Ferris' (2006) error types categories.

As the error categories were too wide, those mistakes categories which were not present in the students' writings were omitted. Another category -prepositions- was included due to the nature of the story prompt (use of *at* to express time). They were also classified according to Qi and Lapkin (2001) categories.

Category	Error type	Description + Example
Lexical	- Word choice - Preposition	- The word chosen was not accurate for the description. <i>The boy was studying <u>story</u>.</i> - Extra or wrong preposition used. <i>The boy goes to school <u>in</u> bus.</i>
Form	- Sentence structure - Spelling -Subject-verb agreement -Verb form -Verb tense -Articles,determiners	- The sentence is not correctly built. <i>It is <u>ten past half</u>.</i> - Spelling mistake in a word. <i>The boy was studying <u>Histori</u>.</i> - Subject and verb disagreement. <i>The boy <u>go</u> to school by bus.</i> - The verb has no-sense in the sentence. <i>He <u>desterday</u> up because he was studying.</i> - Lack of accuracy in the verb meaning for the sentence. <i>Last night, a boy <u>is studying</u> History.</i> - Extra or wrong article/determiner used. <i>The boy was studying History at <u>the</u> night.</i>
Discourse	-Run-ons	- Non-sense. The sentence cannot be understood. <i><u>They four-five past eight o'clock bus school.</u></i>

Figure 3. Adapted error types categories and examples
(Ferris, 2006; Qi & Lapkin, 2001)

To answer the fourth research question, the conversations had in stage 2 were used to collect the data. Sentences in bold are those said by the researcher, underlined sentences those by the children. The following examples serve to illustrate the answers:

1. *Individual low achiever:*

- **Why is *ten past-half* wrong? Do you know?**
- It is half past ten.
- **Yes, but why? Can you explain it?**
- [No answer]
- **The order is wrong, it is half-past ten. Do you understand?**

2. *Individual average achiever:*

- **The mistake is in the boy *go* to school. Do you know why?**
- No.
- **I am sure you know.**
- Ah yes, the boy goes to school because it is "he".

3. *Individual high achiever:*

- Teacher, I did not use the past.
- **You are right. The verbs have to be in the past tense because you are telling something which happened in the past.**

4. *Collaborative low achiever:*

- **Why is it *studying* and not *estudying*? Can you tell me?**
- I not know. *Estudying*.
- ¿Por qué no está bien?

5. *Collaborative average achiever:*

- **Do you go *in bus* or by bus?**
- In bus, no?
- No Inma! By bus, by car...on foot!
- Is true

6. *Collaborative high achiever:*

- Teacher the past of catch is caught!
- Yes, we thought it was catch, catch, catch.

4. RESULTS.

4.1 Differences in text 1 and text 2.

After the collection of the writings and their correction, the frequencies of errors in each narration were counted and proportioned with simple percentages so they could be compared. As shown in figure 4, in the pre-test a total of 156 errors were found. A week after receiving the DF in stage 2 and after being asked to try to explain the mistakes, participants were able to change 95 errors out of the total 156 which makes up the 60,9 % of the total errors. The remaining 39,1% refers to errors which the students could not change and were present again in their writings. From the pre-test results, it can be seen that the learners were able to incorporate some of the marked errors; students took advantage of the feedback provided thus it can be said that differences among texts 1 and 2 are found. It is quite evident

the fact that differences in the groupings and proficiency levels affect the results. This issue will be addressed in the following research question.

4.2 Individual vs collaborative writing and types of groupings.

Figure 5 is an expansion on the data collected in stages 2 and 3. On it, the average and total errors made per grouping on the proficiency levels can be observed. Those data were also expressed in terms of uptaken and unchanged errors with simple percentages. If we have a look at Figure 4, we find the participants were able to uptake the 60,9 % of corrected errors whereas the remaining 39,1% were unchanged. Taking this into account, it is found that participants who wrote individually could only uptake the 50,6 % of the errors, being clearly under the average percentage and having a higher percentage of unchanged errors. However, participants grouped in pairs and engaged in the collaborative task were able to uptake the 69,9% of the mistakes, a 9% more of uptake compared to the individual writings. Something surprising to be remarked is the fact that pairs made 1,7 mistakes more than the individual grouped students but were able to uptake a higher amount of errors. After the analysis, the results conclude that pairs benefit more from the feedback than individuals.

