



**Faculty of Education**

**English Department**

**Self-Study: How am I incorporating the formative assessment process in the EFL  
classroom to achieve written accuracy?**

**A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree Seminar and  
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### **Abstract**

The study aimed to reflect on how I have been incorporating corrective feedback on language accuracy in the EFL classroom with 7th graders. To further explore the research question, I designed qualitative research that included three key instruments: (1) journal entries from the practicum experience, (2) focus group interviews with the students, and (3) an observation chart with the perspective of the guide teacher. The data was analyzed through qualitative research and deductive coding. The study showed that although the feedback was present in all my classes, it was always focused on the correction of grammar mistakes. Correcting and focusing on grammar features may not be the best approach and might depend on what stage or level of production the students have. In the meantime, the focus should be on expressing meaning, paying attention to key mistakes that with time could become fossilized if not paid attention to. This study showed that although feedback is present in most of the classes, there was a need to discuss with the students and reach an agreement on which is the most suitable feedback. The findings made me aware of elements of the teaching practice that need to be further developed to ensure student's progress in learning.

## **1. Introduction**

This self-study research aims to investigate my experience with formative assessment and feedback concerning grammatical accuracy in written production. This self-study intended to analyze my understanding of the concepts mentioned and how formative-assessment processes were included or avoided in my practicum as a pre-service teacher.

### **a. Context**

Due to Covid-19, there were numerous changes in methodologies and strategies in EFL classes, such as monitoring the students during in-class activities. Many of these changes continue to be present, as students show a tendency to expect a faster work pace and activity-led classes. The students and the teachers grew accustomed to the use of digital platforms in learning the language. While teaching online lessons, teachers could hardly see the students' progress, therefore, their opportunities to provide feedback were limited. In that sense, writing skills were absent in the classroom, so students hardly produced texts which did not allow for the teachers to focus on their learning process holistically. Productive skills were neglected since the focus was on grammar exercises that were not connected to the unit material, this way students had a difficult time acquiring an accurate use of the language. This dichotomy represented a severe challenge in my teaching practice when schools returned to face-to-face classes.

The main goal is to move back to a classroom focused on learning while closely monitoring their progress with the appropriate time for students' production of the language and feedback from the teachers. By going back to face-to-face classes, methodologies changed, and with that the further incorporation of assessment in language learning. Assessments such as diagnostic tests are learner-centered, offering opportunities for students to get involved in their learning process, as well as providing the teachers with valuable information about their progress when acquiring the language to incorporate in the classroom

(Chen & Fox, 2017). This can be of utmost importance when returning to traditional classrooms since it can provide us with information on the difficulties students may encounter when returning to their classrooms. According to the Ministry of Education [MINEDUC] (2019), there are three fundamental principles to keep in mind when returning to face-to-face classes. Firstly, the prioritization of the learning objectives that were implemented during the pandemic, secondly, a diagnostic period in which students return to the school and teachers assess the impact online learning had on the students, and finally, using the evidence gathered to make decisions on how to move forward with the learning objectives. In the case of my practicum, the school did not provide a diagnostic assessment to further understand the student's abilities and starting point of learning after the online lessons ended and the impact this could have had on the students learning. By overlooking the diagnostic tests there was also a disregard for the student's weaknesses and strengths, there were expectations for the students to perform equally when there was no certainty that they can perform the tasks successfully. When there is an omission of the student's weaknesses and strengths, there is also an omission of their needs and what they require to scaffold the learning process.

#### **b. Motivation**

The practicum center of this study is a private school located in downtown Santiago where students start language instruction at an early stage, from kindergarten through the twelve years of school. I worked with students from 7th grade who have demonstrated interest in learning English, inside and outside of the school. The students make comments about their interest in learning English and their fears of writing and making mistakes. Although they are interested in learning and try to use the language as much as they can, they are self-conscious of their weaknesses when expressing themselves in English. Therefore, I believe that in the writing process we must start with controlled practice paying close

attention to accuracy to avoid the fossilization of mistaken grammar structures. Once the students have learned the grammar structures, their purpose, and the overall language functions and their use, they may feel more confident when writing, decreasing the instances where they second guess themselves, and delivering more clearly what they want to express. Although the students are provided with instances in which they can express themselves in English where the communicative purposes of language are the primordial aspect of the task, there are numerous mistakes made that can affect the clarity of their speech.

As stated above, among their many resources, the students have the possibility of working with computers in the classroom, which I believe can speed up the writing process as well as hinder it. Since their first resource is to use a translator, the students rarely write, therefore, their writing is not authentic which can frustrate the feedback process when teachers attempt to correct their work. As a practicum teacher, I presented this issue to the main teacher. In consequence, the use of technological resources has decreased rapidly. The students have not used computers or translators in the writing process, which has allowed me to see their authentic proficiency level. I have noticed that students often confuse tenses and make errors in Subject-Verb Agreement and prepositions, despite minor mistakes in spelling or lack of vocabulary.

Although this is a private school, and they are not obligated to include all of the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) requirements, they have to guide their work through guidelines such as the one provided by Decree 67. Decree 67 emerged from the need to present guidelines for the schools on how to conduct formative assessments in the classroom, providing equal opportunities for summative and formative assessment, as well as including instances for feedback. In addition to what we learned in the university program about the importance of providing appropriate instances for feedback, these practices are reinforced by what we see as teachers in training from our practicum center teachers. All things considered,

teachers are meant to reflect on what they see and hear, which is why reflecting on the student's learning process and how as teachers we address their needs is crucial to our development as pre-service teachers and the students we are supporting.

Nowadays, students are going back to their classes, but the issue continues. There are little to no instances of formative assessment and receiving feedback on their work. This year, the teachers from the school have planned no more than two summative tests through Google Forms, and the feedback from those two tests remains unknown as their grades are delivered through online platforms. Additionally, in these tests, there were no writing skills items, so these are neither taught nor assessed. After the students manifested that they would like to know what answers were incorrect and how to improve to avoid these mistakes, the teacher ignored these requests and argued that receiving their marks should be enough. Teachers also argue that there is no time to give personalized comments to each student and that they must move on to the next project or assessment. Among these teaching beliefs, teachers also have the idea that students are not interested in learning. They believe that students usually misbehave in classes because they are unmotivated, which is why teachers have concluded that students do not want to learn, and we should do all we can to keep them engaged in the activities, any attempt to change these dynamics will result in misbehavior from the students.

