IIUM JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL STUDIES (ENGLISH), 12:2 (JULY 2024) 33-52

ISSN: 2289-8085

The Comparative Effectiveness of Focused and Comprehensive Written Corrective Feedback on Writing Accuracy: A Mixed-Methods Perspective

Arshad Iqbal Khattak [1] , Mohammad Azannee Saad[2*]

[1]English Language Institute,
King Abdulaziz University, Jeddah,
Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
[2]Department of Language and Literacy,
Kulliyyah of Education, International Islamic University Malaysia,
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia

**Corresponding Author: azannee@iium.edu.my*

(Received: 30th December 2023; Accepted:2nd May 2024; Published online: 26th July 2024)

Abstract

While research has extensively looked into the impact of written corrective feedback (WCF) on EFL/SL learners' writing accuracy, research exploring the comparative effectiveness of focused and comprehensive WCF in enhancing learners' writing accuracy is notably scant. Assessing the comparative efficaciousness of feedback focus is highly important for facilitating error correction for teachers and making it more feasible for learners. This mixed-methods study explored the efficacy of those two methods of WCF on Saudi EFL learners' writing accuracy in their essays. Essays were collected from 18 Foundation Year Health Sciences learners at a B1 proficiency level at the English Language Institute of a public university in Saudi Arabia. A pre-test, post-test, and delayed post-test design employing a repeated-measures MANOVA was used to gauge the impact of the two feedback methods of WCF on learners' writing accuracy. Additionally, the research investigated learners' beliefs about WCF and their priorities regarding the scope of WCF. Results showed that although focused WCF resulted in lower error means across specific categories and total errors, it did not exhibit significantly higher effectiveness compared to comprehensive WCF. Moreover, the learners unequivocally preferred comprehensive WCF over focused WCF. These findings suggest that the two types of feedback need not be seen as mutually exclusive in terms of their effectiveness. Instead, their efficacy may depend on learner proficiency, error type, and the learners' writing draft in question. Considering these contextual factors, educators can adopt an unbiased, ingenious approach to vary their feedback focus and maximize student learning. Moreover, this study contributes uniquely to research methodology within the feedback domain by combining quantitative and qualitative methods to explore the construct.

Keywords: *Comparative Efficacy of Feedback , Focus Feedback Methods, Focused Comprehensive WCF, Focused Vs. Unfocused WCF, Feedback Scope, Learners' Beliefs , Preferences About Feedback*

INTRODUCTION

Effective written communication is essential in today's globalized world, influencing success in various academic and professional areas (Sparks et al., 2014). Language educators strive to improve students' writing abilities, with a key method being WCF. WCF in second language (L2) contexts helps students identify and correct errors in their writing to enhance language proficiency (Crosthwaite et al., 2022).

A debate in the domain of WCF revolves around the efficacy of focused versus comprehensive WCF. Focused WCF targets specific aspects of writing, while comprehensive WCF addresses a broad range of errors, offering overall improvement suggestions (Lee, 2020). This debate remains unresolved, with some scholars supporting comprehensive WCF and others favoring focused WCF. For example, Lee (2019) argues against comprehensive feedback, citing the extensive time required for providing this type of feedback, potential teacher burnout, and possible student discouragement. Additionally, Lee suggests comprehensive WCF may not align with second language acquisition (SLA) theories, especially for learners with lower proficiency.

However, these criticisms of comprehensive WCF have not gone unheeded. Falhasiri (2021) challenges these points, noting that the cognitive load argument originated in the context of speaking skills rather than writing skills. Also, according to Falhasiri, research by Lopez et al. (2021) and Frear and Chiu (2015) indicates that students did not find comprehensive feedback burdensome. The researcher argues that feedback clarity and learner proficiency are more critical factors in comprehension than feedback scope.

Despite ongoing debates, there is no conclusive evidence favoring either approach. Minimal research has explored the effectiveness of both WCF types, and the results thus far are inconsistent. Mao and Lee's meta-analysis (2020) found varying outcomes across three studies (Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen et al., 2009; Frear & Chiu, 2015) with no definitive conclusions about the superiority of either approach. On the other hand, both students and teachers in EFL settings often prefer comprehensive WCF (Lee 2004; McMartin-Miller 2014), despite some researchers suggesting that focused WCF might be more beneficial (Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2007). Thus, understanding EFL learners' preferences and beliefs is crucial, warranting further investigation to align feedback strategies with student preferences. In view of the above, this study aims to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is focused WCF more effective than comprehensive feedback in improving writing accuracy in specific error categories (e.g., subject-verb agreement, verb forms, articles, word choice) as well as overall error correction?

RQ2: What are students' beliefs about the significance of WCF, and which form do they prefer: focused or comprehensive WCF?

LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature review examines research on feedback scope, comparing the effectiveness of focused versus comprehensive WCF, and explores learners' beliefs about their efficacy.

Feedback Scope

"Feedback scope" in learners' written work refers to the extent of feedback provided by teachers, either addressing every error or focusing on specific categories (Mao & Lee, 2020a). Comprehensive WCF corrects all errors in students' writing, while focused WCF targets specific error types (Beuningen et al., 2012; Lee, 2013, as cited in Mao & Lee, 2020).

As empirical support for WCF has grown, attention has shifted to feedback strategies, leading to a neglect of feedback scope, an area of prime importance to frontline teachers (ibid). Consequently, there is a shortage of research on this topic.

Focused Vs Comprehensive WCF

Several studies have compared the effects of focused and comprehensive WCF. To begin with, Ellis et al. (2008) compared the effects of focused and unfocused WCF on English articles among Japanese university students. Participants wrote narratives and took a grammar correction test. The study found improvement in article usage for both experimental groups, with no significant difference between focused and unfocused feedback.

Sheen et al. (2009) compared focused and unfocused WCF on English articles and other errors. Eighty intermediate-level participants were divided into four groups. The focused group outperformed the unfocused and control groups in post-tests, suggesting that learners responded more favorably to focused WCF as compared with unfocused WCF.

Frear and Chiu (2015) also studied focused and unfocused indirect WCF on Taiwanese EFL learners. Both treatment groups showed better weak verb accuracy than the control in immediate and delayed tests, with no significant differences between focused and unfocused groups. Indirect feedback and the prevalence of strong verbs were considered to have influenced the results.

