

What do they correct? Newly enrolled students' corrections in university papers

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Extending on previous studies of texts produced by newly enrolled students, which showed that students make relatively many formal errors (i.e. punctuation, orthography, and grammar), the present article describes an experiment aiming to examine what students correct – and what they don't correct – when instructed to proofread their texts. Our conclusion is that overall, the students weed out only a minority of their errors, partly because only some of these errors are addressed in the proofreading process, partly because the students in some cases change correct forms into incorrect ones, and partly because the students in some cases add new text with new errors during the proofreading. As for the types of errors that are corrected, our study shows that especially errors at the levels of punctuation and spelling are problematic: Corrections of these error types are relatively rare and often result in new errors. Conversely, lexical and syntactic errors occur relatively infrequently, and these errors are corrected relatively often. The results thus indicate that some types of errors are relatively easily identified and corrected through proofreading, while others pose greater problems and must be addressed more purposefully in teaching.

KEY WORDS: language errors; orthography; punctuation; proofreading; revision