### **c. Rationale**

The main reason that motivated this study is that as a practicum teacher I observed a lack of formative assessment and feedback the students were receiving. This raised the question of whether I have included these in my teaching practice and provided corresponding feedback to my students throughout the lessons, specifically on writing accurately according to grammar rules. Given the circumstances that students learn the use of the language in the classroom to practice in the English computer lab, I found it necessary to

pay close attention to grammar errors so that when they have to produce written text for their tasks, they can feel more comfortable and surer that they can achieve the task independently, especially without using a dictionary. Understanding the use of the language and participating in controlled practice activities are part of the beginner stages of writing and equally important as the writing itself. Additionally, the school project mentions that students should participate actively in the learning of the language, and they should try to do their best. Regardless, there is a lack of practice in writing skills where mistakes could become fossilized if not corrected or paid attention to. For the students to be able to express meaning and do so accurately, we must pay attention to both aspects of the language equally, however, each is worked with greater or lower intensity depending on the stage the students find themselves in. If we refer to students who are in the beginning stages of the language, there are aspects of the accuracy and the use of language that carry more importance than others. Being able to express meaning is an aspect of language that students can acquire implicitly by practicing, while accuracy is an aspect of language functions that are more explicitly talked about.

## **2. Literature Review**

### ***2.1 The Writing Process***

In the Chilean EFL context, there are numerous definitions of what the writing process involves. For instance, Nunan (2003) defines classroom writing as a cyclical process and a product, where the writer, depending on the desired outcome, will organize their ideas, create drafts, edit, and read until reaching an expected goal. Providing instances for the students to improve will “encourage the idea that learning to write is more than creating a final product; it is the learning of a series of skills leading to that product” (Nunan, 2003,

p.96). The National Curriculum (2016) reinforces this idea that the process is more important than the final product. Students can discover and develop writing strategies, which might include reviewing their mistakes and learning from them. The idea is that students learn a long-term ability in writing which is why in the early stages it is common to encounter mistakes. Nunan (2003) mentions a type of writing called freewriting, which would be the final stage of writing production, where students can write on any topic of their interest, “this writing exercise is intended to make students comfortable with the act of writing, and less afraid to make errors and experiment with ideas” (p.90). Additionally, writing practice can also present diagnostic feedback that helps learners improve their linguistic accuracy at every level of proficiency. Contrastingly, students who are in the beginning stages of writing may need more guidance to participate in freewriting, which is why in the post-stage of the class, we must scaffold the process by first providing controlled and semi-controlled practices. This way, students will have a guide and implicitly learn tenses and grammar rules so in the future they will be able to write on their own. It is also of great importance to motivate our students to learn through writing, if they believe the activities or tasks are not meaningful to them students may approach the tasks without much care. This may result in a lack of motivation while being inattentive to mistakes or monitoring of their progress (Carson, 2001 as cited in Myles, 2002). If as teachers, fail to pay attention to those mistakes, they can become fossilized errors that can be problematic in the learning process (Myles, 2002). This being the case, oral feedback would seem more suitable for fluency mistakes since it does not address fundamental or structural errors. While it could also provide helpful conversations with the students to discuss their mistakes, written feedback would appear to be more appropriate for accuracy mistakes as it can allow teachers to explicitly correct the student's mistakes. Although there is no better approach, each case should be assessed by the teachers and more importantly guided by the student's needs. Nonetheless, Harmer (2008) states that this writing

process might be too time-consuming and could have some resistance from the students. To avoid this unwillingness, Harmer (2008) suggests that we should engage the students in writing activities that are enjoyable for the students to participate in so that writing becomes a common practice in the classroom and gives the students a sense of achievement. Being exposed to a variety of texts can help strengthen learning since the brain recognizes patterns acquired by writing in these new contexts. In other words, “as children learn a second language at school, they need to learn both the variety of language that children use among themselves (and in informal settings with familiar adults) and the variety that is used in academic settings” (Lightbown & Spada, 2006 p. 31). Additionally, Broughton et al. (2002) mention another limitation when teaching writing in the EFL classroom which is that “no composition in school is likely to be truly free” (p. 118). Nonetheless, in the early stages, “there is a tendency to emphasize accuracy at the expense of the fluency which can add genuine pleasure to the process of composition” (Broughton et. al, 2002, p. 130). This would be one of the most significant challenges when teaching writing, it can become a common element when teaching writing where teachers focus on one aspect more than the other when there should be a balance of both aspects to develop the skill successfully.

## **2.2 Feedback:**

Writing is never taught alone, to assess our students’ progress we need to understand what feedback entails. Numerous authors (Brookhart, 2018; Reitbauer et. al, 2013; Hattie & Temperley, 2007; Marzano, 2010) have pointed out the importance of feedback in the classroom. In addition, feedback is defined by Graham et al. (2015) as “the critical element in effective formative assessment, as it provides information that is used by students to improve their writing or learning” (p. 526). Similarly, Hattie and Temperley (2007) state that feedback is information provided by the teacher, peers, or student itself, which can be used to understand, change, and reflect on student performance. These authors also propose three

main questions related to feedback: Where am I going? How am I going? and where to next? Additionally, Chen and Fox (2017) support this idea by saying that feedback needs to follow a set of rules: clear, focused, applicable, and consistent. The authors also mention that it should increase self-reflection as well as autonomy. Moreover, Avilés and Flores (2019) present an important issue regarding feedback in the Chilean context and is that keeping in mind that Chile is considered a low-proficiency country, being in the 45th position in the worldwide classification (Education First English Proficiency Index 2017), it can be concluded that students would benefit from receiving feedback. The feedback process would provide the students with key information about their progress and learning experiences while delivering strategies to improve and move forward in their learning process (Olivares, 2021). Therefore, feedback would be necessary because it can allow teachers and students to identify how much they have learned and what should be done to improve and reach the learning goal.