Rahimi (2019) examined comprehensive versus focused WCF's impact on French EFL learners' accuracy. Focused feedback significantly reduced word errors, while focused-revision was most effective for sentence errors. Focused feedback was more effective for specific errors, but comprehensive-revision reduced errors across various categories.

Nicolás-Conesa et al. (2019) studied the effects of highly focused and mid-focused metalinguistic corrective feedback on regular and irregular past tense forms in low-intermediate EFL learners. The study involved 58 Thai university students, divided into treatment and control groups. Over four weeks, the treatment groups received feedback during story rewriting tasks. Assessments at pretest and two posttests showed significant improvement in regular past tense forms for both treatment groups compared to the control, with no notable differences between the treatment groups. The study suggests that focused WCF is effective for longer texts, while unfocused WCF may be better for shorter texts. It emphasizes the need to balance error correction in WCF to avoid overwhelming L2 learners' processing capacity, with implications for similar educational settings.

Aliakbari et al. (2023) compared the effectiveness of unfocused and focused WCF on L2 accuracy development. In a study with 86 EFL students divided into a control group and two experimental groups, the focused group received correction on irregular and regular past tense, while the unfocused group received correction on a wider range of grammatical categories. Results indicated that both treatment groups improved accuracy in the short term, but focused WCF was more effective over time.

In summary, these studies highlight the need for further research on WCF effectiveness as they do not clearly tear apart the two types of feedback in terms of their relative effectiveness. This study, therefore, examines focused and comprehensive WCF with Saudi EFL learners, contributing to the sparse literature on feedback focus (Mao & Lee, 2020).

Student Beliefs about Feedback Scope

Beliefs regarding corrective feedback encompass learners' perspectives, attitudes, and opinions regarding its effectiveness in L2 learning and teaching, as well as their views on its appropriate implementation (Lee, 2017). Several research studies have explored learner beliefs regarding their inclination towards selective versus comprehensive WCF.

To begin with, Abourizk (2020) investigated the absence of comprehensive training for both students and educators regarding various forms of teacher-provided feedback. The study aimed to ascertain students' preferred type of feedback and their perceptions of misunderstood feedback. Most students reported receiving feedback on entire essays or assignments, and showed a preference for comprehensive feedback to address all errors. They considered this type of feedback as useful in error identification and correction, as well as enhancing clarity regarding mistakes.

Albogami (2020) examined the perspectives of both L2 teachers and students regarding the significance of written feedback and the components of effective written feedback within an EFL setting. The majority of student participants (81%) emphasized accuracy concerns, such as grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics. Additionally, they expressed above-average agreement on content-related issues (74%), organizational concerns (69%), stylistic elements (56%), and strategies employed in completing writing tasks (67%). This demonstrated a tendency towards comprehensive WCF.

Rajab (2018) explored students' preferences for WCF. Students who observed improvements in their writing skills and were satisfied with their teachers' corrective feedback approaches preferred the "comprehensive method", with 9 out of 10 participants affirming this preference.

Hopper and Bowen (2023) explored EFL students' and instructors' preferences on the quantity and form of WCF and the types of errors to address. The study involved 469 EFL undergraduate students and 40 teachers. Both students (83.58%) and teachers (45%) favored the "mark all errors" approach, believing WCF aids in understanding target forms and preventing recurring errors. Despite students generally preferring marking all errors, some teachers considered it unproductive. Regarding feedback frequency, the majority of students (81.66%) and teachers (62.5%) supported marking errors every time they occur.

In summary, these studies reveal a general preference among learners for comprehensive WCF to enhance their understanding and correction of errors. However, the studies did not exclusively focus on the comparative efficacy of selective versus comprehensive correction methods and did not juxtapose their findings against experimental research. Therefore, further examination is needed to align learners' feedback preferences with experimental research findings.

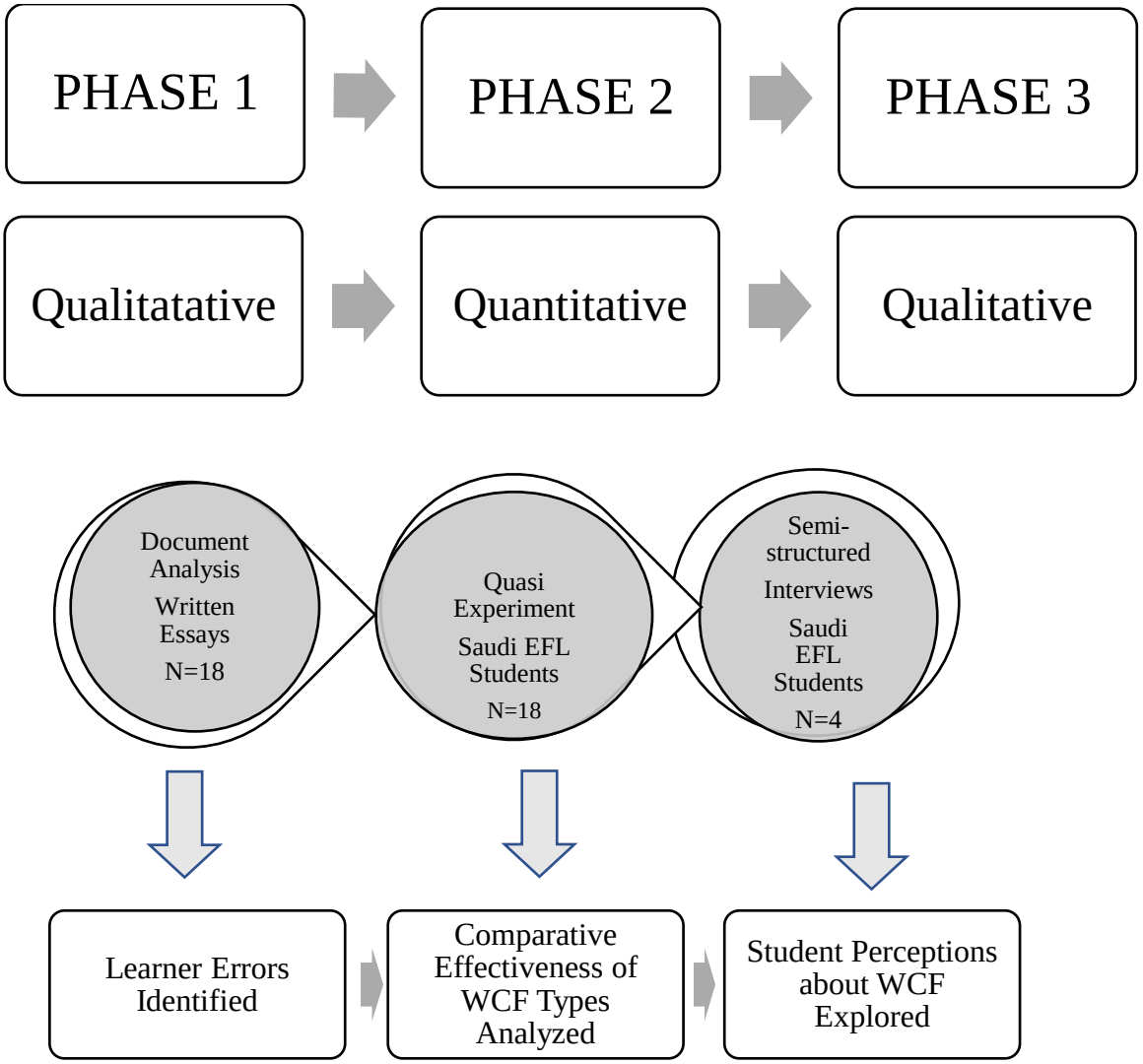
METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study employed a mixed-methods approach, combining document analysis, a quasi-experiment, and semi-structured interviews to address two research questions. It began with document analysis of eighteen essays from three student groups, graded for accuracy and error ratios. Following this, four students were interviewed to investigate their beliefs and preferences regarding WCF. Figure 1 visually depicts the study's design.

