

Written corrective feedback in English compositions: Teachers' practices and students' expectations

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ABSTRACT

Written corrective feedback (WCF) has been the subject of many studies in the field of second language (L2) writing. This study sought to investigate: (1) teacher's practices in marking students' English language compositions, (2) students' expectations of teacher's WCF, and (3) compare whether students' expectations correspond to teachers' practices of WCF. Sixty-four students and three teachers of an upper secondary school in Malacca, Malaysia participated in this study. Teachers' WCF practices and students' preferences were elicited from two different sets of questionnaires. Findings revealed that both students and teachers generally believe that WCF is beneficial in improving students' writing skills. It was also discovered that students prefer direct, specific, and comprehensive feedback over indirect feedback. However, the study showed some discrepancies between students' preferences and teachers' practices in composition classrooms in terms of the amount, type, and necessity of the feedback where most students were found to require more WCF than the amount their teacher was capable of giving. This misalignment calls for teachers' and students' adjustments to ensure the effectiveness of WCF strategies employed by teachers. Findings from this research also imply that the study of contextual factors and beliefs influencing preferences with regard to WCF may also be necessary.



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1. Introduction

Writing is one of the important skills English language learners learn, apart from speaking, listening, and reading. Although there have been changing perceptions on effective and meaningful ways to give students feedback, the general agreement is that corrective feedback is undeniably essential to facilitate L2 knowledge, as mistakes and errors are expected in all stages of learning (Lee, 2017). Feedback in writing may encompass many aspects of writing, including composition skills, style, organization, content, and others, although there have been changing perceptions on effective and meaningful ways to give students feedback. In this particular study, WCF is defined as "a feedback which specifically indicates errors of language, such as in grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics" (Al Shahrani, 2013, p. 4).

Many researchers agree that written corrective feedback (WCF) is important because the lack of such feedback may lead to anxiety or resentment, which could decrease students' motivation to learn (Ferris, 2004). However, the amount of WCF that should be given to students is debatable. Studies have shown that attending too many errors and providing effective feedback to help learners in their

writing development is too demanding for teachers and learners. It is even more complicated when students make too many errors that teachers do not know which particular aspect to focus on to help the learner improve. According to Ellis et al. (2008), “learners are more likely to attend to corrections directed at a single (or a limited number of) error type(s) and more likely to develop a clearer understanding of the error and the correction needed” (p.356). However, most teachers sometimes result in correcting all students’ errors and spending ample time to mark the students’ writing tasks paying attention to how students might respond to the WCF. A recent study conducted by Lee (2019) produced a surprising finding as it highlights that giving students less CF is better than giving more.

The argument also lies in the type of feedback that should be corrected. Ellis (2008) listed six major corrective feedback strategies: direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focused/unfocused, electronic, and reformulation. Sanavi and Nemati (2014) specifically studied the effects of these different types of feedback through an experimental study of five groups of Iranian English language learners. It was found that reformulation strategy, which focuses on teachers’ reconstruction of inaccuracies to make it more accurate, had the most obvious effect on students’ performance in International English Language Testing System (IELTS) writing Task 2. A recent study conducted by Rashtchi and Abu Bakar (2019) on 103 ESL students in Malaysia discovered that students mostly favour direct and explicit feedback and want teachers to correct as many errors as possible. These researches suggest the importance of studying the type and amount of corrective feedback since there are multitudes of factors that may contribute to different attitudes towards corrective feedback.

Nunan (1987) argued that one of the most severe problems to learning is the mismatch between teacher and learner expectations about what should happen in the classroom, which can result in learners being disengaged in class (Park, 2010). Bitchener and Knoch (2008) further assert that “motivation is more likely to be gained if teachers negotiate with students about how frequent the feedback will be given, about the type of feedback that will be given, and about what the students will be expected to do in response to feedback” (p. 210). It is, therefore, essential to investigate students’ preferences towards teachers’ error correction as different learning styles may result in varying levels of cognition and engagement (Katayama, 2007). Several studies have shown that there are discrepancies in what students and teachers define as good feedback. Some students prefer error correction given by the teacher compared to self-correction and peer correction, as they believe that they are not competent enough to correct their errors. However, studies have found that teachers often use peer and self-correction. To avoid the mismatch between students’ preferences and teachers’ practices, researching students’ preferences in different contexts and groups of students is essential, as students might have different learning needs and preferences since teacher feedback is sensitive to students’ needs and instructional context (Ferris, 2004).

