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**DIRECT CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON  
ENHANCING WRITING SKILLS AMONG  
LOWER SECONDARY EDUCATION STUDENTS  
AT A PUBLIC INSTITUTION IN ZUMBA**

**RETROALIMENTACIÓN CORRECTIVA DIRECTA  
PARA MEJORAR LAS HABILIDADES DE ESCRITURA  
EN ESTUDIANTES DE EDUCACIÓN SECUNDARIA INFERIOR  
EN UNA INSTITUCIÓN PÚBLICA EN ZUMBA**

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## Direct Corrective Feedback on Enhancing Writing Skills Among Lower Secondary Education Students at a Public Institution in Zumba

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### ABSTRACT

This action research assesses the effectiveness of direct corrective feedback (DCF) on enhancing writing skills among lower secondary education students at a public institution in Zumba during the 2024-2025 academic year. It was focused on four stages: planning, acting, developing, and reflecting. The research instruments used to collect data were a pretest, posttest, questionnaire, and field notes. Both tests were employed to measure students' knowledge on writing skills before and after the action process. Meanwhile, the questionnaire and field notes documented students' perceptions towards DCF. The participants of this study were 26 lower secondary students. They were chosen by convenience sampling. The results demonstrated that DCF helps learners to identify mistakes, which leads them to improve their writing production and become competent language users in terms of writing. Future research should incorporate large samples in order to generalize results.

**Keywords:** active writers, identification of mistakes, feedback, rewrites, writing production

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# **Retroalimentación Correctiva Directa para Mejorar las Habilidades de Escritura en Estudiantes de Educación Secundaria Inferior en una Institución Pública en Zumba**

## **RESUMEN**

Este estudio de investigación acción evalúa la efectividad de la retroalimentación correctiva directa (RCD) en la mejora de las habilidades de escritura entre los estudiantes de educación secundaria inferior en una institución pública en Zumba durante el año académico 2024-2025. Esta investigación se centró en cuatro etapas: planificación, actuación, desarrollo y reflexión. Los instrumentos de investigación utilizados para recopilar datos fueron: un pretest, posttest, cuestionario y notas de campo. Ambas pruebas se emplearon para medir los conocimientos de los alumnos sobre habilidades de escritura antes y después del proceso de acción. Mientras tanto, el cuestionario y las notas de campo documentaron las percepciones de los estudiantes hacia la RCD. Los participantes de este estudio fueron 26 estudiantes de secundaria inferior, seleccionados por muestreo por conveniencia. Los resultados demostraron que la RCD ayuda a los estudiantes a identificar errores, lo que mejora su producción escrita. Futuras investigaciones deberían incorporar muestras más grandes para poder generalizar los resultados.

**Palabras clave:** escritores activos, identificación de errores, retroalimentación, reescrituras, producción escrita

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## INTRODUCTION

This research focuses on the use of direct corrective feedback to enhance the writing skills of tenth graders. Providing feedback to students in order to help them improve their writing practice is a regular action by teachers. It is useful because it is a tool that enables learners to identify mistakes in any part of their writing performance. This allows them to correct punctuation, vocabulary, grammar, or language use; this contributes to enhancing the writing performance leading students to get a good quality of writing. In today's world, writing effectively in English has become a necessary skill for learners and professionals (Ahmad, 2020). This is particularly true in countries where English is not the official language, but it is used in some important contexts such as academic and professional ones. Referring to the Ecuadorian context, it is indispensable to remark that English is a mandatory subject. For this, the Ministry of Education (MinEduc) has created some specific standards to ensure that learners learn properly and achieve some specific English levels. In fact, lower secondary students are expected to be able to write simple sentences and paragraphs using basic words and expressions, as well as achieve an A2.1 English proficiency level (MinEduc, 2016).