Figure 1

The Study's Mixed- Methods Exploratory Sequential Design



Participants

This study involved 18 students enrolled in Health Sciences in their second trimester of a three-trimester course, aged 19 to 21 years. They were placed at Level B1 in English proficiency according to the CEFR. They had started learning English in Grade 6, receiving approximately six years of formal language instruction. These learners initially struggled with formal academic writing, facing challenges in content organization and language accuracy.

For the interview component, four native Arabic-speaking male participants were purposively selected from the cohort to explore their experiences and viewpoints thoroughly. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on typicality and specific characteristics sought for qualitative research, following Cohen et al. (2011).

Data Collection

This section outlines the two main data collection methods utilized in the study: a quasi-experiment, and semi-structured interviews. Each method serves distinct purposes aligned with the research questions.

The Quasi-Experiment

Data for a pre-test-post-test experiment were collected from five student-written essays at five different time intervals (T1-T5). Over seven weeks, students in three groups (experimental group 1, experimental group 2, and control group) each wrote five essays on healthcare topics, limited to 250 words per essay. A total of 18 essays were gathered per time point (N=6 per group). Essays were written under exam conditions, with students allotted one class hour per task and without access to dictionaries or electronic devices.

Semi-Structured Interviews

Beliefs regarding preferences between two feedback types were explored through semi-structured interviews with four students (two from each experimental group). Nine interview questions guided the discussions, though open-ended prompts were used to encourage free expression of opinions. Interviews, averaging ten minutes each, were transcribed verbatim and carefully verified for accuracy using electronic tools.

Instruments

1. **Writing Tasks**

In this study, writing tasks were used as the primary method for data collection. These tasks were selected because students were familiar with them from their academic writing course, which covered various essay types such as descriptive essays, compare-and-contrast essays, and persuasive essays. Drawing from textbook essays consisting of five paragraphs, students were tasked with writing 250-word compositions following the same structure, focusing on healthcare-related themes.

2. **Scoring Rubric**

Two types of accuracy were evaluated in student essay scripts: overall accuracy and accuracy within specific error categories, following methodologies from previous studies (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). Accuracy was quantified using an error-words ratio, calculated as the number of errors divided by the total number of words, multiplied by 100. Additional metrics such as holistic scales, error-free T units (EFTs), and error-free clauses (EFCs) were considered, with a preference for error counts as a more precise measure (Polio, 1997). Inter-rater reliability of the scoring rubric was assessed by the researcher and a colleague who independently graded ten scripts using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation. The reliability coefficients were high, measuring 0.97 for focused accuracy and 0.87 for total accuracy.

3. **Interview Protocols**

The researcher followed (Jacob & Furgerson, 2015) guidelines for constructing interview protocols, beginning with basic questions about participants' backgrounds and progressing to more in-depth inquiries to build rapport. Open-ended questions were favored to encourage detailed responses, with prompts used to explore topics further. The questions underwent piloting and refinement with a colleague to ensure clarity and relevance, with the finalized set included in Appendix

Data Analysis

In this study, a Mixed-Model Multivariate Analysis of Variance (MANOVA), including repeated measures MANOVA, was used to compare variance in score means across three groups with two response variables at different time points. Writing Corrective Feedback (WCF) was the predictor variable (PV), while writing accuracy served as the response variable (RV) with two distinct levels: focused error ratio per 100 words (FER) and total error ratios per hundred words (TER), measured in relation to errors per 100 words of written text (Chandler, 2003).

For the student interviews, content analysis, specifically codification, was employed. This involved selecting text samples, defining units of analysis and categories, coding the texts by assigning them to categories, and quantifying occurrences of words, codes, and categories (Cohen et al., 2011). Codes metaphorically represented key attributes of data segments (Saldaña, 2013). The researcher transcribed the interviews verbatim, identified significant text segments, and assigned them code words or phrases capturing their essence. Similar codes were merged to create categories and themes, adhering to qualitative research principles to provide detailed descriptions of fewer themes rather than general information about many (Creswell, 2014).

