

Can you fix what you can't see? The role of visual feedback in detecting and correcting typing errors

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We frequently detect and correct our errors in oral and written communications. It has been proposed that both internal monitoring mechanisms and external feedback are involved in these processes, however, the contribution of each channel to detection and correction remains unclear. We address this question by manipulating visual feedback in two experiments during word typing. Experiment 1 shows that visual feedback helps the correction but not detection of typing errors. Experiment 2 replicates this finding, and further shows that providing positional information (i.e., asterisks as in typing a password) improves corrections, but not to the level of full visual feedback where both letter identity and position are visible. In summary, the results suggest that the external visual feedback is critical to correction (but not detection) of typing errors and that information about both position and letter identity are used during the correction process.