However, in Ecuador the students from lower secondary education do not have a good basis of English, therefore they struggle with the development of the writing skill, even though it is established in the National Curriculum for English as a Foreign Language (EFL). This curriculum is focused on helping students from the tenth grade achieve the required English level established by MinEduc and improve their writing performance (MinEduc, 2016). This group of learners deals with different writing aspects which block them from producing effective writing activities. They struggle with this productive skill for some reasons. Wondim et al. (2024) mention that writing is a complicated cognitive task as it requires the mastery of multiple language skills, such as organization, grammar, and idea clarity. Because of its complexity, many learners find it difficult to master. They also state that personal interests and educational experiences can impact students' writing production. Indeed, the lack of the development of writing activities affects directly to the mastery of students' writing skills. It is evident that as much students write, as better writers they become. What is more, Masrul et al. (2024) posit that the lack of feedback on writing performances constitute the one of the main obstacles for students to



carry out good writing practices. In fact, when feedback is offered to the students, they have plenty of opportunities to master the writing skills at their pace.

Based on the previous information, this research work emphasizes on the incorporation of direct corrective feedback (DCF) as a solution to enhance students' writing skills. DCF has been considered as a valuable strategy to improve learners' writing performances; this has been demonstrated by various researchers. Anggunsari and Wahyuni (2023) found that DCF helped learners to enhance their writing productions since they were precise when using the language to get accurate written works. They demonstrated that students who developed writing with DCF obtained better learning outcomes than the ones of the control group. Furthermore, Agustiningasih and Andriani (2021) demonstrated that DCF was a useful strategy that allowed the creation of comfortable learning settings for learners which led to significantly improve their writing productions. Additionally, Kara and Abdulrahman (2022) found that DCF is effective as it enabled learners to identify and recognize written mistakes and correct them. It gave them chances to enhance their performances in their writings. Overall, these authors postulate that the incorporation of DCF during the English lesson to enhance the writing production is undoubtedly necessary and effective due to the fact that it provides students with corrections on their mistakes. It permits them to express better their ideas on writing tasks.

Lastly, this research study is directly focused on the academic context. In this sense, the general objective of this research work is to enhance writing skills through direct corrective feedback among lower secondary education students at a public institution in Zumba. The main research question of this research work is: How can direct corrective feedback enhance writing skills among lower secondary education students at a public institution in Zumba? From it, two specific questions arise (a) What is the effectiveness of direct corrective feedback on enhancing writing skills among lower secondary education students? What are the students' perceptions when receiving direct corrective feedback to enhance their writing skills? Direct corrective feedback is a powerful tool to promote effective writing practices as it provides students with plenty of opportunities to personalize their learning and optimize the learning process; guaranteeing in this way the development of good writing products.



## METHODOLOGY

The approach of this research was a mixed method because it enabled to collect quantitative and qualitative data. The quantitative data was used to compare the scores of the students after and before the intervention. The study adopted an action research design. As described by Sáez and Cortés (2021), this research design aims to enhance educational practice through reflective cycles and can vary according to the predominant paradigm, ranging from technical to critical perspectives. The focus on the action research approach involved using a cycle that includes stages such as planning, acting, developing, and reflecting (Mertler, 2021).

This study used the action research cycle which consists of four stages: planning stage, acting stage, developing stage and reflecting stage (Mertler, 2021). In the planning stage, there has been identified the research problem, and a proposal focused on writing skills was carried out. It also involved the administration of the pretest to the sample under study which was chosen using the convenience sampling. This test was validated by four experts in the English language subject. Then, in the acting stage, the proposal was implemented throughout eight weeks. It comprised different writing activities where students received direct feedback using three types of correction such as cross-outs, rewrites, and additions. It was done to address the problem. Next, in the developing stage, the research instruments were administered to the population involved in the study to collect data regarding the intervention plan. Finally, in the reflecting stage, the gathered data was analyzed and discussed to assess the efficacy of the intervention as well as to write the respective conclusions of the research study.

The participants involved in this study were 26 lower secondary students. They were chosen by convenience sampling because the researcher had easier access to the institution (Creswell, 2012). They were between 14 to 15 years old. This group of students was immersed into direct corrective feedback. This study was conducted after getting the approval and informing the students that the collected information would be kept confidential and anonymous.