RESULTS

The Relative Efficacy of Focused Vs Comprehensive WCF

Table 1 displays the collective group averages and standard deviations for each dependent variable over five distinct time intervals. For both response variables, the group means of Focused Feedback Group (FFG) are consistently lesser over the five-time intervals, while the means of the Control Group (C) are consistently greater. The mean scores of the Comprehensive Feedback Group (CFG) for both response variables fall somewhat in between those of the Control Group (C) and the Focused Feedback Group (FFG).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Two Dependent Variables for Three Groups over Five Time Periods

	Groups					
	Control		**CFG**		**FFG**	
	Mean	**Std Deviation**	**Mean**	**Std Deviation**	**Mean**	**Std Deviation**
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Pre)	6.26	1.53	3.28	.61	1.87	.68
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post1)	6.55	1.25	2.60	.67	1.69	.72
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 2)	5.93	1.16	2.27	.44	1.45	.83
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 3)	5.98	1.37	1.81	.47	1.16	.58
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Delayed post)	5.75	1.29	1.18	.08	1.09	.51
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Pre)	13.10	5.48	7.49	2.96	4.52	1.99
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 1)	12.08	5.23	6.04	2.45	3.82	1.86
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 2)	12.11	4.87	5.68	2.41	2.46	1.69
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 3)	11.58	5.14	4.49	2.44	1.91	1.46
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Delayed post)	11.35	4.58	3.83	1.34	1.65	1.29

Table 2 displays the findings of the MANOVA analysis, with an alpha level set at .05. The p-values for within-subject factors and any interactions with these factors were computed using Greenhouse-Geisser corrections to address the violation of the sphericity assumption. According to Greenhouse and Geisser (1959), this correction method is suitable for such cases. Notably, Greenhouse-Geisser corrections were not used for the Dv Factor, as it did not violate the assumption of sphericity.

Regarding Between-Subjects analysis, the main effect for groups was significant ($F (2, 15) = 19.09$, $p < .001$), showing noteworthy variations in FER and TER between the levels of groups.

Concerning Within-Subjects analysis, the main effect for Time Factor was significant ($F (4, 60) = 49.32$, $p < .001$), suggesting substantial differences in FER and TER across Time Factor levels, disregarding the Dv Factor. The main effect for the Dv Factor was also significant ($F (1, 15) = 33.15$, $p < .001$), revealing significant variations over the levels of Dv Factor, irrespective of the Time Factor. Furthermore, the interaction effect between Time Factor and Dv Factor was significant ($F (4, 60) = 9.83$, $p < .001$), signifying that the association between the levels of the DV Factor varied significantly over the levels of Time.

For Within-Between Interactions, the interaction effect between Time Factor and GPS was significant ($F (8, 60) = 3.41$, $p = .003$), demonstrating that the association between the levels of the Time Factor varied significantly, excluding the Dv Factor. The interaction effect between the Dv Factor and the GPS was also significant ($F (2, 15) = 4.54$, $p = .029$), suggesting that the association between the levels of the Dv Factor varied significantly, irrespective of the Time Factor.

However, the interaction effect between the Time Factor, Dv Factor, and GPS was not significant ($F (8, 60) = 1.08$, $p = .387$), suggesting that the associations between combinations of the Time Factor and the Dv Factor were comparable over the levels of GPS.

Table 2

Mixed Model MANOVA Results

Source	***Df***	***SS***	***MS***	***F***	***P***	η_p^2
Between-Subjects						
GPS	2	1,553.22	776.61	19.09	< .001	0.72
Residuals	15	610.31	40.69			
Within-Subjects						
Time Factor	4	85.92	21.48	49.32	< .001	0.77
GPS:Time Factor	8	11.87	1.48	3.41	.003	0.31
Time Factor Residuals	60	26.13	0.44			
Dv Factor	1	566.76	566.76	33.15	< .001	0.69
GPS:Dv Factor	2	155.34	77.67	4.54	.029	0.38
Dv Factor Residuals	15	256.44	17.10			
Time Factor:Dv Factor	4	15.58	3.90	9.83	< .001	0.40
GPS:Time Factor:Dv Factor	8	3.41	0.43	1.08	.387	0.13
Time Factor:Dv Factor Residuals	60	23.77	0.40			

Upon detecting significant main effects, univariate analyses (Omnibus test) were executed, and the outcomes of these analyses are presented in Tables 3 and 4. Notably, the univariate analyses for both FER and TER reveal that the differences in means are significant (p = .000) among the groups. This pattern is consistent over all five time points.

Table 3

Univariate ANOVA for FER (omnibus test)

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Pre)	Between Groups	60.362	2	30.181	28.287	.000
	Within Groups	16.004	15	1.067		
	Total	76.366	17			
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post1)	Between Groups	80.098	2	40.049	47.382	.000
	Within Groups	12.679	15	.845		
	Total	92.777	17			
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post2)	Between Groups	68.263	2	34.132	46.117	.000
	Within Groups	11.102	15	.740		
	Total	79.365	17			
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 3)	Between Groups	82.111	2	41.056	50.234	.000
	Within Groups	12.259	15	.817		
	Total	94.370	17			
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Delayed post)	Between Groups	85.249	2	42.624	66.354	.000
	Within Groups	9.636	15	.642		
	Total	94.885	17			

Table 4

Univariate ANOVA for TER (omnibus test)

		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Pre)	Between Groups	227.795	2	113.897	7.994	.004
	Within Groups	213.721	15	14.248		
	Total	441.515	17			
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 1)	Between Groups	219.085	2	109.542	8.918	.003
	Within Groups	184.254	15	12.284		
	Total	403.339	17			
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 2)	Between Groups	289.800	2	144.900	13.394	.000
	Within Groups	162.276	15	10.818		
	Total	452.076	17			
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 3)	Between Groups	300.338	2	150.169	13.065	.001
	Within Groups	172.416	15	11.494		
	Total	472.755	17			
Total Error Ratio per 100 words (Delayed post)	Between Groups	310.734	2	155.367	19.054	.000
	Within Groups	122.313	15	8.154		
	Total	433.047	17			

The subsequent phase in the scrutiny aimed to identify which of the three groups exhibited significant variations between their means, prompting the implementation of a post-hoc analysis. Multiple comparisons revealed noteworthy mean differences between the control and focused groups across all five time points, as well as between the control and comprehensive feedback groups across certain time points for both FER and TER. However, no significant mean differences were observed between the FFG and the CFG for either of the two response variables, FER and TER, at any point of time. Despite the FFG consistently having lower means compared to the CFG throughout all time intervals, these differences did not reach statistical significance. Table 5 illustrates this tendency.