Although there has been a gradual move towards a more communicative classroom in Malaysia’s education system, the way students are tested in the national exam still focuses on form. Without accurate grammar, students cannot get high marks. One of the learning outcomes stated in the curriculum is that “students have to present information to different audiences by composing, revising and editing drafts; and checking the accuracy of spelling, punctuation, and grammar;” and “using appropriate format, conventions, and grammar when presenting the information” (Ministry of Education, 2003, p.15). To promote these goals, conducting more studies relating to WCF in local secondary school contexts is necessary to gain insights into teachers’ practices and students’ expectations of WCF. The availability of research examining the same objectives are only found in tertiary education settings (Rashtchi & Abu Bakar, 2019). Findings from this study can further inform teachers how to best help the students achieve the curriculum’s stated outcomes. The objectives of this study are to:

- a) Investigate the teacher’s WCF practices in marking students’ compositions.
- b) Examine the students’ expectations of WCF given by their teachers.
- c) Compare whether students’ expectations correspond to teachers’ practices of WCF.

2.1. Written CF

Written CF is defined as “a written response to a linguistic error that has been made in the writing of a text by an L2 learner,” which can either be direct or indirect (Bitchener & Storch, 2016). Earlier studies on corrective feedback have looked into whether or not error correction in writing is important (Ashwell, 2000; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Then, many researchers believe that the issue was no longer whether corrective should be done, but rather how it should be done to best facilitate students in learning from their errors or mistakes as extensive research has proven that feedback is necessary for students’ learning over the years. Therefore, more research in the 80s was carried out, investigating which type of feedback can maximize students’ potential in writing the most.

Teachers and researchers generally do have a strong belief that WCF is critical in improving their writing. Not only that, error correction is also the key that contributes to student success in second language learning (Ellis, 2009). Correcting students’ errors and providing feedback to the students has become one of the routines and norms in exploring students’ potential in acquiring the language.

2.2. Type of feedback

Feedback may differ according to types. One variety is the difference between focused and unfocused WCF. Focused WCF means feedback focusing on only a few linguistic errors while unfocused refer to feedback focusing on a wide range of errors. Studies on the impact of different types of feedback also reported varied findings where those with focused feedback showing a higher level of accuracy in writing compared to the others (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Shintani, Ellis, & Suzuki, 2014; Pratolo, 2019). Research conducted in other contexts such as different age groups and type of linguistic error produce unique findings. Gorman and Ellis (2019) conducted an experimental study on the effects of different types of instruction, namely instruction with metalinguistic explanation, direct written correction, and no form-focused instruction on young children aged 9 to 12 years old. Results suggest that there is no difference in the level of accuracy the children displayed in the written tasks given. Diab (2015) conducted an experimental study on Arabic native speakers with English as their second and third language. The study focuses mainly on the effect of WCF, particularly on pronoun errors and wrong words, and the study found that students in the experimental group with direct metalinguistic feedback managed to reduce the number of pronoun errors made. For lexical errors, no significant difference was identified among all the groups. From this review of literature, it is clear that more research is needed to study other variables that may influence the effectiveness of WCF.

2.3. Students’ preferences on teacher feedback

WCF experienced varied reactions. Sheen (2007) believed that corrective feedback contributes to language improvement. Nonetheless, several researchers have claimed that error correction is ineffective. For instance, it is uncertain on how a teacher can ensure that the students have retained new language elements through WCF since the students are merely recipients rather than active and proactive agents in the feedback process (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). WCF would not be as successful if the strategies being used by the teacher tend to be continually counter-productive. It is beneficial only if the teachers know the students’ expectations and preferences towards receiving feedback. Research on the students’ perspective on feedback only began to develop in the 1990s.