On the contrary, Bonnie Schwartz (1993) (as cited in Lightbown & Spada, 2006) states that “instruction and feedback change only superficial aspects of language performance and do not affect the underlying systematic knowledge of the new language” (p. 105), arguing that interacting in the language should trigger on its own the acquisition of language structures. That being the case, this could mean that students would be presented with more opportunities to practice writing in the language, however, this may not always be the case and it can depend on the lesson goal. Ortiz (2016) mentions that in Chile, English teachers tend to provide feedback and corrections on all aspects of the written production, making it difficult for the students to pay attention to more than two or three grammatical errors. In the same manner, Vagen (2017) stresses that feedback “should be about the particular qualities of his or her work, with advice on what he or she can do to improve and should avoid comparisons with other pupils” (Black & Wiliam, 1998 as cited in Vagen, 2017, p. 12). In

other words, it should be concise and work to reach a specific goal. Moreover, Binu (2020) believes that when providing feedback to students, it is necessary to pay attention to how they incorporate the feedback into their writing, the author believes that feedback can only be useful if the students reflect and act on said feedback (p.1). Feedback is a process deeply connected with critical thinking, encouraging the students to analyze their work to improve their problem-solving skills, and promoting creativity and communication along the process. Bearing in mind previous statements by the authors, the feedback provided by the teachers should encourage these aspects of critical thinking to improve their language accuracy as well as their abilities to express meaning in a foreign language.

All these definitions work towards a common understanding that feedback must be available to students and that it should not harm the process of learning. A crucial part of the formative assessment process is that feedback must have comments, suggestions, and opinions on how students can improve their work. Because “grades and scores alone, without comments and other feedback, reduce to almost nothing the linguistic and cognitive performance data available to the student” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 41). Only providing a letter or a number, as a result, would not help the students to reflect on their language learning process, and they would be motivated by the final grade, not by the learning process itself. Nowadays, the “use of the standardized test for gatekeeping purposes can lead students to focus on simply gaining an acceptable score rather than improving language abilities” (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2010, p. 40). This only proves the urgency to incorporate instances in the classroom to provide feedback and constantly check on the student's progress, to naturally promote the learning of the language by motivating the students based on their abilities, not on a final grade.

Although there are numerous benefits to user feedback in the classroom, Hattie and Temperley (2007) suggest, “students may abandon goals and thus eliminate any gap, and this

often leads to nonengagement in the pursuit of further goals" (p. 87). Accordingly, Binu (2020) mentions that not providing feedback to the students may be just as harmful as only providing a grade, this is because they may feel that their efforts are not recognized or that they may feel neglected. Lastly, Vagen (2017) provides suggestions to follow when giving feedback to students, especially if it is written feedback. This should be done with a respectful and positive tone, to be descriptive using clear vocabulary, students should have time in the classroom to work on the feedback, and this should focus on the task rather than the student themselves. However, there are numerous arguments (Truscott, 1996; Cohen & Bobbins, 1976; Frantzen & Rissel, 1987) as to why providing feedback is far more complicated. The time and resources available for the teachers, the inaccurate use of formative assessments, and even if students are exposed to enough feedback is not a guarantee that their learning abilities might improve or that the students will be more motivated to learn.

### ***2.3 Feedback on grammar accuracy:***

Feedback can be focused on numerous elements of the process of learning a second language, to complement the information concerning feedback and writing skills, the focus of this study was grammar corrective feedback, which is focused on grammar production and written accuracy. Simply put "corrective feedback is defined as a teacher's indication given to students in order to let them know that their written work contains errors" (Lightbown & Spada, 1999 as cited in Sermsook et. al, p. 44). Errors such as struggling to find the right words to express our ideas, transfer errors caused by the interference of the first language, overgeneralizing grammar rules, among others that can become common in the classroom. There are several types of grammar corrective feedback, the most common are explicit correction, recast, and metalinguistic clues (Tedick & de Gortari, 1998). In short, in corresponding order their definitions would be:

Indicating that the student's utterance was incorrect; the teacher provides the correct form, the teacher implicitly reformulates the student's error, or provides the correction; without providing the correct form, the teacher poses questions or provides comments or information related to the formation of the student's utterance (Tedick & de Gortari, 1998, p. 3-4)

This is where feedback on written skills becomes crucial to the development of the students' abilities. Several factors need to be considered because the effectiveness of the feedback will depend on the "students' motivation, their current language level, their cognitive style, the clarity of the feedback given, the way the feedback is used, and the attitudes of students toward their teacher and the class (Ferris, 1997; Goldstein, 2001; Omaggio Hadley, 1993 as cited in Myles, 2002, p. 12). Myles (2002) also presents the idea that "without individual attention and sufficient feedback on errors, improvement will not take place" (p. 14). To ensure that feedback is clear and understandable for the students, the elements previously mentioned should be taken into consideration when providing feedback, and see how each of those components can affect the correction of the student's work, their motivation, the achievement of a task, and the overall progress they may make in the learning of a second language.

In terms of how to conduct the feedback, there is a wide range of theories of what works best. Sermsook et. al (2017) suggests that praising the students can soften what might come off as criticism, and it can also improve students' motivation and teacher-student relationships. These authors also mention the use of oral feedback and its effectiveness since it offers opportunities to clarify doubts with ease (Sermsook et. al, 2017). A study conducted by Sohmani and Tayebipour (2015) showed that there was a "significant difference between written and oral feedback so, it can be said that written and oral feedback was differentially effective" (p. 1606). One of the theories the authors had is that "they paid more attention to

what the teacher said, not what she underlined in their essays” (p. 1608). Furthermore, Guadu and Boersma (2018) state that one of the challenges teachers must face is the limited time they have to attend to their student's needs and that “the allotted time for the course is not adequate to assess students with a variety of tasks and to use the feedback from the assessment to shape teaching” (p. 48).

In contrast, in a study conducted by Semke (1984), the results showed that “corrections do not increase writing accuracy, fluency, or general language proficiency and they may have a negative effect on students’ attitudes” (as cited in Ashoori Tootkaboni & Khatib, 2014, p. 35). Additionally, Reitbauer et. al (2013) mentions that “Truscott questions the effectiveness of correcting grammatical errors in students’ writing on the grounds that, according to him, there is no evidence that correcting grammatical errors actually results in an improvement in accuracy” (p. 58). Nevertheless, feedback should be given considering all factors and more importantly, the context and the student’s needs will determine whether the feedback is given written or orally, in the classroom or through online platforms as well as how much feedback needs to be given for it to be understandable by the students. Even though there is no clear evidence that feedback will improve the accuracy or proficiency of the language, that should not be enough reason to avoid providing students with strategies and helpful comments on how to make progress in their language learning process.