Table 5

Post-hoc Analysis

Multiple Comparisons (LSD)

Dependent Variable	(I) GPS	(J) GPS	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
						Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Pre)	C	CG	2.98667*	.59636	.000	1.7156	4.2578
		FG	4.39167*	.59636	.000	3.1206	5.6628
	CG	C	-2.98667*	.59636	.000	-4.2578	-1.7156
		FG	1.40500*	.59636	.032	.1339	2.6761
	FG	C	-4.39167*	.59636	.000	-5.6628	-3.1206
		CG	-1.40500*	.59636	.032	-2.6761	-.1339
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 1)	C	CG	3.94667*	.53080	.000	2.8153	5.0780
		FG	4.86167*	.53080	.000	3.7303	5.9930
	CG	C	-3.94667*	.53080	.000	-5.0780	-2.8153
		FG	.91500	.53080	.105	-.2164	2.0464
	FG	C	-4.86167*	.53080	.000	-5.9930	-3.7303
		CG	-.91500	.53080	.105	-2.0464	.2164
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 2)	C	CG	3.66500*	.49669	.000	2.6063	4.7237
		FG	4.47667*	.49669	.000	3.4180	5.5353
	CG	C	-3.66500*	.49669	.000	-4.7237	-2.6063
		FG	.81167	.49669	.123	-.2470	1.8703
	FG	C	-4.47667*	.49669	.000	-5.5353	-3.4180
		CG	-.81167	.49669	.123	-1.8703	.2470
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Post 3)	C	CG	4.17167*	.52195	.000	3.0592	5.2842
		FG	4.82000*	.52195	.000	3.7075	5.9325
	CG	C	-4.17167*	.52195	.000	-5.2842	-3.0592
		FG	.64833	.52195	.233	-.4642	1.7608
	FG	C	-4.82000*	.52195	.000	-5.9325	-3.7075
		CG	-.64833	.52195	.233	-1.7608	.4642
Focused Error Ratio per 100 words (Delayed post)	C	CG	4.57000*	.46274	.000	3.5837	5.5563
		FG	4.66167*	.46274	.000	3.6754	5.6480
	CG	C	-4.57000*	.46274	.000	-5.5563	-3.5837
		FG	.09167	.46274	.846	-.8946	1.0780
	FG	C	-4.66167*	.46274	.000	-5.6480	-3.6754
		CG	-.09167	.46274	.846	-1.0780	.8946

Note: *. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Students' Beliefs about WCF Value and Scope

The study examined students' perceptions of the effectiveness and preferences regarding WCF, employing thematic analysis of interviews with four students (two from each feedback group). The themes emerging from the analysis reflected participants' perspectives on WCF, who are anonymized as Participants A, B, O and Z to maintain confidentiality.

Previous Feedback Experience

One of the themes identified from the analysis was the students' prior experiences of WCF. Participant O recalled his previous education where his English teacher had him write multiple drafts on the same topic, receiving feedback on each draft. He found this iterative process beneficial as it allowed him to revise his work based on the feedback received, contrasting it unfavorably with the approach at his current university where he had to apply feedback to new essays.

> "*So, whenever I took a test there, I had to write a first draft of the same topic. So, I write the first draft and then he gave me feedback. So, I can correct my error whenever I correct them. He he'll ask for the final draft, and I'll send it to them. It wasn't actually just… It was more like a homework. But the topic was given, so it was quite easier than here.*"

Another student, A, recalled that his previous teachers primarily emphasized formal aspects such as spelling and grammar over content or organization.

> *"Actually, on a few selected errors like the spellings, not exactly in the university like the ideas and the, yes, content, yes, and the transition words and yes, just like how to write the lower case and the capital case."*

B remembered receiving feedback that encompassed all paragraphs and the entire essay, though the exact extent of coverage was not entirely clear. He described his experience, stating, "I think my feedbacks were on all of my paragraphs, it wasn't like specific things, but it was like the whole paragraph and on the whole essay."

Z, who had studied in Australia, received feedback that addressed various perspectives, including both form and content. Despite his having few errors, the feedback provided comprehensive coverage of different aspects of writing. In this regard, the student mentioned,

> *"All the feedback was basically… there were minimal feedbacks, but there were not that many errors, but the feedback was on all perspectives. If there was something to do with spelling, or maybe using a better word or sentence structure, I got feedback from all perspectives."*

In summary, the participants' past experiences with feedback varied: O valued feedback on multiple drafts, A's feedback focused mainly on formal errors, B received feedback that appeared to cover the entire essay, and Z's feedback, despite being minimal due to fewer errors, was comprehensive. Overall, the participants demonstrated a solid understanding of WCF based on their previous academic experiences.

The Value of Teacher Feedback

Another theme was the students' appreciation for teacher-provided WCF. All four participants strongly opposed the idea of having a teacher who did not provide any feedback. Participant O highlighted the importance of feedback for learning, particularly during the initial draft stage, as it enhances both learning and exam performance. He noted,

"I would say. If it was like the first draft, obviously I'll have a problem with him. I'll be mad at him. Because after all, I'm trying to learn here. So feedback would be helpful for me and for my tests I guess."

Participant A emphasized the importance of receiving a second perspective on writing, noting that feedback helps identify errors that writers might overlook themselves. He illustrated this by saying,

"No, no, actually, because like you know, every person writes a single word. He seems like, yes, my word is all correct and yeah, very good. But when you give it like to your classmate or your teacher and he give you the feedback, you say, oh, yes, I made this error, and I made this error. So, if I give my teacher my draft and he didn't give me his feedback, so I don't know what my mistakes are. And yes, my error. So how can I improve my writing skills?"

Participant B expressed his belief that feedback is crucial for improvement, even if it may feel daunting initially. He expressed concern about a scenario where no feedback is provided, saying,

"Not at all. No, that means that he doesn't like me to be improved. I believe feedback makes you improve. Especially in the beginning, I used to see a lot of feedbacks and a lot of red ink and that got me scared at the beginning, but later on, I knew why the teacher was giving me the feedback because he wants me to be improved and see my weak spots."