To date, there are growing bodies of literature on L2 students’ preferences regarding teacher feedback (Amrhein, 2010; Hamouda, 2011; Haishan & Qingshun, 2017; Nanni & Black, 2017). However, few attempts have been made to link students’ and teachers’ preferences to see whether their preferences match, and limited studies have explored the factors that can influence

teacher's preferred way of giving feedback in students' compositions. One study conducted by Hamouda (2011) on 200 native Arabic speakers focused on students' and teachers' preferences on error correction. However, this study examined the difficulties teachers often face in providing feedback and on students revising their papers after receiving teachers' feedback. Nanni and Black (2017) investigated Thai teachers and students' preferences on five different categories of feedback, which include content, grammar, organization, vocabulary, and spelling. The research findings revealed that WCF was most useful for organization and content, while students regarded WCF useful for grammar and vocabulary. This study, however, did not study factors that contributed to the participants' preferences. A research done by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) aimed to investigate several research questions which are: 1) What amount of WCF do ESL students and teachers believe is most useful, and why? 2) What types of WCF do students and teachers think are most useful, and why? 3) What types of errors do students and teachers think should be corrected, and why? and 4) Are there differences between students' and teachers' preferences and reasons regarding the usefulness of different amounts of WCF, types of WCF, and types of errors to be corrected? Results revealed a gap between what the students expect and what the teacher provides for them. Most of the students thought it would be beneficial if the teacher was able to correct all errors that the students had made. However, the teacher would like to provide a medium for the students to self-correct to increase student autonomy in their learning. The article concludes that teachers need to discuss openly with the students on the rationale of teachers' actions regarding WCF.

2. Research Method

2.1. Research context

The study took place at an upper secondary school located in the southern region of Malaysia. The school consists of only 16 and 17-year-old students who learn English as a compulsory subject that will be tested in the Malaysian National Examination Certificate. As part of the writing syllabus, students have to learn to write different forms of writing such as descriptive, narrative, and argumentative composition creatively and relevantly using accurate spelling, punctuation, and grammar.

2.2. Research participants

The participants of this study were three teachers and 64 students (27 males and 37 females) from three different classes, namely 5H, 5P, and 5Q, with a class size ranging from 24 to 26 students. All of the students were 16-year-old second-language speakers of English and speak Malay as their first language.

The three female teachers taught three different classes (Class 5H, 5P, and 5Q). All of them ranged in age and teaching experience, but are qualified teachers as they possessed a bachelor's degree majoring in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESL) and have had a minimum of 5 years of experience teaching English.

2.3. Instrument of the study

Since this is a survey research, two sets of questionnaires were used in this research: one for students and one for teachers. The questionnaires were adapted from two pieces of research conducted by Lee (2008) and Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), which examined the same research content. The students' questionnaire consists of three sections: Section A (Personal Background), Section B (Students' Preferences), and Section C (Teacher's Practices). Teacher's questionnaire consists of Section A (Teacher's Background) and Section B (Teacher's Practices and Preferences). Section B is divided into four sub-sections: frequency of feedback, types of feedback, follow-up action after feedback, and types of errors. These instruments were designed to collect both quantitative and qualitative data. Close-ended questions such as yes-no questions, ranking scales, multiple-choice and Likert-scale items were used to collect quantitative data. Open-ended questions were used to collect qualitative data to ensure the respondents (students and teachers) have the opportunity to elaborate on their responses.

2.4. Data analysis

To answer research question (1), the teacher's responses to the Teacher's Questionnaire were analysed, and to answer research question (2), students' responses to the Students Questionnaire were analysed. Finally, data from both questionnaires were combined and analysed to answer research question (3). Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS 19.0, whereas the qualitative data from the open-ended questions were categorized according to themes. Coding was used to analyze the comparison between students' preferences and teacher practices.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

1) Research question 1: What are the teachers' practices in marking students' compositions?

Teachers' practices and preferences on WCF are divided into four sections: frequency on providing WCF to students, types of feedback given, follow-up action after WCF, and types of errors. All the teachers frequently gave WCF to their students to help them in writing compositions. Teacher P and Teacher Q provided WCF frequently, while Teacher H provided WCF less frequently. The type of feedback the teachers provided differed from one another. Teacher H and Teacher Q corrected students' errors through direct unfocused corrective feedback, which was by underlining, correcting, and also explaining the errors made by the students. Teacher P gave her feedback without explaining the errors made by students in their compositions.