#### ***2.4 Formative Assessment:***

Assessment refers to “all those activities undertaken by teachers, and by their students in assessing themselves, which provide information to be used as feedback to modify the teaching and learning activities in which they are engaged” (Black & William, 1998 as cited in Chen & Fox, 2017, p. 1). According to experts from Vanderbilt University, Graham et. al (2011), including formative writing assessment as part of classroom instruction enhances

students' writing. "The positive effects of formative assessment occur when teachers or peers provide students with feedback about their writing or the learning of a particular writing skill, students are taught to assess their own writing, and teachers monitor students' progress" (Graham et. al, 2011, p.17). The students should reflect on their writing and their progress in learning as much as teachers do, this is why formative assessment processes are highly valuable for the learning of a second language.

Furthermore, these authors present a crucial point in developing accurately the formative assessment process in the classroom because "practice in a classroom is formative to the extent that evidence about student achievement is elicited, interpreted, and used by teachers, learners, or their peers, to make decisions about the next steps in instructions" (Black & William, 2009 as cited in Chen & Fox, 2017, p. 4). Therefore, teachers should make use of the feedback delivered to the students, whether it is to make decisions about further tasks or to help the students achieve a learning goal, yet, teachers usually do not promote reflection of the students' understanding by moving on from one task to the other. Reflecting on the student's progress and their errors is essential to making progress since "it builds metacognition as it involves students understanding the standards expected of them, in setting and monitoring their own learning goals, and in developing strategies for working towards achieving them" (Chen & Fox, 2017, p, 6). Likewise, Broughton et. al (2002) suggest that assessment in language learning can help teachers determine "what kind of errors are occurring, what malfunctioning of the systems there may be" (p. 158). This type of assessment is defined as diagnostic where its main purpose is to "reveal an individual's strengths and weaknesses, and it is therefore likely that it will have to be fairly comprehensive and devote special attention to known or predicted areas of particular difficulty for the learner" (Broughton et. al, 2002, 159). Formative assessment in the classroom should promote teaching self-reflection to the students, deep analysis of our

teaching practices and the student's work, and a scaffolding of the learning goals so that students can move on to the next stages of learning.

Even though formative assessment is necessary for the classroom, there are several challenges teachers face when implementing it. For example, “how are formative assessment and formative feedback going to fit into a very full curriculum and a very full schedule?” (Irons & Elkington, 2021, p. 9). Not to mention the pressure this can have on the teachers working with more than 40 students per class, making good use of the time as well as answering administrative demands (Irons & Elkington, 2021). Additionally, another pressing issue with incorporating formative assessment into the EFL classroom is that students may not always recognize this as a helpful tool for their learning process (Tunstall & Gipps, 1996 in Irons & Elkington, 2021). To ensure that students feel motivated when participating in formative assessment instances inside the classroom, Vagen (2017) suggests that “assessment will be the most effective when pupils can receive feedback that is matched to their individual needs” (p. 28). Understanding that not every form of assessment and feedback might work for every student, providing a wide variety of instances for metacognition can be key to motivating students to participate. As well as exposing them to different assessment strategies that can be encountered in other academic settings. Nevertheless, Vagen (2017) presents a step-by-step for working with formative assessment, aspects that teachers must keep in mind when designing their lessons:

First, it is a prerequisite that the pupils understand what they are supposed to learn and what is expected. Hence, it is reasonable for the teachers to present goals and criteria. Second, pupils need to receive feedback that gives information about the quality of their work. Third, pupils need to be given advice on how to improve. Fourth, through actively taking part in the

assessment process, the pupils might be in possession of increased knowledge of what to learn and how they learn (p. 25).

Finally, teachers must reflect on their role, values, and beliefs about teaching and language assessment. Although there is no perfect methodology, there are guidelines to help teachers include formative assessments in their classroom as well as the feedback given to the students (Chen & Fox, 2017).

### ***2.5 Decree 67:***

Decree 67 defines assessment as a fundamental part of teaching because it allows teachers to collect valuable information regarding the progress of the student's learning, which is essential to guide them throughout the process of learning English (MINEDUC, 2018). The document also mentions that assessment in the classroom is not restricted to a type of situation, methodology, strategies, techniques, or instruments (MINEDUC, 2018). Additionally, the Decree focuses on the formative assessment, its importance, and how to implement it in the classroom. One of the purposes of formative assessment is to monitor and support the student's learning by obtaining evidence of such, interpreted by teachers who then decide what are the next steps in the learning process. Under this definition, Decree 67 states that formative assessment should be predominant in the classroom to reflect on the progress of learning (MINEDUC, 2018).

Furthermore, Decree 67 states that assessment itself should be instances that promote learning and that motivate students to keep learning (MINEDUC, 2018). Likewise, it is expected that teachers contemplate actions to monitor the process, progress, and achievements of learning with the students, to reflect and make the appropriate decisions (MINEDUC, 2018). Formative assessment instances must be included in the lesson plans, and the monitoring of learning achievements is systematically incorporated into the teaching practice (MINEDUC, 2018). Decree 67 provides specific guidelines for each type of school

to promote the changes needed for better education in Chile, keeping in mind the resources available, teachers, students per class, and the workload the teachers have. Feedback is understood as an essential part of any assessment process. This means ensuring that students have access to information on their learning process that might help them achieve their learning goal or even beyond. It also means that teachers must go in-depth and reflect on how the teaching practices influence the student's learning process.

### **3. Research question**

How am I incorporating the formative assessment process in the EFL classroom to achieve written accuracy?

### **4. Research Methodology**

The research aimed to explore whether I have included formative assessments and provided corresponding feedback to my students throughout the class, specifically on written production and writing accurately according to grammar rules.

The research question intended to reflect on my teaching practice in providing specific feedback to the students on their written work regarding the use of tenses. I aspired to understand and compare the student's experiences during the EFL classes with my thoughts and opinions. Therefore with the input from the guide teachers and the students, I decided to use qualitative research since "it is used to understand people's beliefs, and experiences, attitudes, behavior, and interactions" (Pathak et. al, 2013, p.1), which helped me get a better understanding of the student's opinions of the teacher-student interactions and the overall experience of receiving feedback during the lessons. With a qualitative approach to the research, I can look at the 'how' and 'why' of certain phenomena in this context (Phúc, 2014), in the particular case of this research, to become more aware and reflect on the way I have been providing feedback to the students. With this approach, I will be able to collect

opinions and reactions from the students, useful commentaries from the guide teacher, and a deep self-reflection. To ensure that the study is accurate I used triangulation “because the information draws on multiple sources of information, individuals, or processes” (Cresswell, 2018, p. 259) which ensured that the research was accurate and trustworthy.