Grouping		Explicit correction	<u>Uptaken</u>	Unchanged
I N D I V I D U A L	Low	13	3 (23,1%)	10 (76,9%)
		12	4 (33,3%)	8 (66,7%)
	Average	16	6 (37,5%)	10 (62,5%)
		11	7 (63,6%)	4 (36,4%)
	High	9	7 (77,7%)	2 (22,3%)
		12	10 (83,3%)	2 (16,7%)
P A I R S	Low	21	11 (52,3%)	10 (47,7%)
		16	8 (50%)	8 (50%)
	Average	16	14 (87,5%)	2 (12,5%)
		8	5 (62,5%)	3 (37,5%)
	High	13	12 (92,3%)	1 (7,7%)
		9	8 (88,8%)	1 (11,2%)
TOTAL ERRORS		156	95 (60,9%)	61 (39,1%)

Figure 4. Errors after pre- and post- tests for each participant.

Grouping	Explicit correction	Uptake	Unchanged
INDIVIDUAL	12,1	6,1 (50,6%)	6 (49,4%)
PAIRS	13,8	9,6 (69,9%)	4,2 (30,1%)

Figure 5. Average errors per writing on both groupings./

Grouping		Explicit correction	Uptake	Unchanged
INDIVIDUAL	Low	12,5	3,5 (28%)	9 (72%)
	Average	13,5	6,5 (48,1%)	7 (51,9%)
	High	10,5	8,5 (80,9%)	2(19,1%)
INDIVIDUAL ERRORS		36.5	18.5 (50,6%)	18 (49,4%)
PAIRS	Low	18,5	9,5 (51,3%)	9 (48,7%)
	Average	12	9,5 (79,1%)	2,5 (20,9%)
	High	11	10 (90,1%)	1 (9,9%)
PAIRS ERRORS		41.5	29 (69,9 %)	12.5 (30,1%)

Figure 6. Average errors per proficiency levels and groupings.

We should also distinguish between high, average and low-achievers. Figure 6 reports data according to proficiency levels and groupings. As said before, the individual grouped participants made an average of 12,1 errors in each writing. Having a look at the different proficiency levels, we can see that the low proficiency students made 0,4 more errors than the average and were only able to uptake 3,5 errors (28%); the average individual proficiency group made 1,4 more errors than the average and one error more than the low achievers but they were able to uptake a higher amount of errors, 6,5 errors (48,1%); finally, the high achievers in the individual grouping reported 1,6 less errors than the average (2 less than the low proficiency students and 3 less than the average students in the individual grouping) and were able to uptake 8,5 errors (80,9%). Regarding the proficiency levels in the pairs groupings, we find that the average number of errors made were 13,8. The low proficiency students engaged in the collaborative task made 18,5 errors, 4,7 more than the average in this group and 6 more errors than the low proficiency students in the individual groupings but, however, they could uptake 9,5 errors (51,3%). As for the average proficiency students, they made a total of 12 errors per writing, 1,8 less errors than the global average in this type of grouping and 1,5 less than the average proficiency students in the individual group. They could also uptake 9,5 errors (79,1%), 3 more than the average in individual writing. Finally, the high achievers in this group made 2,8 less errors than the average of the pair writing group and 0,5 less errors than the high achievers in the individual group. However, high achievers in the collaborative task were able to uptake 1,5 more errors (90,1% against 80,9 %).

To conclude, the data revealed that all of the groups and the proficiency levels benefited from the provided feedback because of the revision of their writings. Nevertheless, it can be found that some particular groups take more advantage. The proficiency levels which really benefited from the groupings are the low and average achievers in the collaborative task; an improvement in the number of errors uptaken can be observed.

4.3 Error categories intake.

The third research question addressed error categories corrected in the second writing. On figure 7, the number of errors the participants made in each category can be seen. The individual low proficiency participants had most of the errors in run-ons; the individual average students made most errors in verb tense and prepositions; finally, high achievers in the individual groupings were mostly wrong in sentence structure.