Participant Z also stressed the importance of feedback in pointing out areas for improvement. He expressed his view on the matter as follows,

"No. I think this is a negative thing because how will I improve if I have errors, and somebody doesn't point them out for me? So, I think it's better for teacher to give me feedback so I can improve."

All participants highly valued teacher corrective feedback, viewing it as essential for improving writing skills, for gaining a second perspective, for identifying errors, and for highlighting weak points. They unanimously agreed that feedback was indispensable for enhancing their writing abilities.

Feedback Preference

The research centered on participants' preferences for feedback focus. All respondents expressed a strong preference for comprehensive WCF. Participant O specifically favored feedback that helped him avoid minor mistakes made under time pressure, believing it would lead to higher grades. He explained this by saying,

> *"Well, sometimes when I'm writing I drop a letter or two or like my spelling errors or grammar errors. Like the "s" in the last of the word or something like this. And when I'm focusing on writing, I really think I won't do these things specifically. But when I'm writing quickly, I think this can happen easily. So, what I'm focusing from the feedback is the formatting, is how the teacher gonna mark it, so I can avoid dismiss these mistakes and get the full mark."*

Participant A, despite feeling nervous about extensive corrections, acknowledged the improvement that comprehensive feedback brought to his writing. Sharing his thoughts, he said,

> *"I think on my all errors. But sometimes, like, I get so nervous when I see a lot of feedback and my teacher gave me a lot of... Yeah, exactly. So, I feel very nervous, especially if I put my all effort in this essay or paragraph, so when I see like a lot of errors, so I get so nervous. But I think it's improved me day by day, yes."*

Participant B believed in the long-term benefits of comprehensive WCF, seeing it as useful beyond academia. He commented on the matter saying,

> *"I prefer it to be on all of my errors because that will benefit me not only in university but also when I go out of the university. For example, if I want to apply for a job that will help me write more accurately and more understandably."*

Participant Z emphasized the value of catching minor errors early through comprehensive WCF to prevent them from becoming major ones. He highlighted the issue as,

> *"I prefer it on all of them because even though they are frequent ones, there might be one or two that you wouldn't realize, and they may develop overtime. So, it is better to learn from them as they are small before they become even bigger mistakes."*

In conclusion, all participants preferred comprehensive feedback and regarded it as essential for improvement. They recognized the educational and developmental value of comprehensive WCF, even though it might sometimes trigger feelings of apprehension or nervousness due to the corrections received.

Feedback Management

The study investigated students' reactions to comprehensive WCF, exploring their beliefs and strategies for managing it. While some literature suggests comprehensive WCF can overwhelm students and cause stress, participants in this study preferred it for its potential benefits**.**

Participant O showed eagerness to engage with comprehensive feedback, as it ensured a high grade. In this respect, he opined that,

> *"Yeah, I guess so, even if I had to change the formatting of the essay or paragraph or whatever, at the end of the day, if he gives me lots of feedback, I'm able to correct them and make it to the full mark, I guess."*

Participant A acknowledged difficulties in dealing with extensive corrections due to his numerous errors but still valued comprehensive feedback. He explicated the point saying,

> *"Often, it's not easy because like for me like I have a lot of grammar issues and spelling issues, so it is not easy to hang out with all this information."*

Participant B expressed the intent to seek teacher assistance to manage a large amount of feedback. He responded as,

> *"I believe yes. When I do a discussion with my teacher, he would explain to me; he would give me the information again and again, so I can understand more and correct my errors."*

Participant Z outlined a step-by-step approach to handle feedback systematically. He laid out his management plan saying,

> *"I would take each feedback as itself and then I would edit my writing. And then I will go to the next feedback, so I take it point by point."*

In summary, the participants shared their diverse strategies for managing extensive feedback. They laid out their coping mechanisms for comprehensive WCF despite its potential cognitive load.

Satisfaction with Feedback

Lastly, the researcher delved into the participants' impressions of the feedback they had received in class. O believed the feedback improved his performance, although he had some lingering concerns. He responded as,

"I guess so, yeah, because I'm correcting them, I think I'm improving. I'm getting a higher mark" but added that "I think there is some mistakes I'm not being able to correct them."

A highlighted significant improvement in writing and language skills. He highlighted some areas wherein he thought he had improved.

> *"The 1st way is in my spelling, and I think the way also when I chat with my friends, I chat with English sometimes. So, at first, I used Google Translate so much, but these days I don't need Google Translate, yes. So, I write it yes, and also, it's improved my conversation skill. So, I'm not afraid to talk."*

B experienced discouragement initially but later began to appreciate comprehensive WCF as it led to improvement. His impression was that

> *"I think it was the right amount. As I said, I was scared at the beginning when I saw a lot of red ink and I got disappointed, but later on I saw the amount of red ink got less and that means I got improved more."*

Z expressed complete satisfaction, finding the feedback comprehensive and effective. He expressed his satisfaction with the feedback in the following manner,

> *"And nothing was missing. I understood everything clearly, and when I applied it to my writing, my writing became better and had no errors."*

Overall, the participants' responses emphasized their willingness to engage with comprehensive WCF, recognizing its potential benefits despite acknowledging the challenges it might present.

In conclusion, this study explored students' perspectives on WCF and their preferences between focused and comprehensive feedback. Thematic analysis of interviews with four participants revealed insights into their past experiences with WCF, appreciation for teacher feedback, and a strong preference for comprehensive feedback. Participants recognized the enduring benefits of WCF in enhancing writing skills and emphasized their commitment to self-improvement. The study also highlighted strategies students use to manage feedback. Despite challenges, students highly valued comprehensive WCF for its educational advantages, underscoring its critical role in fostering growth and refinement in writing skills.

DISCUSSION

The discussion is structured around the research questions. Initially, the outcomes concerning the varying effectiveness of focused versus comprehensive WCF are examined. Next, the themes derived from the interviews with students are critically assessed.