Follow-up actions are referred to as actions taken by the teachers after WCF has taken place. These actions are carried out by the teacher to ensure the students do not repeat the same error after the teacher has given WCF. After returning students' composition, all the teachers often gave teacher-group feedback by explaining errors made by the students in front of the class. They also frequently asked the students to work with a partner and correct their errors. Besides, Teacher H and Teacher Q reported that they prefer explaining the errors by meeting the students in person. Teacher P always asked her students to rewrite their essays.

After returning students' compositions, all the teachers indicated that they expect their students to meet them individually to discuss the errors made. Furthermore, Teacher H wants her students to correct some errors made in the compositions. At the same time, she expects her students to rewrite one paragraph of the essay by making necessary corrections of all kinds of errors made, which may include grammar, organisation, vocabulary, and punctuation. Teacher P also wants her students to do some corrections. Exchanging compositions with a partner is one of the actions expected from Teacher P. Lastly, Teacher Q expects her students to work in groups. She wants her students to work with a partner to exchange and improve the compositions in terms of errors made. All of the teachers do not expect students to read aloud the comments given. They also mentioned that asking students to work in groups to improve their composition is not an option. Furthermore, Teacher H and Teacher P do not expect the students to rewrite the whole composition. On the other hand, Teacher Q wants her students to correct all the errors rather than only some of the errors.

For types of error, grammatical and spelling errors were the most corrected by the teachers compared to others. According to the teachers in this study, correct usage of grammar and accurate spelling is regarded as the essence of writing compositions, especially for secondary school students. Therefore, the teachers paid extra attention to errors relating to spelling and grammar. However, the teacher often overlooked one aspect when giving WCF, which is vocabulary/ word choice. In terms of wrong usage of punctuation marks and organization, mixed responses were given by the teachers. Two teachers always corrected students' organizational errors, while one teacher did not correct her students' organizational errors. Teacher P and Teacher Q always corrected punctuation errors, while Teacher H did not correct her students' punctuation errors.

2) Research question 2: What are the students' expectations of WCF given by their teachers?

The second research question sought to explore students' perspectives and expectations in receiving WCF from their teachers.

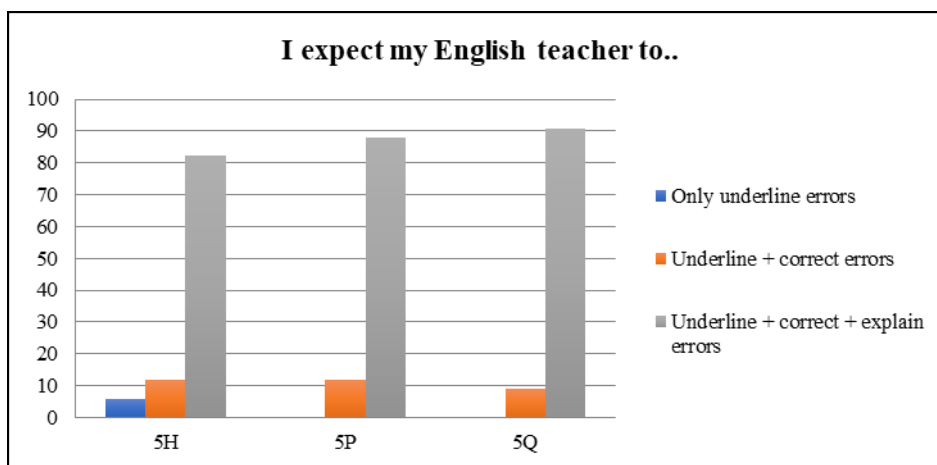


Fig. 1. Expectation of the type of WCF

Figure 1 displays students' expectations of the type of feedback given by the teachers. It is shown that students did not favour implicit error correction (i.e., simply underlining the errors). More than 80% of students from all three classes preferred their teachers to underline, correct, and explain the errors. Various comments were given by the respondents: some of the 5H students' comments are "because I could not understand most of the errors" and "My faults are sometimes underlined and scribbled, but I cannot understand unless the corrections are stated."