The collection sources and techniques used in this research work to collect data are described as follows. To gather quantitative data, the testing technique with the instruments of a pre-test and post-test were used.



It was with the purpose to determine the effectiveness that direct corrective feedback has over the writing skills. The pretest was administered at the beginning of the intervention plan and the posttest at the end of it. Both tests were applied to the same group of learners by the researcher in a controlled learning setting. Besides a questionnaire was applied in order to know the students' perceptions toward DCF.

The tests consisted of 4 questions each one had a score of 2.5. They evaluated vocabulary, punctuation, grammar and language use. Besides, the questionnaire had 8 statements design with the liker scale (disagree, neutral, and agree).

It is important to say that the researcher validated the instruments using construct and content validity. For content validity the research asked four experts in the area. Additionally, the Iken's V formula was applied using Jamovi, yielding a value greater than 0.7, which confirms the validity of the instruments.

## RESULTS

**Table 1** Pretest. Descriptive measures for writing skills.

Writing aspects	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Vocabulary (2,5)	26	0.96	0.692	0.00	2.50
Punctuation (2,5)	26	1.09	0.648	0.00	2.50
Grammar (2,5)	26	1.27	0.620	0.50	2.50
Language use (2,5)	26	0.79	0.764	0.00	2.00
<b>Total (10)</b>	26	4.12	2.031	0.50	8.00

Table 1 displays the scores of 26 students obtained in the pretest. The test was applied at the beginning of the implementation of the intervention plan. It was applied in order to measure the students' performance on writing skills (vocabulary, punctuation, grammar, and language use). As shown in the table, students got a mean score of 4,12 /10 (SD 2,031). As demonstrated before, the total mean score was low. Students' scores ranged from 0.50 to 8.00. Based on this critical situation, the teacher-researcher considered developing an action research study with this group of students with the purpose to help them to enhance their writing skills.

The lowest score obtained by the tenth grader students was on "language use" with a mean of 0,79/ 2,5 (SD 0,764). The range of the scores in this writing aspect was from 0 to 2 points, which reflects that any student got the maximum score of 2,5 points.



The aforementioned results show that students did not perform well in writing when using the language appropriately to communicate ideas naturally. Additionally, students got a mean score of 0,96/2,5 in the aspect of “vocabulary” (SD 0,692). That explains why students got scores from 0 to 2.5. This demonstrated that almost all students did not have a good vocabulary range to express ideas properly in written ways. It is relevant to indicate that nobody reached a score of 2.5 in the evaluated aspects of writing.

In “punctuation”, students got a total mean score of 1,09/ 2,50 (SD 0,648). Lastly, in “grammar” students achieved a mean score of 1,27/2,5 (SD 0,620). These results demonstrated that learners’ writing performance was a little better in both punctuation and grammar. Considering these results, it was determined that students need improvement in the four writing aspects.

**Table 2** Posttest. Descriptive measures for writing skills

<b>Writing aspects</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Min</b>	<b>Max</b>
Vocabulary (2,5)	26	2.25	0.255	2.00	2.50
Punctuation (2,5)	26	1.85	0.394	1.50	2.50
Grammar (2,5)	26	1.94	0.432	1.00	2.50
Language use (2,5)	26	2.27	0.291	1.50	2.50
<b>Total (10)</b>	26	8.31	1.158	6.50	10.00

Table 2 shows the results obtained in the posttest on writing skills (vocabulary, punctuation, grammar, and language use). The total mean score is 8,31/ 10 which is superior to the minimum level required for the MinEduc which is 7/10. The mean scores range from 6,50 to 10, which are better than those obtained in the pretest.