**a. Data collection tools**

The instruments I used to collect my data are (1) Journal entries on my experiences as a practicum teacher, (2) Focus groups with the students I have been teaching at my practicum center (7th graders) to manage the student’s opinions. I conducted primarily semi-structured focus groups which allowed me to be more flexible and to ask clarifying questions if needed (Mertler, 2017) and provide fixed questions that guided the conversation, and finally (3) Class observation by the guide teacher.

Firstly, I included extracts from a thesis journal (See Appendix A) with my experiences as a practicum teacher, to expand the information about the context, its limitations, and personal impressions on the development of feedback given in the class. According to Farrell (2018) “teaching journals provide teachers with a written record of various aspects of their practice, such as classroom events, and enable them to step back for a moment to reflect on their work” (p. 2). The journal entries are good opportunities for reflection on our teaching practices and “by reflecting not only on observations but also the feelings and interpretations associated with those observations” (Mertler, 2017, p. 138). The entries were written after each lesson and as Farrell (2018) describes, this is a more delayed reflection, called “reflection-on-action”, where teachers reexamine the interactions with the students. The journal entries were open, there were no guiding questions, however, it focused on instances from the classes regarding the feedback provided to the students.

The second instrument was a focus group (See Appendix B) with students 10 from the 7th grade. Morgan and Spanish (1984) define focus groups as “audio-taped small discussion

that explores topics selected by the researcher” (p. 254). I conducted a primarily semi-structured focus group where I was able to be more flexible and ask clarifying questions if needed (Mertler, 2017) and provide fixed questions that guided the conversation. Cohen, Manion, and Morrison (2007) agree that “group interviewing can be useful with children, as it encourages interaction between the group rather than simply a response to an adult’s question” (p. 374). According to Morgan and Spanish (1984), focus groups “offer the chance to observe participants engaging in interaction that is concentrated on attitudes and experiences which are of interest to the researcher” (p. 259). This offered genuine information from the student’s perception of my development as a teacher and in the incorporation of the formative assessment processes. The focus group acknowledged their concerns and opinions while generating “data and insights that would be unlikely to emerge otherwise” (Frechtling, 2002, p. 52). Mertler (2017) also suggests that “when conducting a focus group interview, it is important to ensure that each participant is provided with the opportunity to speak” (Mill, 2011 as cited in Mertler, 2017, p. 136). Therefore, my role as a researcher when conducting the interview was to present the participants with the questions and to encourage all students to express their opinions. Finally, due to the school’s schedule, most students were not available to participate in the focus group, therefore, the participants were not selected but I worked with the students available.

Finally, the class observation from the guide teacher (See Appendix C) helped me get insights from an outside perspective to analyze if feedback is present in my classroom practices. Observations can help to “collect data on a wide range of behaviors, to capture a great variety of interactions, and to openly explore the evaluation topic” (Frechtling, 2002, p. 53). Due to time constraints and the schedule of the school, there were few instances for the guide teacher to assess, which is why a semi-structured was the best fit. As defined by Mertler (2017) “Semi-structured observations allow the practitioner-researcher the flexibility

to attend to other events or activities occurring simultaneously in the classroom or to engage in brief but intense periods of observation and note taking” (Hubbard & Power, 2003 as cited in Mertler, 2017, p. 131). In this case, the guide teacher observed the teacher-student interactions assessing whether specific criteria taken from the literature review have been included in the feedback. For this, the guide teacher will be given an observation table (See Appendix C) to register what they observe for three classes and to take additional notes if necessary.

**b. Data analysis approach:**

To make the connection between the findings of the research and the literature, I will use a coding system. According to Cresswell (2015), “coding is the process of analyzing qualitative text data by taking them apart to see what they yield before putting the data back together in a meaningful way” ( p. 156 as cited in Elliott, 2018). Creswell (2007) notes that "codes can emerge in response to not only expected patterning, but also what you find to be striking, surprising, unusual or conceptually captivating" (p. 153 as cited in Hedlund-de Witt, 2013, p. 3), this helped to keep an open mind for secondary findings or topics that emerged from the student’s opinions.

For the analysis approach, I will analyze the data collected using the instruments previously mentioned and keeping in mind the literature reviewed. I will use a deductive approach. According to Linneberg and Korsgaard (2019), “this approach helps focus the coding on these issues that are known to be important in the existent literature” (p. 13). Additionally, during the coding process, the frame could be adjusted if interesting discoveries emerge that are not captured by the preexistent codes (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019). Finally, to analyze my instruments, I used the following codes: 1) Feedback focused on grammar accuracy, 2) Language used in the feedback, 3) Teacher’s suggestion for

improvement 4) Explicit correction 5) Recast 6)Metalinguistic clues 7) Tone used by the teacher 8) Opportunities for improvement 9) Positive reinforcement.

## **5. Research Findings**

This study investigated how I have been incorporating feedback on language accuracy inside the EFL classroom. This section is devoted to the outcomes of the research along with the interpretation and implementation of the research tools.

### **Findings**

The findings revealed that although I am dedicated to giving feedback in the classroom, complying with most of the elements presented in the literature when comparing the data, the student's opinions lightly differ from this statement. They expressed that they would like more opportunities for general feedback while using implicit correction of their work. The main finding was that although I provided feedback in my classes, there were specific factors present in the data. There was a predominant use of oral feedback, an absence of a clear method or preference when providing feedback, as well as a disagreement in the instruments on suggesting strategies to the students for the improvements of their written skills. In addition to these primary findings, the students expressed a preference in terms of the designated language when providing feedback and a preferred method that adapts to their needs.