Other than that, students were asked to choose the characteristics of feedback that can assist their learning. More than three-quarter of the students from all three classes stated that they wanted to be given mark/ grade, feedback on their errors, and written comments every time after their teacher returned their compositions. The percentage of students who chose "mark/grade + feedback on my errors + written comments" are highly significant (5H: 88.2%, 5P: 84%, and 5Q: 63.6%), and this suggests that the students want the feedback to be as detailed as possible. None of the students wanted only grades/ marks, only responses to their errors, or only written comments.

In the student questionnaire, students were asked to choose activities they wanted their teacher to ask them to do "the most" and "the least". Findings are summarized in Table 1 and 2. Of the choices given, most students from all three classes wanted their teachers to ask them to correct all errors and ask them to meet the teacher individually more often. All students from 5Q particularly wanted their teacher to do more one-to-one sessions with them to obtain explanations on the errors.

Table 1. Activities That Should Be Done More Often

	5H (%)	5P (%)	5Q (%)
Correct all errors	80	92	89
Rewrite the whole composition	70	80	65
Meet him/ her individually	84	95	100
Work in groups to improve the composition	60	52	75

Table 2. Activities that Should be Done Least

Activities	5H (%)	5P (%)	5Q (%)
Read aloud his/her comments in class	75	89	92
Consult dictionaries/ grammar books on my own	95	80	78
Exchange my composition with a partner and correct each other's errors	80	75	83

Table 2 shows activities students less likely favour after teachers return compositions in class. Students from all three classes disliked their teacher asking them to consult dictionaries or grammar books independently. A possible reason for not wanting the autonomy could be their incompetency to understand grammar rules without any explanation from the teacher. Other than that, students also disliked their teacher asking them to exchange their compositions with a partner and correct each other’s errors and teacher reading aloud her comments in class.

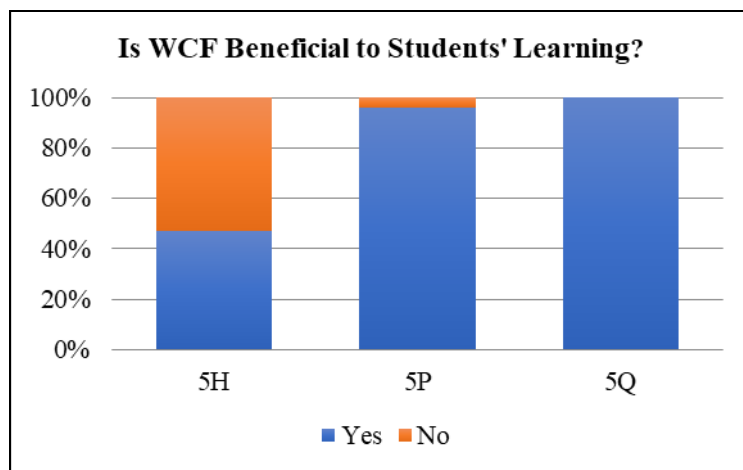


Fig. 2. Students' Attitude towards WCF

From Figure 2, it is evident that all 5Q students and a large percentage of 5P students believed that WCF given by their teacher is beneficial to their learning. They generally could understand feedback given by their teacher. There were many reasons mentioned by the students as to why they thought that their teacher’s WCF is beneficial. Among the reasons given were WCF could help them “notice [their] mistakes and know whether [they are] good or there are still things to improve”, “it can enhance [his] motivation to learn,” and “know [their] weaknesses.” Reasons why they could understand their teachers’ feedback were because “[her teacher] wrote her opinions in simple sentences so [she] can understand it” and “everything is clearly written, and comments are specific.” More than half of the students from 5H, however, had problems with WCF given by their teacher. A possible reason would be because 88.2% of 5H students reported that they often had difficulties in revising their compositions after receiving WCF from their teacher. The table below lists some of the reasons why most 5H students thought that WCF is unbeneficial.