The lowest score was in “punctuation” with a total mean score of 1.85 (SD 0.394). The maximum score learners achieved in this aspect was 2.50, and the minimum score was 1.50. Comparing this result with the one gotten in the pretest, where the mean score was 1.09, it is crucial to postulate that students had a potential improvement in the use of punctuation marks within sentences. In fact, students become more capable of using the punctuation marks correctly to enhance the clarity of their writing activities. Referring to “grammar”, students achieved a mean score of 1.94 (SD 0.432). The maximum was 2.5, and the minimum was 1. This indicates a remarkable improvement in grammar, as in the pretest the mean score was 1.27.





This improvement indicates that learners have become more proficient in grammatical usage, applying correct grammar structures to make their written tasks more consistent. Considering this information, it is of paramount importance to highlight that the students showed better writing practice when building well-structured sentences which led to the creation of clearer and more effective conveyance of written information.

In terms of “vocabulary”, students achieved a mean score of 2.25 (SD 0.255). The maximum score in this aspect was 2.5, and the minimum score was 2. This indicates a significant improvement in vocabulary, as in the pretest the mean score of this aspect was 0.96. This improvement points out that learners have greatly enhanced their vocabulary usage, being able to use effectively a good range of words in their writing performances. These results reflect that the students increased their abilities to use different and precise vocabulary in their writing tasks with the aim of contributing to a richer and more expressive communication.

Lastly, in the aspect of “language use”, learners got a mean score of 2.27 (SD 0.291). The maximum score in this aspect was 2.5; meanwhile, the minimum score was 1.50. Compared to the mean score of the pretest, which was 0.79, this indicates that in the posttest students showed a considerable improvement in language use, which was the highest improvement among all aspects. This improvement suggests that learners have significantly enhanced their ability to use language effectively and appropriately. This collected data helped to determine that students increased their proficiency in constructing sentences that are grammatically correct, the ideas of the writing tasks are coherent, and show cohesion which enables them to create effective written performances.

Based on the previous results, it is evident that students got higher scores in the posttest; it is after they developed writing skills with the support of the DCF which is a powerful strategy to enhance their writing production. In fact, these results contributed to determining that DCF is effective to enhance students’ writing practice.



**Table 3** Normality test Shapiro Wilk-Pretest/Posttest writing skills

	N	Shapiro-Wilk	
		W	p
<b>Pretest (Total)</b>	26	0.952	0.252
<b>Posttest (Total)</b>	26	0.902	0.017

The p-values of the Shapiro-Wilk indicates that the results show that the  $p$  value for the pretest (0,225) is normal, and the posttest (0.017) is non normal. This justifies the use of a non-parametric test which is the Wilcoxon test for analyzing the differences.

**Table 4** W of Wilcoxon

			Statistic	p
Pretest	Posttest	W de Wilcoxon	0.00	< .001

Table 4 indicates that the p-value (0.01) which means the improvement observed in the posttest compared to the pretest is highly. This strongly suggests that the intervention had a positive effect on students' writing performance.

### Questionnaire Results

**Table 5** Frequency on statements of the questionnaire about students' perceptions on direct corrective feedback

STATEMENTS	Disagree	Neutral	Agree
The direct corrective feedback you receive facilitates your written production.	0 %	17 %	83 %
Direct corrective feedback helps you to learn from mistakes.	3 %	30 %	67 %
Direct corrective feedback permits you to identify writing mistakes easily.	0%	3%	97 %
When receiving direct corrective feedback, you have opportunities to internalize the correct use of language.	0%	27%	73%
Direct corrective feedback enables you to reduce grammatical mistakes in your written tasks.	7 %	13%	80%
You understand how to write better when applying cross-out on your written tasks.	0%	10 %	90 %

When the teacher rewrites your sentences, words or phrases, you successfully comprehend the grammatical structures and vocabulary usage in context.	0%	0%	100%
You understand word formation better when adding suffixes, prefixes or sentences when adding articles or prepositions.	4%	13 %	83%

Table 5 displays the results obtained from the questionnaire regarding the level of acceptance of direct corrective feedback on enhancing writing skills. These results are detailed below.