The Relative Efficacy of Focused and Comprehensive WCF

This study aimed to compare the effectiveness of focused and comprehensive WCF on students' writing accuracy over time, addressing the research question: "Is focused WCF more effective than comprehensive WCF in improving learners' writing accuracy on selected error categories and overall errors?" The mixed models MANOVA results indicated significant differences in error means among the Focused Feedback Group (FFG), Comprehensive Feedback Group (CFG), and Control Group (C) across various time points for Focused Error Ratio (FER) and Total Error Ratio (TER). Significant main effects were found for groups, time, and their interaction, indicating variations in error means within and between groups over time.

Post-hoc analyses revealed significant mean differences between the control group and both the focused and comprehensive groups for FER and TER across multiple time points. However, differences between the FFG and CFG were not statistically significant, despite the FFG consistently showing lower error means over time. This suggests that while focused feedback produced lower error means on both focused error categories and overall errors, these differences did not reach statistical significance, possibly due to similar linguistic proficiency levels among participants in both feedback groups.

Comparisons with previous research showed mixed findings. Similar to Ellis et al. (2008) and Sheen et al. (2009), this study found that focused feedback was comparable to comprehensive feedback in reducing errors, although not significantly more effective. In contrast, Rahimi (2019) reported focused feedback as more effective for specific error types, contrasting with the current study's findings of no significant advantage for focused feedback overall.

Overall, while the study did not definitively establish focused feedback as significantly more effective than comprehensive feedback, it hinted at a potential trend that prolonged exposure to focused feedback might yield significant improvements. The study underscores the complexity of feedback effectiveness, influenced by factors such as error types, feedback methods, and participant characteristics, suggesting avenues for further exploration in future research.

Student Beliefs about Feedback Scope

As for students' beliefs about WCF, the study aimed to answer RQ2: What are students' beliefs regarding the significance of WCF, and which form of WCF do they favor: focused WCF or comprehensive WCF?

The participants in the study placed great importance on teacher's WCF as a means to enhance their writing accuracy. They perceived teacher WCF as an indispensable tool for improving their writing skills and were unable to envision any progress without it. They expressed strong aversion to scenarios where teachers refrained from providing any form of corrective feedback. This response highlighted the students' recognition of the multiple dimensions of value that WCF offers. The findings resonated with those of AlBogami (2020) where the overwhelming majority of student participants (81%) agreed that the most commonly emphasized aspect of written feedback is addressing accuracy concerns, including grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics.

Satisfaction with feedback emerged as another significant theme, reinforcing the students' favorable evaluation of teacher feedback. All interviewees expressed substantial satisfaction with the feedback received on their essays, indicative of their belief in the feedback's efficacy in enhancing their writing. For instance, one participant credited the feedback with improving the accuracy of his writing, resulting in better grades. Interestingly, another reported improvement in spelling accuracy, and even conversational skills, which, though surprising, made sense as far as EFL learners are concerned. This concurs with the findings of Rajab (2018) which reports the positive impact of WCF on the learners' listening, speaking and reading skills. Improved accuracy in writing correlated with better control over spoken output, highlighting the comprehensive impact of teacher feedback beyond its immediate scope.

A central question in the research concerned whether students preferred focused or comprehensive WCF. When given the choice between receiving feedback that addresses some errors (focused) or all errors (comprehensive), all participants chose the latter. This preference for comprehensive feedback was also echoed in other studies such as Rajab (2018), Abourizk (2020), Albogami (2020) and Hopper and Bowen (2023). In all those studies, students were reported to show a preference for detailed, comprehensive WCF. Comprehensive feedback was seen as valuable for learning, for ensuring that errors were recognized and corrected, and for improving writing overall.

Despite concerns that comprehensive feedback could overwhelm students, participants affirmed their ability to manage it, motivated by their desire to enhance their writing skills and grades. However, the students' readiness to accept comprehensive feedback could be attributed to a belief in the idea that "the greater the amount, the more beneficial". However, this study suggests that teachers could introduce students to diverse feedback strategies, aiding them in appreciating innovative ways of feedback provision. This finding resonates with that in Nicolás–Conesa et al. (2019), which emphasizes the need to strike a balance between addressing various errors in the provided WCF for L2 users and avoiding unnecessary challenges that may overload students' WCF processing capacity. This could lead to a broader understanding of feedback types and their benefits. Varying feedback practices over time and aligning them with learner proficiency levels could further enable students to choose suitable strategies for improved accuracy and learning outcomes.

CONCLUSION

In summary, the study found no significant difference in the effectiveness of two feedback methods on reducing errors among learners. Both methods, focused and comprehensive WCF, were equally effective overall, although focused WCF consistently resulted in slightly lower error rates. However, this difference was not statistically significant. Until further research provides conclusive evidence, teachers are advised to tailor their feedback approaches based on individual teaching contexts, considering factors like student proficiency levels and error types. Combining both focused and comprehensive feedback methods could enhance student learning. Additionally, the study highlights the importance of considering students' perspectives on feedback. While they value comprehensive WCF for its impact on writing ability and exam performance, they could benefit from exposure to various feedback approaches. Educators play a vital role in fostering this understanding.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on its findings, the recommendations of this study may be directed towards students, teachers, and researchers, as they represent the primary stakeholders for whom the study's findings hold relevance**.**

Pedagogical Recommendations

The findings of this study underscore the importance of taking WCF seriously, as they provide evidence of its effectiveness in enhancing writing accuracy. Contrary to the belief that comprehensive feedback may be cognitively burdensome, the study suggests that students' keenness to improve their writing accuracy can offset any perceived adverse effects. Moreover, the study indicates that focused feedback may be just as, if not more, effective as comprehensive feedback, challenging the notion that more feedback necessarily equates to better outcomes. Last but not least, the inconclusive findings regarding the relative efficacy of the two types of feedback may encourage teachers to explore innovative and creative approaches to providing feedback.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the inconclusive findings in research comparing focused and comprehensive WCF, future studies should explore combining both types to assess their impact on writing accuracy. This could involve providing both types of feedback to the same group of learners in successive sessions to determine which yields better results. Furthermore, Qualitative and mixed-methods studies should be prioritized for conclusive evidence regarding feedback scope, with precise quantitative designs controlling for variables like the definition of feedback types and learners' exclusive exposure to interventions. Additionally, learners' proficiency levels should also be considered, with different types of feedback targeted at various error types. Ensuring learners understand and engage with feedback through revisions is also crucial for effective experimentation.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to my supervisor, Asst. Prof. Dr. Mohammad Azannee Saad, for his invaluable guidance and unwavering support throughout the development of this work. His clear and precise feedback played a crucial role in shaping its structure and direction, and his patience was truly remarkable. I am also thankful to Prof. Dr. Tunku Badariah Tunku Ahmad, my co-supervisor, for her valuable advice during the initial phase of the thesis. Additionally, I am grateful to Dr. Khush Noor Khan for his assistance with the statistical analyses. Lastly, I express deep appreciation to my wife and children for their unwavering belief in my abilities and constant encouragement.