Table 3. Students' Difficulties After Receiving Teacher's WCF

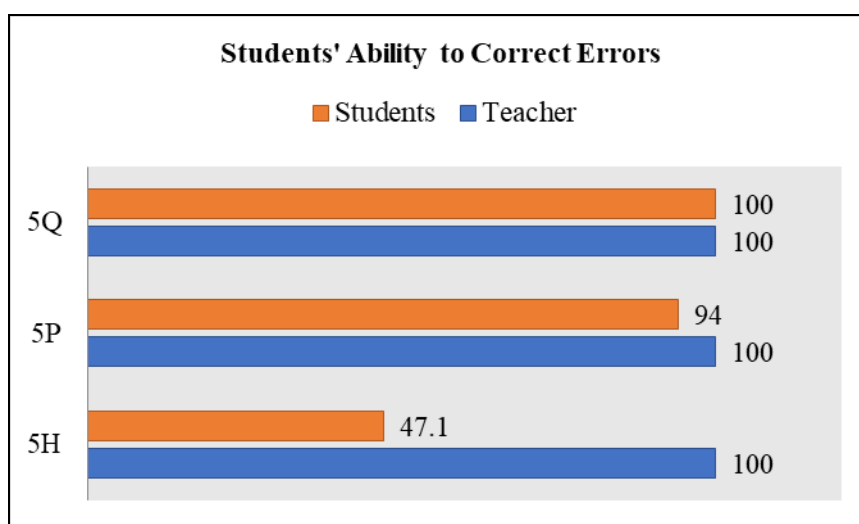
A. Inability to Understand Symbols Used
“because she always underline here and there, lots of patches she said but there is no corrective feedback to correct the mistakes I've done”
“I want her to state clearly what signs or symbols she uses and what need to be added to my essays”
“because I cant understand what were my mistakes on writing those essays. Usually she only use those symbols like Δ and _____ and I cant find out what did she mean”
B. Illegible Handwriting
“sometimes I don't know what's wrong with my essay and I sometimes I can't understand her writing”
C. Unclear Explanation
“teacher always make the correction unclear and difficult for me to understand”
D. Implicit Correction
“because teacher does not give the correct answer”

According to Table 3, five common problems relating to WCF are found. The most common problem was the students' inability to understand the symbols used. When marking students' exam papers, teachers are given guidelines set by the Ministry of Education. Teachers are required to use symbols while marking students' essays such as “ ” to show good/correct sentence, “ ” to show words used correctly, “^” for omissions of word, “_____” for structural error, “R” for repetition, and many others. However, some classes might not be familiar with the symbols and signs used, which could probably be why many students of 5H had difficulty in revising their compositions after receiving WCF. Other problems were illegible handwriting, unclear explanation, and implicit correction.

3) *Research Question 3: Are there any differences between students' expectations on the types and amount of feedback given and teachers' current practices? If yes, what are the differences?*

Students' preferences and teacher practices were compared according to their responses from the questionnaires given. Three themes emerged which are 1) the necessity of WCF 2) amount of WCF and 3) type of WCF. All three teachers believe that WCF is necessary for their students' learning. Students of 5Q, similarly believe that WCF is beneficial. However, less than half of students from 5H thought that WCF given by their teacher is beneficial. Several reasons as to why they responded differently were due to their inability to interpret codes and symbols used, no written comments and explicit correction made, and the amount of feedback given was very limited.

Figure 3 demonstrates that the students and teachers had similar opinions except for class 5H. 76% of the students from 5H believed that they could self-correct their errors after teacher's WCF. Their teacher, on the other hand, believed that the students were not able to self-correct their errors. This discrepancy illustrates that what the teacher believed the students could do was incongruent with what the students thought they could do. Furthermore, teachers from 5P and 5Q thought that their students could correct their errors. Similarly, their students agreed and strongly agreed that they could correct their errors (5P: 68%, 5Q: 77.3%). Although these students believed that they could correct their errors, quite a large number of students from class 5P (40%) reported that they had difficulty in revising their compositions after receiving teacher feedback due to reasons such as “my composition has too many red marks”, “sometimes, I cannot figure out my mistakes”, and “teacher does not give the correct answer”.



^a Ss (n=64) Ts (n=3)

Fig. 3. Students' Ability To Correct Errors

Students were also asked to comment on whether their teachers' WCF could improve their writing skills. All three teachers agreed that their WCF helped their students to improve their writing skills. 94% of students from 5P and 96% of students from 5Q agreed and strongly agreed. However,

there was another mismatch between Teacher 5H's practices and her students' opinions. More students (58.9%) from 5H thought that their teacher's WCF did not help them improve their writing skills. Teacher 5H, in contrast, thought that her feedback could help her students in writing.