ERROR TYPES	INDIVIDUAL						PAIR						TOTAL ERRORS	
	Low		Average		High		Low		Average		High			
	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post	Pre	Post		
Sentence structure	4	2	2	2	6	2	3	0	3	0	0	0		
Word choice	0	0	3	2	2	0	7	2	3	2	5	0		
Verb tense	3	2	4	2	6	0	3	0	2	0	7	1		
Verb form	0	0	2	2	2	0	5	3	0	0	0	0		
Articles/determiners	0	0	3	1	2	1	0	0	2	0	4	1		
Spelling	2	1	3	1	0	0	5	5	5	3	4	0		
Run-ons	15	12	3	1	1	0	12	7	1	0	0	0		
Subject-verb agreement	0	0	3	0	1	0	1	1	5	0	0	0		
Prepositions	1	1	4	1	1	1	1	0	3	0	2	0		
TOTAL ERRORS	25	18	27	14	21	4	37	18	24	5	22	2	156	61
AVERAGE ERRORS	12,5	9	13,5	7	10,5	2	18,5	9	12	2,5	11	1	78	30,5

Figure 7. Number of errors per categories

ERROR TYPES	INDIVIDUAL			PAIR			
	Low	Average	High	Low	Average	High	
Sentence structure	50%	0%	66%	100%	100%	-	63,2%
Word choice	-	33%	100%	72%	33%	100%	67,6%
Verb tense	33%	50%	100%	100%	100%	86%	78,2%
Verb form	-	0%	100%	40%	-	-	46,6%
Articles/determiners	-	66%	50%	-	100%	75%	72,7%
Spelling	50%	66%	-	100%	40%	100%	71,2%
Run-ons	20%	66%	100%	42%	100%	-	65,6%
Subject- verb agreement	-	100%	100%	0%	100%	-	75%
Prepositions	0%	75%	0%	100%	100%	100%	62,5%

Figure 8. Percentages of uptake per categories

* No errors found in categories marked with -.

Regarding error categories mostly uptaken by the participants, the findings were as follows. Although low proficiency students in the individual group had difficulties with run-ons category, they were not able to uptake those corrected mistakes. The categories they improved on were sentence structure and spelling (uptaking the 50% in both). The average participants, who had problems with verb tense and prepositions, improved in prepositions and subject-verb agreement categories. Finally, the individual high achievers had most of their problems with sentence structure and verb tense, however, they were successful in five categories, uptaking 100% of the errors. As for the paired writings, low achievers, although they had most of the problems with run-ons, they were able to uptake 100% of errors in sentence structure, verb tense, spelling and prepositions categories. The run-ons category could only be reduced in 42%. The average proficiency children, who struggled with spelling and subject-verb agreement, could improve in 100% sentence structure, verb tense, articles-determiners, run-ons, subject-verb agreement and prepositions. The errors in spelling and word choice categories were, however, improved to a lesser extent (40 and 33%).

The findings revealed that the most uptaken error categories were; (i) verb tense (78,2%), (ii) subject-verb agreement (75%), (iii) articles/determiners (72,7%), (iv) spelling (71,2%), (v) word choice (67,6%), (vi) run-ons (65,6%), (vii) sentence structure (63,2%), (viii) prepositions (62,5) and (ix) verb form (46,6%). It can be concluded that all of the participants (except for the individual low and average students) benefited from the feedback in what verb tense concerns. Individual average and high and paired high proficiency students could uptake 100% of the subject-verb errors. As for articles and determiners, only average and high achievers engaged in the collaborative writing could exceed the average percentage. The spelling category was uptaken to a greater or lesser extent by all the groups, something which is surprising since the low and average individual students uptook more spelling errors than the average paired. In word choice category, only high achievers of both groups were able to uptake all the mistakes; even low achievers in the paired writing could uptake more errors than the average in both groupings. Regarding run-ons, all the average and high proficiency learners benefited from the feedback; low achievers were able to improve to a lesser extent. However, there is an uptake difference of 22% in individual and paired low proficiency levels. As for sentence structure, all of the groups but individual average students showed improvement, standing out low and average proficiency students in the paired group. With respect to prepositions, the paired students uptook all of their errors but individual low and high achievers were not successful. Finally, referring to verb form, only individual average and high and low paired had problems with this category but only the individual high category was able to change their errors.

It can then be said that children mainly incorporated categories related to form; verb tense (78,2%), subject-verb agreement (75%), articles/determiners (72,7) and spelling (71,2%). In what lexical categories respect, only high achievers were able to uptake 100% of the errors. Finally, as for discourse, average proficiency students in both groups and individual high proficiency showed a remarkable improvement. Besides, as seen on figure 8, although there was an overall improvement in the revised texts for all the levels and groupings, those who benefited more were the paired group, specially, low and average achievers with an uptake of 100% in most of the categories.