RESEARCH ETHICS

The research obtained approval from the participants, with due consideration given to ethical concerns, including safeguarding participants' confidentiality and respecting their right to withdraw from the study.

FUNDING

There are no specific grants or funding from any agency from the public, commercial, or any of the profit or non-profit organization.

REFERENCES

Abourizk, R. (2020). *A Phenomenological Study of the Perceptions of ESL/EFL Students on Teacher Written Feedback* [Doctoral dissertation, Northcentral University]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

Albogami, M. M. (2020). *An Inquiry into Effective Written Feedback From EFL Teachers' and Students' Perspectives at a Saudi University* (Order No. 28448116) [Doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter,]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

Aliakbari, M., Aryan, M., & Sourani, M. (2023). The Efficacy of Focused and Unfocused WCF on EFL Learners' Grammatical Accuracy. *Al-Adab Journal*, *144*(1), 61-84. https://doi.org/10.31973/aj.v1i144.3955

Chandler, J. (2003). The efficacy of various kinds of error feedback for improvement in the accuracy and fluency of L2 student writing. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, *12*(3), 267–296. https://doi.org/10.1016/S1060-3743(03)00038-9

Cohen, L., Manion, L., & Morrison, K. (2011). *Research Methods in Education (*7th edition*)*. Routledge.

Creswell, J. W. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. SAGE.

Crosthwaite, P., Ningrum, S., & Lee, I. (2022). Research trends in L2 WCF: A Bibliometric Analysis Of Three Decades Of Scopus-Indexed Research on L2 WCF. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 58*, 100934. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2022.100934

Ellis, R., Sheen, Y., Murakami, M., & Takashima, H. (2008). The Effects Of Focused And Unfocused WCF In An English As A Foreign Language Context. *System, 36*(3), 353–371. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2008.02.001

Falhasiri, M. (2021). Is Less Really More? The Case for Comprehensive WCF. *Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics, 24*(3), 145–165. https://doi.org/10.37213/cjal.2021.31242

Frear, D., & Chiu, Y. (2015). The Effect of Focused and Unfocused Indirect WCF On EFL Learners' Accuracy in New Pieces Of Writing. *System, 53*, 24–34. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2015.06.006

Greenhouse, S. W., & Geisser, S. (1959). On methods in the analysis of profile data. *Psychometrika, 24*(2), 95–112. https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02289823

Hopper, D., & Bowen, N. (2023). Students' and Teachers' Beliefs about Written Corrective Feedback: Perspectives on Amount, Type, and Focus of Feedback in an EFL Setting. *REFLections, 30*(3), 735–756. https://doi.org/10.61508/refl.v30i3.268135

Jacob, S. A., & Furgerson, S. P. (2012). Writing Interview Protocols and Conducting Interviews: Tips for Students New to the Field of Qualitative Research. *The Qualitative Report, 17*(42), 1-10. https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2012.1718

Lee, I. (2017). Working Hard or Working Smart: Comprehensive Versus Focused WCF In L2 Academic Contexts. In Teaching Writing for Academic Purposes to Multilingual Students. In Bitchener, J., Storch, N., & Wette, R (Eds.), *Teaching Writing for Academic Purposes to Multilingual Students*. Routledge.

Lee, I. (2019). Teachers' Frequently Asked Questions About Focused WCF. *TESOL Journal, 10(*3). https://doi.org/10.1002/tesj.427

Lee, I. (2020). Utility Of Focused/Comprehensive WCF Research For Authentic L2 Writing Classrooms. *Journal of Second Language Writing, 49*, 100734. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2020.100734

Lopez, M., Van Steendam, E., Buyse, K., & Speelman, D. (2021). Comprehensive Corrective Feedback In Foreign Language Writing: The Response Of Individual Error Categories. *Journal of Writing Research, 13*(1), 31–70. https://doi.org/10.17239/jowr-2021.13.01.02

Mao, Z., & Lee, I. (2020a). Feedback scope in written corrective feedback: Analysis of empirical research in L2 contexts. *Assessing Writing*, *45*, 100469. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.asw.2020.100469

Nicolás–Conesa, F., Manchón, R. M., & Cerezo, L. (2019). The Effect of Unfocused Direct and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback on Rewritten Texts and New Texts: Looking into Feedback for Accuracy and Feedback for Acquisition. *The Modern Language Journal*, *103*(4), 848–873. https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12592

Rajab, H. (2018). *EFL Teachers and Learners' Perceptions, Beliefs and Practices on WCF in the Saudi Higher Education Context* [Doctoral dissertation, University of Exeter]. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses.

Rahimi, M. (2019). A comparative study of the impact of focused vs. Comprehensive corrective feedback and revision on ESL learners' writing accuracy and quality. *Language Teaching Research*, *25*(5), 687–710. https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168819879182

Saldaña, J. (2013). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (2nd ed). SAGE.

Sheen, Y., Wright, D., & Moldawa, A. (2009). Differential Effects of Focused and Unfocused Written Correction on The Accurate Use of Grammatical Forms by Adult ESL Learners. *System*, *37*(4), 556–569. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2009.09.002

Sparks, J. R., Song, Y., Brantley, W., & Liu, O. L. (2014). Assessing Written Communication in Higher Education: Review and Recommendations for Next-Generation Assessment: Assessing Written Communication. *ETS Research Report Series*, *2014*(2), 1–52. https://doi.org/10.1002/ets2.12035