In the first statement, 83% of students agreed that direct corrective feedback facilitates written production. This suggests that most of students find this type of feedback useful for improving their writing ability. Meanwhile, 17% were neutral and 0% disagreed with this statement. It is supported by the information collected from the field notes which shows that students felt motivated and enthusiastic to develop writing activities after receiving DCF on their written tasks. It is that DCF helps students become active writers at the time they outperform their writing skills. Referring to the second statement, it indicates that 67% of students agreed that direct corrective feedback helps them to learn from their mistakes, while 30% remained neutral and just 3% disagreed. This indicates that while the majority see a clear benefit, there is a small portion that is not fully convinced. The data gathered from field notes helps to confirm this situation since it was noticed that learners had chances to identify mistakes and correct them by being cognizant about them by checking those mistakes to get readable pieces of writing. In statement three, it was found that 97% of learners agreed that direct corrective feedback makes it easy to identify writing mistakes. This shows a near-unanimous consensus on the clarity this type of feedback provides. Only 3% of students were neutral with this statement. These results were validated through the field notes which helped to determine that when students saw their mistakes highlighted in their written works, it was easy to correct them to get meaningful written tasks. Focusing on statement four, it is crucial to remark that 73% of learners agreed that direct corrective feedback helps them internalize the correct language usage. This suggests that most find this type of feedback effective in learning and remembering language rules. While 27% of them were neutral. In the field notes, it was pointed out that the positive impact of DCF enabled learners to recognize mistakes immediately as well as reinforce the correct use of the language in context.



Furthermore, in the statement five, it was reflected that 80% of respondents agreed that direct corrective feedback reduces grammatical mistakes in written assignments. This indicates that most of students see a notable improvement in their grammar thanks to this type of feedback. 13% were neutral and just the 3% of them disagreed in this criterion. These results were corroborated with the ones of the field notes which displayed that DCF increased students' motivation and confidence which lead to improve their knowledge in terms of grammar.

Regarding statement number six, it was found that 90% of students agreed that direct corrective feedback improves their understanding of how to write better, and 10% of them were neutral. This suggests that most of the students find that applying corrections helps them improve their writing. These results are supported with the ones of the field notes which permitted to notice that DCF contributes to helping learners improve their writing performance in general. It enables students to enhance their writing skills and to get fruitful written products. Besides, in the seventh statement, 100% of students agreed that rewriting sentences, words or phrases helps them to understand grammatical structures and vocabulary usage in context. This shows that DCF is effective in producing successful written tasks. Considering the results of the field notes, it is significant to remark that when students rewrote their tasks after receiving the DCF, they recognized their mistakes immediately and corrected them by following the correct grammatical patterns and selecting the proper words to communicate accurate ideas. Finally, in statement number eight, it was determined that 83% of respondents agreed that DCF helps them understand the formation of words and sentences by adding suffixes, prefixes, articles, or prepositions. 13% were neutral, and just a small portion 4% disagreed with this statement. This indicates that most of the students find this type of feedback useful for learning language structures. In the field notes, it was settled that DCF helped them to rewrite words by adding their correct prefixes, affixes as well as placing emphasis on the missing words such as articles or prepositions to create solid written products.

Overall, the results reflected in the questionnaire lead to the conclusion that direct corrective feedback is valuable for students for its effectiveness in improving their written production and language learning. Definitely, this kind of feedback is advantageous for students and the provided written corrections in their writing practice allow them to feel comfortable to express their ideas.



## DISCUSSION

In Ecuador, lower secondary students often struggle with writing, despite the EFL curriculum aiming for an A2 level (MinEduc, 2016). To address this, an action research study was conducted to evaluate the effectiveness of direct corrective feedback (DCF) on enhancing writing skills. The central question was: how can direct corrective feedback enhance writing skills among lower secondary education students at a public institution in Zumba?