4.4 Languageing.

From the conversations had with the participants, it can be seen that low achievers could not provide any solid explanation. They repeated what was written but were not able to give any reasons. As for average achievers, the individual group was able to provide answers but with the researcher's prompt. However, in the collaborative group, one of the participants was not able to see the error but the other gave her partner the right explanation. Regarding high achievers in both groups, they were able to provide reasons by seeing the marked errors.

5. DISCUSSION.

The main purpose of this study was to examine the effects of DF and MF on Spanish EFL primary students' written productions. The main findings were:

- The participants took advantage of the feedback; errors in text 2 were reduced compared to those in text 1.
- All the groups benefited from rewriting the text, however, participants engaged in collaborative writing had fewer errors than individuals. Proficiency influenced the results and low and average achievers in the collaborative writing showed a greater improvement.

- The categories the participants mainly incorporated were those related to form; verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles/determiners and spelling.
- Only average and high proficiency participants were able to provide explanations about the errors.

The results of both pre- and post- tests echo those of the studies reviewed. Our findings support those by Bitchener *et al* (2005) who found that the feedback provided had a significant effect on accuracy (Bitchener *et al*, 2005); the participants were able to reduce the errors they made in stage 3. Qi & Lapkin (2001) results also coincided with those reported; overall, the results have shown that a three-stage L2 writing task may contribute to the improvement of L2 writing (Qi & Lapkin, 2001). However, the results reported by Robb *et al* (1986) contradict our findings. They came up with the conclusion that direct methods of feedback do not tend to produce results commensurate with the amount of effort required from the instructor to draw the attention to surface errors. (Robb *et al*, 1986). Collaborative writing was found to be more successful than individual writing. Storch (2005) found out that that pairs produced shorter texts, but with greater grammatical accuracy and linguistic complexity. Collaborative writing also allowed students to give and receive immediate feedback on language (Storch, 2005). The findings by Ferris (2006) can be confirmed with the results from our study to some extent. In Ferris' (2006) study, the participants showed improvement in verb tense, verb form, subject-verb agreement and sentence structure (Ferris, 2006). However, our results claimed that the main categories incorporated were verb tense, subject-verb agreement, articles/determiners and spelling, only coinciding in verb tense and subject-agreement. This could be due to the nature of the prompts used. Finally, the fourth finding was related to the explanations the students were able to provide of their corrected mistakes. As previously stated, only average and high achievers were able to provide consistent explanations, confirming Swain *et al* (2009) findings; there was a positive relationship between the quantity of students' languaging and their ability to correctly identify the voice of a sentence and provide reasons (Swain *et al*, 2009).

6. CONCLUSIONS.

The reported research results coincided with the findings of previous studies and revealed that (i) Primary EFL children benefited from receiving DF and the subsequent languaging when writing the second text. The findings also suggest that, (ii) although all the groups and proficiency levels benefited from the feedback, participants ascribed to the collaborative writing group, specially, low and average proficiency ones took a greater advantage of the feedback. Furthermore, the study proved that (iii) students *selected* certain categories to uptake; categories related to form were the ones the participants could better uptake. Finally, (iv) not all the participants were able to give metalinguistic explanations for the errors; only a part of the collaborative writing group -average and high achievers-. Thus, this research has offered evidence that this type of feedback can make a great impact on students' written output and that it is useful to improve grammatical accuracy.

Several implications can be drawn from the results reported and discussed. The first one is the need of introducing the provision of feedback, giving our students the opportunity of revising their productions and learning from their own mistakes. As the main gains were found in form, this type of feedback would be useful to pay attention to grammatical aspects. Along with the implications would be the fact that collaborative writing grouped students showed a greater improvement so, the need of collaborative work in class is compelling since changes in the students' output will be real. Besides, the use of collaborative writing forces students to negotiate meaning and includes two points of view which are enriching for the both the task and the children.

Despite the benefits the use of DF and MF entail, there are some limitations which should be taken into consideration for future studies. Regarding the methodology, a larger sample and statistical data treatment would provide the study with more representative results (Coyle & Roca de Larios, 2014). Also, the need of a longitudinal study or a delayed post test revealing more useful data in which the effects of short-term memory were reduced. Apart from that, including a control group with no feedback would provide more realistic results.

7.APPENDICES.

Appendix 1. Prompt and template



Skills Builder for Young Learners: Flyers 1 (Gray, 2000)

Name _____

Individual

Pair

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