Table 4. Teacher vs. Students' Responses

Class	How Teachers Correct Students' Errors	Students' Expectations (I prefer my English Teacher to..)	Percentage
5H	Underline, correct, and explain errors	Underline, correct, and explain my errors	82.4
		Underline and correct my errors	11.8
		Underline my errors	5.9
5P	Underline and correct errors	Underline, correct, and explain my errors	88
		Underline and correct my errors	12
		Underline my errors	0
5Q	Underline, correct, and explain errors	Underline, correct, and explain my errors	90.1
		Underline and correct my errors	9.1
		Underline my errors	0

The responses coded in yellow in Table 4 demonstrate that teacher's practices and students' expectations on the amount of any type of feedback match. From the table, it is clear that 82.4 % of students from class 5H and 90.1 % from 5Q responded that they preferred their teachers to underline, correct, and explain their errors. This expectation matches what their teachers have been practising in giving WCF in class. Interestingly, most students from 5P (88%) preferred their teacher to underline, correct, and explain their errors but their teacher did not often explain their errors. This indicates a mismatch between what the teacher practised and what the students needed.

Table 5. Teacher vs. Students' Responses

Class	Teacher's Type of Feedback Practices	Students' Expectations	Percentage
5H	Mark/ Grade, feedback on errors, and general written comments	• Only grades/ marks	0
		• Only responses to my errors	0
		• Only written comment	0
		• Mark/ grade and feedback on my errors	5.9
		• Mark/ grade and general written comments	5.9
		• Mark/grade, feedback on my errors, and general written comments	88.2
5P	Only written comment	• Only grades/ marks	0
		• Only responses to my errors	0
		• Only written comment	0
		• Mark/ grade and feedback on my errors	0
		• Mark/ grade and general written comments	12
		• Mark/grade, feedback on my errors, and general written comments	84
5Q	Only responses to my students' errors	• Only grades/ marks	9.1
		• Only responses to my errors	0
		• Only written comment	0
		• Mark/ grade and feedback on my errors	4.5
		• Mark/ grade and general written comments	22.7
		• Mark/grade, feedback on my errors, and general written comments	63.6

As shown in Table 5, only teacher 5H's practices match her students' expectations while Teacher 5P and 5Q's practices in giving WCF do not match the students' expectations. For instance, 84 % of students from 5P wanted their teachers to provide mark/grade, written comments, and feedback on

their errors, but their teacher only provided written comments without the grade and feedback on errors. Similarly, many students from 5Q (63.6%) preferred their teacher to give mark/grade, written comments, and feedback on their errors while 22.7% preferred their teacher to give mark/grade and written comments. The teacher's practice, however, did not align with the students' expectations, as she only gave responses to her students' errors without any grade or feedback. Again, this illustrates a considerably significant mismatch between teacher and students' preferences.

2.5. Discussion

The current study found that students from all three classes mainly agreed that WCF from their teachers contributed most to their improvement in writing skills (76%) and is beneficial to their learning (84%). This high percentage suggests that WCF is necessary despite the challenges faced by the students and the inconsistencies between teacher's practices and students' expectations. Although some students argued that they often could not understand their teacher's feedback and could not correct them, teachers' use of symbols and markers helped them notice that there were errors in their compositions. As emphasised by Ellis et al. (2008), bringing the student's attention to errors will help their language development as errors allow them to notice the correct form, and later internalize the rule. However, this does not mean that teachers can mark students' compositions on the surface level without giving attention to specific linguistic features. Students still should be given continuous guidance on areas they can improve in writing.

Findings indicate that most students and teachers agreed that WCF is beneficial (96 %: 5P, 100%: 5Q), except for students of class 5H (47.1%). Here, it should be pointed out that some students may benefit more than others due to a variety of reasons such as motivation, learning styles, and metalinguistic background knowledge (Ferris, 2010). From the students' written responses, the reasons why they did not benefit from their teacher's WCF could be because of their low interest towards the subject where 58.9 % 5H students have "very low", "low" and "somewhat low" interest towards English language and limited proficiency in the language. This finding can somehow highlight that interest in the subject may also influence how much students can benefit from teacher's feedback, as highlighted by Ferris (2010).