#### ***a. The delivery of the feedback***

The data analysis showed that there is a clear focus on grammar accuracy when providing feedback. In the journal entries there were corrections of the use of prepositions, possessives, and Present/Past Perfect, where students said, "*Will they play basketball on tomorrow*", "*I put stethoscope in he's chest*", "*I have had stomachache*", respectively. However, most of the students agreed that although the focus is on grammar accuracy, they would prefer general feedback that focuses on all aspects of language rather than tenses

accuracy. The guide teacher also mentioned in additional notes of the observation table that providing general corrections will give students time to adjust to new teaching practices by stating “*una vez que sepan cómo entender y utilizar la retroalimentación, nos podemos enfocar en aspectos específicos*”. I slightly disagreed with this statement because feedback should go from specific feedback to a more general approach, which is the way it was addressed.

***b. Feedback being delivered written or orally***

There was a clear consensus among the data collected that there was a higher presence of feedback being delivered orally, this was mainly due to the lack of student notebooks, if there were worksheets available, there was written feedback as well for the students to study afterward. Additionally, the students did not find one option more useful or practical than the other. All three instruments agreed that most of the time the feedback was presented orally, and students and the guide teacher made no additional comments. It was evidenced in the journal entries that oral feedback was predominant, for instance, “*I first asked him if he wanted to write a question, if not, then he needed to make the first adjustment*”. In the three journal entries, there is evidence of conversations with the students because oral feedback allows for rich discussions in which the teacher can better understand the thought process of the student.

***c. Providing strategies and suggestions for improvement***

According to the students and the guide teacher, I rarely provided strategies or suggestions on how to improve, when asked about it the students expressed a desire to get advice or suggestions on how to improve their writing by saying that “*nos gustaría que nos diera consejos para mejorar solos*”. However, this criterion was present in the journal entries providing tips to remember key information on tenses and to check the resources available,

for example in Journal entry n°3 I suggested to the student that “*if he was unsure about how to say certain phrases that he could check the material again or look in a dictionary*” as well as reminding the students to rely on each other for support. It is expected for the students to ignore these aspects of a lesson, especially when in the lessons teachers usually focus on giving marks and providing the correct answers. There is a lack of feedback and formative assessment in the classroom, so students are not used to receiving comments on their work and learning strategies to improve on their own.

**d. *The language used to provide feedback***

A primary finding that emerged from the focus group with the students is that they expressed a concern related to the language used in the feedback saying that feedback should be in English and Spanish for better understanding and to avoid confusion, most of the students of the focus groups said: “*si me lo explica en español lo puedo entender mejor porque cuando habla en inglés no le entiendo nada*”. This was not present in the journal entries nor the observation table, however, it is a crucial finding to improve future teaching practices, paying close attention to the student's needs and interests could improve their attention to self-correct mistakes as well as their interest in learning.

**e. *Type of feedback***

In terms of feedback correction, there were mixed opinions among the instruments. According to the observation provided by the guide teacher, metalinguistic clues showed the most presence in the classroom. Nevertheless, this type of feedback was present in only one journal entry where I wrote “*I suggested that he take a second look at his writing and see if he could find out what was wrong*”, encouraging the student to reflect on their work to not rely too much on the teacher's correction. In the two remaining journal entries, I used feedback explicitly informing the students their writing contained mistakes, for example, “*I*

*taught him that we use on when it is a specific day*". There seems to be a great discrepancy between what the guide teacher observed, my reflections on the teaching practice, and the student's responses. The students did not identify any type of feedback correction in the classroom, but they expressed preferences towards metalinguistic clues and recast, where the majority of the students mentioned that they prefer when the correction is not direct because they feel upset when teachers tell them they are wrong. Students said "*lo importante es que nos diga cómo podemos mejorar para así no depender siempre de los profesores*", others agreed by stating that "*si me ayuda a corregir yo solo mis errores, me siento más autónomo e independiente*". These students' opinions would indicate that metalinguistic clues and implicit corrections were not present in the classroom at all.

***f. Teacher's attitude towards feedback***

Regarding the attitude of the teacher towards feedback, the three instruments agree that I used respectful tones when providing feedback, the students highlighted my patience and my kind words. In connection to the criteria of positive reinforcement, there was explicit interaction by praising the student's work, this was supported by the guide teacher's observation, and the students also recognized the teacher's sayings such as "very good" and "excellent work" to encourage those students who struggle with their work. In relation to the opportunities for improvement, the students said that "*si no entiendo lo que me dice, se queda conmigo hasta que entienda*" and "*explica muy bien, es muy simpática y amable para enseñar, pero a veces quedo más confundido, sobre todo si me habla en inglés*". Another factor that was mentioned in the focus group is that I avoid comparison among students "*no nos compara, pero si nos dice que nos ayudemos entre todos, que así podemos juntar todo lo que sabemos*", nevertheless, in the journal entries this was not explicitly shown. This could be because it is an implicit practice or at the moment of writing the entries, it was not relevant to the research.

In response to the research question, the conclusion is that there is an implementation of feedback that follows certain criteria to ensure that the students are not discouraged from learning, and there is a respectful tone and a dedication to helping them reach a better understanding of the language. In contrast, the student's opinions could be interpreted as a lack of feedback that responds to their needs and interests, which raised a higher interest in improving their proficiency in the language that at the beginning of the year was being dismissed.

## **6. Discussion**

The finding showed that feedback is usually focused on grammar accuracy when developing written skills, and the feedback was mostly delivered through oral comments and conversations with the students. Although the students expressed a preference for how they would like the feedback to be delivered, the data did not show a predominant methodology used when providing the feedback. The three instruments disagreed when defining which method was used the most; however, there seemed to be a lack of implicit correction as well as metalinguistic clues, which would suggest that explicit correction was the most present in the classroom. Regardless, the use of respectful tones, positive reinforcement, encouraging words, and a dedication to explaining and ensuring that the students understand the feedback, were present in the instruments.

Although there is not a consensus on how and when feedback should be delivered, especially what feedback should address, there is a common understanding of certain aspects feedback should include. Throughout the research it has been mentioned that feedback should not aim to compare the students, it must have a clear purpose, whether it is focused on accuracy or meaning, and it should promote self-reflection for the students to be able to self-correct their work. Students and teachers must understand how much the students have learned and how students can improve in their learning process. Another important discussion

is if feedback is effective in improving the proficiency of the students. On the one hand, Truscott (1996) finds questionable the idea that correcting grammatical errors will be more effective, arguing that there is no evidence of the accuracy improving (as cited in Reitbauer et. al 2013, p. 58). Likewise, Hendrickson (1978) highlights the belief that “producing errors is a natural and necessary phenomenon in language learning” (Corder, 1967; Grittner, 1969; Chastain, 1971; Holley & King, 1974; Gorbet, 1972; Dresdner, 1973, Dulay, 1974; Gorbet, 1974; Burt, 1975; Krashen & Seliger, 1975; Valdman, 1975; Hendrickson, 1977b; Lange, 1977; Lantolf, 1977; and Terrell, 1977, p. 390). On the other hand, Ferris (1997) argues that feedback focused on grammar correction allows students to develop their writing and for the teachers to help them when learning a second language (as cited in Leaph, 2011).