Direct corrective feedback (DCF) enhances writing skills among lower secondary education students in Zumba by providing targeted guidance on their written work. This feedback helps students identify and correct mistakes in grammar, punctuation, vocabulary, and language use, leading to more accurate and well-organized writing. As students learn from their mistakes and apply corrections, they become more confident and proficient writers. The results of the study indicate that DCF is a valuable tool for improving writing skills and overall language proficiency. These results are corroborated by the results of Agustini and Andriani (2021) who revealed that direct corrective feedback had a positive impact on learners' writing ability since it made them feel comfortable during the instruction improving significantly their writing development. Also, Sahmadan (2019) showed that the incorporation of direct corrective feedback is better than the regular learning. This indicates that direct corrective feedback is useful to ensure better writing practice and to get confident language users in terms of writing performance.

### **What is the effectiveness of direct corrective feedback on enhancing writing skills among lower secondary education students?**

The results of this study indicate that there was a significant improvement on the students' writing skills after the intervention. This reveals that direct corrective feedback helped learners to enhance their writing skills. These results are similar to the ones obtained by Anggunsari, and Wahyuni (2023), who found that students improved their writing skills with an emphasis on accuracy, which indicates that learners were able to find and analyze some mistakes in their writings to create well design and organized written products. Additionally, and Sabarun (2020), indicate that students improved their writing performance specially in aspects such as grammar accuracy and organization.



### **What are the students' perceptions when receiving direct corrective feedback to enhance their writing skills?**

Based on the questionnaire responses and field notes, students expressed positive perceptions and attitudes towards DCF. They reported that this strategy helped them to boost their confidence during writing lessons. Moreover, students demonstrated a constructive attitude toward both giving and receiving feedback on their writing. Additionally, DCF allowed students to learn from their mistakes. It was evident that when they analyzed and corrected their mistakes, they became more focused and attentive while composing their sentences. This heightened awareness translated into more careful and deliberate writing. This information is reinforced by the results of the study developed by Syamsir (2016) who demonstrated that the application of direct corrective feedback enhances students' writing ability. It means that the implementation of DCF is definitely a great strategy to guarantee the development of students' writing skills.

Finally, students showed significant improvements in their compositions after receiving direct feedback. They not only put more effort into their writing but also actively applied the feedback to refine and enhance their writing process, resulting in better overall quality. These findings are strengthened by the ones demonstrated by Kara and Abdulrahman (2022). These researchers found that students improved their writing skills when they received direct feedback as it helped them to identify mistakes and learn from them. Undoubtedly, when students receive direct corrective feedback, they learn better how to use the language in written ways.

In summary, DCF positively impacted students' writing abilities, fostering greater self-awareness, engagement, and improvement in their work.

### **Alternative explanations of the results**

As the study shows that DCF enhances students' writing practice. Alternative explanations for the results must be considered. For instance, it is believed that during the instructional process the oral and personalize feedback and guidance given by the instructor could have influenced in the positive results obtained in their writing performances. Also, the development of independent writing tasks is another relevant point to refer to since as much students write as much better at this skill they are.



## Scope and limitations

This research work was focused on evaluating the efficacy of DCF to enhance writing skills in lower secondary students. One crucial point of this study is that it used quantitative research instruments which enable to collect numerical data regarding students' performances. However, the study had as significant limitation that is reflected on the size of sample. It indicates that the number of students involved in the study did not permit to generalize findings.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results, it can be concluded that direct corrective feedback is valuable for students due to its effectiveness in improving their written production and language learning. The feedback provided through written corrections in their writing practice allows students to feel more comfortable expressing their ideas. Each objective was met through the significant findings derived from the research results: The research demonstrated that direct corrective feedback significantly enhances students' writing skills by making it easier for them to identify and correct mistakes, ultimately leading to improved written production.

The majority of students perceive direct corrective feedback positively, recognizing its role in helping them learn from their mistakes, internalize language rules, and understand grammatical structures and vocabulary usage more effectively.

Overall, direct corrective feedback proves to be a highly effective and beneficial approach for enhancing writing skills among lower secondary education students in a public institution in Zumba.

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