It is demonstrated that 5P and 5Q students' preferences did not align with their teachers' as they needed more feedback than what their teachers were capable of giving and they wanted their teacher to correct all errors made. The teacher, however, would like to provide a medium for the students to self-correct as it is one way to increase student autonomy in their learning. This finding is similar to findings obtained by other researchers where language learners wanted more correction than they were receiving from their teachers (Rashtchi & Abu Bakar, 2019; Black & Nanni, 2016 and Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010).

It is interesting to note that most students in this present study highly valued explicit feedback over implicit feedback as they believed that they could not correct their own errors due to limited grammar knowledge. Therefore, students did not only want their teachers to underline errors, but also correct and explain the errors. This type of feedback is identified as metalinguistic information, which entails teachers giving explanations, rules, and correct grammar usage. They may also include using codes like PT for Past Tense in which the intention is to help L2 learners to understand the errors made (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

Most students from 5H viewed WCF as beneficial, but they believed that teachers could not just use symbols and underline errors as they did not know how to correct their errors. The inability to self-correct makes it difficult for students to acquire language and improve language skills. As opposed to students from 5Q, they agreed that WCF is beneficial because "[her teacher] wrote her opinions in simple sentences so [she] can understand it" and "everything is clearly written, and comments are specific." From this finding, we can say that there are certain best practices or quality that can make the feedback beneficial to the students (it can result in acquisition). As Ferris (1999) suggests, clear and consistent correction can promote language acquisition. In this study, most students believe that feedback should be specific, detailed, and precise to improve students' learning.

Although self-correction has been found to promote acquisition (Lyster, 2004; Ferris, 2006), most of the students in this study were not willing to self-correct. This finding is consistent with what Lee (2005) has found in which students preferred direct feedback as opposed to indirect or implicit feedback because they mostly did not understand grammar rules. Ellis (2009) states that, it is impossible to allow learners to self-correct their errors if they do not have the necessary linguistic knowledge to do so. Ferris (1999), in contrast, indicates that the effectiveness of implicit or indirect feedback yields different results when employed with varying contexts and participants. For instance, one of the findings from her study suggests that students with higher levels of proficiency should be given more opportunities to correct their errors while students with lower proficiency should be given a lot of guidance and support on how to correct their errors (Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

Several researchers pointed out that direct feedback paired with rule reminders or explanations, either written or oral, is necessary to improve students' writing skills (Bitchener & Knoch, 2001; Sheen, 2007). However, these researches were done in experimental settings, and to expect teachers to write explicit feedback with explanations every time after assigning a composition task per the students' preference may seem unrealistic. On the other hand, there are other aspects for teachers to pay attention to other than correcting specific linguistic features such as organization, content, and ideas. These demands explain why teachers may sometimes result in just giving written comments at the end of the students' compositions rather than correcting every single error done by the students (Ferris, 2010). As mentioned by Teacher P, for example, she could only give written comments to her students' compositions due to time constraints since there were many other activities to be done in class. Hyland & Hyland (2006) also support this finding. They believe that students should be active and proactive agents in the feedback process by learning to correct their errors after receiving teacher feedback.

4. Conclusion

This study found that there were gaps between students' expectations and teachers' practices. While it is crucial for teachers to know and understand what exactly students prefer when dealing with WCF, the truth is fulfilling individual differences, needs, and attitudes is indeed demanding and challenging. Based on the findings, there are suggestions for teachers and students to help them utilize WCF to benefit both parties. What can be suggested for teachers would be to:

- a. ensure that the usage of symbols and markers used to indicate WCF are clearly understood by students.
- b. note down and group all errors that are found and made by the students and discuss it as a whole in class by the end of the week. In this way, information-sharing can be cultivated.
- c. implement cooperative/collaborative writing activity to monitor large groups of students.
- d. cultivate independent learning among the students to instil learner autonomy
- e. explain every rationale of teachers' action so that it does not create confusion among the students.

This study can be consolidated with further research to obtain a clearer picture of WCF. In this study, WCF was viewed in a very specific context, which was through secondary school students' compositions. Findings were also self-reported. For future studies, researchers could possibly pay more attention to broader contextual factors and collect data from various variables such as classroom observations and interviews to obtain more in-depth findings.

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