Furthermore, it is crucial to inform the students about their weaknesses and strengths in the language, guiding them through the process of acknowledging their own mistakes to improve future writing assessments (Burksaitiene, 2012; Crook, 1998; Hargreaves, 2013 as cited in Pérez & González, 2018). Nevertheless, if as teachers we do not pay attention to those errors, they can become fossilized and, in the future, could be problematic for the student's communicative intentions (Myles, 2002). After the acknowledgment of these errors, it should follow the presence of strategies and suggestions for improvement, whether it is accompanied by the teacher or the students by themselves. Promoting instances for correction can offer opportunities to better scaffold the process, always considering that feedback should be followed by instances for the students to use the teacher's comments and suggestions.

Students showed an inclination to have more instances for improvement in the English classroom, and more importantly a motivation to learn how to improve on their own.

Although errors are a natural phenomenon, teachers must pay attention to the student's errors, and teach them how valuable it is for them to increase their self-reflection as well as their autonomy. Despite that, as Ortiz (2016) mentions, providing feedback on all aspects of

written production could be counterproductive because of the attention span of the students and their ability to analyze their work. Particularly in this context where students are not used to receiving any form of feedback, and in the case of this research where the focus is grammar accuracy. Focusing on too many elements may confuse the students and diminish the opportunities in which the teacher can dedicate time to the class to explain and ensure that students understand the feedback given. These corrections may only come across as criticism and one of the most fundamental characteristics of feedback is that it encourages students to improve and only correct their work, it should not be a criticism to them as a person. This was tightly connected with the preference of the students to not be directly corrected but to be implicitly corrected or by the use of metalinguistic clues because “if we allow time and provide appropriate cues for the learner to self-repair, more often than not the student will come through” (Tedick & de Gortari, 1998, p. 5).

After careful analysis, I realized that correcting written mistakes to achieve grammar accuracy may not always have the expected outcome, sometimes “tolerating some oral and written errors help learners communicate more confidently” (Hendrickson, 1978, p. 390). I strongly believe that if my students are confident and sure of themselves, they will be able to express themselves clearly and intelligibly. Consequently, I will promote more formative assessment instances in the classroom for the students to improve their written performances, however, in terms of feedback on grammar accuracy, as Ferris (2003) mentions sometimes what is preferable is not what is most effective, and what works for some students it might not work for others (as cited in Leaph, 2011). In future practices, I will be more careful in paying close attention to grammatical mistakes and not enough attention to the ability of students to express meaning intelligibly, providing opportunities to also express themselves freely.

## **7. Research Implications**

The research findings can lead to several implications for my future teaching practice. This research helped me to better understand my teaching persona and my beliefs concerning my relationship with my students. Being aware of their needs, interests, and doubts can be a key aspect of the way we conduct our classes. Despite the content we need to teach, I believe there is an urgency to pay attention to our context and more importantly to our students, their struggles, their achievements, and their progress. Concerning the findings, asking our students what their preferred approach to receiving feedback is just as important as our diagnosis of their mistakes, especially if they are not used to being aware of these issues. I consider it highly important to dedicate time in the classroom to talk about feedback or formative assessment processes that can help the students move forward.

This self-study research allowed me to reflect deeply on my teaching practice, focusing on the way I give feedback to the students to improve their grammar accuracy in written production. For instance, the findings revealed that feedback practices were present during my lessons, despite having an over-use of oral feedback, the corrections included motivation for the improvement of the written skills as well as positive reinforcement and encouraging words. These corrections followed implicit protocols for teachers when providing feedback, such as correcting only those aspects that are relevant to the task while also suggesting strategies to move forwards. Nevertheless, these corrections usually ignored the student's demands, mainly because before conducting this research, their interest in learning was obscured by a need to fulfill academic schedules. This intensified my interest to improve and learn methodologies and strategies used in the classroom to promote language learning in a manner that is close to the students and that they can understand. In some cases, paying too much attention to language mistakes can deviate attention from the content and the overall organization of a written text. The National Curriculum (2016) stresses the importance of offering communicative opportunities for our students which is why we need

to devote time for the students to experience the language in a controlled but also natural environment. Students will only learn to write through writing and as teachers, we need to provide enough opportunities for our students to practice, reflect on the process, and learn from their own experiences.

The main limitations during the research process were the design of the instruments for the collection of the data as well as the proper setting to implement them. The schedule of the school and the time available to conduct the research interfered with the implementation of the focus group because I had available students who were free after a test, this limited their concentration which consequently limited the time spent in the focus group. Students often drifted off, talked about personal issues, or joked around, despite being reminded that this interview required seriousness. Additionally, the focus group had mainly closed questions which could have restricted the answers of the students, however, at the moment it was the best option to gather concrete information from the students and to avoid bringing up irrelevant information. Moreover, I believe they could not fully understand the questions and interpreted them as something they would like to see in the classes rather than something that is implemented in daily practice.

In addition to limitations regarding the schedule of the school is that it shortened the amount observations provided by the guide teacher, the number of classes a week, and opportunities for the implementation of the observable lessons were limited to one which is not enough to gather relevant information and to recognize a pattern in the methodologies and strategies used during the lessons. This also caused a discrepancy with the design of the observations which were more of a quantitative approach while there was only one class available to be observed. In addition to the lack of classes available for the implementation of instruments, the journal entries were also greatly affected since there were not enough instances to have a written document.

## **8. Conclusions**

The study aimed to reflect on how I have been incorporating corrective feedback on language accuracy in the EFL classroom with 7th graders. To further explore the research question, I designed qualitative research that included three key instruments: (1) journal entries from the practicum experience, (2) focus group interviews with the students, and (3) an observation chart with the perspective of the guide teacher.

The study showed that although the feedback was present in all my classes, it was always focused on the correction of grammar mistakes. Correcting and focusing on grammar features may not be the best approach and might depend on what stage or level of production the students have. In the meantime, the focus should be on expressing meaning, and paying attention to key mistakes that with time could become fossilized if not paid attention to. This research helped me understand that there is a need for balance among the elements needed for developing written skills. Learning grammar rules and key elements of the language should be followed with time for the students to express themselves. Students want to learn, they demonstrated a desire to improve, to be independent and autonomous when using the language. If as teachers we do not take the time to get to know their fears and struggles, the goals would be hard to reach. This filled me with the desire to be a better teacher, to learn how to help them learn, and to be aware of practices that are often taken for granted, but if well developed, could help the students reach greater things.

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## Appendix A

### Journal entry n°1

In 7th grade, the students are working on a role-play regarding body parts and medical/hospital vocabulary, because of this there has been more written production instances. Simultaneously, the students are learning to use Will to make predictions of the future. This has been beneficial not only because I believe they need to practice for the final work but also because it has allowed me to further diagnose their writing abilities. With the team of pre-service teachers, we are reviewing chunks that may be useful for them, however, when they get to the semi-controlled portion of the class, they often get distracted and rarely listen to the instructions. In any case, this has benefits because it has allowed me to correct these mistakes before they become fossilized. The students had a very good reception to the feedback comments and continued to ask throughout the class if their work was correct, to which I told them they were doing an excellent job and gave them tips on how to improve without relying only on my comments.

For example, the students had to write an example following a structure, the example given by the teacher was:

**Will they play basketball on Monday?**

The student wrote:

**Will they play basketball on tomorrow**

I first asked him if he wanted to write a question, if not, then he needed to make the first adjustment, which was to change the order of the words to **They will play basketball on tomorrow**. Then I taught him that we use **on** when it is a specific day, and in the case of his example, it was not needed.

### Journal entry n°2

The students have started writing their dialogues for the role play which is the final assessment so for the past few days I have been focusing on giving feedback to the students on their writing. They were given a list of chunks and videos with common phrases to create their dialogues, however, some mistakes have been made.

For example, one student wrote

*-put stethoscope in he's chest*

I suggested that he takes a second look at his writing and see if he could find out what was wrong. He said he knows *he's* is wrong but he couldn't remember how to say it correctly. I reminded him of the possessive pronouns, and we corrected the sentence together.

put **the** stethoscope in **his** chest

He then told me he was afraid to ask the teacher because he felt he should have known this. I told him that although he should remember this because it will be useful in the future, making these mistakes are common and it could happen to everybody, even native speakers. I encouraged him to keep trying with the next sentences and to ask me or their classmates if he had any more doubts. On the one hand, I was glad that the student confided in me and trusted me to tell me he was ashamed and that he felt safe asking for help. On the other hand, it is frustrating seeing that students could continue to make mistakes just because they are afraid to admit they are wrong. They should feel comfortable enough in the classroom to ask the teachers for directions on how to improve their work.

### Journal entry n°3

The students have continued to work with their dialogues and today I worked with the second group of students. They were various discussions going on in the classroom, so I initially thought that they were not working so I started checking their progress. I noticed that one of the students wrote this dialogue:

*-what are your symptoms?*

*-I have had stomachache*

I indicated to him that in English we usually don't say "I have had stomachache" and I corrected his work by rewriting "I have a stomachache" to what the student replied by writing what he had initially. He said that that is what he wanted to write and that he only needed help with spelling, and that I should leave the rest of the work as it is. I apologized to him and explained that it was not all that clear what he wanted to say and if he could explain it, he then confessed that he was using a translator and that is why he was so confident in his sentences. I suggested to him if he was unsure about how to say certain phrases that he could check the material again or look in a dictionary because translators do not understand what we want to communicate and sometimes people as it happened to me, could get confused and not understand him.

## Appendix B

### Focus group:

Se entenderá por retroalimentación a los comentarios, sugerencias, correcciones hechas por la profesora en práctica durante las horas de clase. Estos pueden ser orales o escritos.

Lo que haremos durante este grupo focal es que yo les haré unas preguntas y ustedes deben responder lo más honestamente posible. Cualquiera de ustedes puede responder las preguntas, no hay un orden específico, pero la idea es que hablen todos los participantes del grupo.

En el contexto de las clases de inglés:

- ¿Crees que yo promuevo oportunidades para practicar escritura en inglés? ¿Te gustaría que hubiera más actividades para practicar?
- ¿Qué tan frecuentemente yo les entrego retroalimentación en su escritura por las actividades hechas en clases?
- ¿Les gusta que les corrijan lo que escriben o que les entreguen sugerencias sobre cómo mejorar? ¿Preferirían que les enseñe a corregir su propio trabajo?
- ¿Creen que pueden confiar en mí para recibir consejos o ayuda sobre cómo mejorar su escritura? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Creen que podría haberles dado más retroalimentación durante las clases? ¿Por qué?
- ¿Es fácil entender la retroalimentación que les entrego? ¿O a veces les confunde aún más? - ¿Creen que ofrezco oportunidades para aclarar dudas sobre la retroalimentación?
- ¿Prefieren que la retroalimentación sea en inglés o en español?
- ¿Prefieren recibir retroalimentación sólo de los errores o también les gustaría recibir comentarios sobre lo que hicieron bien?
- ¿Creen que uso un tono respetuoso y positivo para dar la retroalimentación?
- ¿Les gusta recibir retroalimentación sobre errores específicos? Por ejemplo, sobre Presente Simple
- ¿Les gusta recibir retroalimentación sobre errores en general?

## Appendix C

### Observation

Criteria	Statements	Always	Sometimes	Never
Delivery of the feedback	The teacher's feedback focuses on grammar accuracy			
	The teacher delivers feedback orally			
	The teacher gives feedback in writing			
	The teacher suggests strategies to improve			
Types of corrective feedback	The teacher explicitly indicates the writing contains mistakes			
	The teacher implicitly reformulates the mistakes made by the students			
	The teacher formulates questions to give clues/comments related to the correction of the mistake			
Teacher's attitude towards feedback	The teacher praises the students correct work			
	The teacher offers opportunities to clarify doubts about the feedback			
	The teacher avoids comparison among students			
	The teacher uses a respectful and positive tone when giving feedback			