

Written Corrective Feedback in Narratives: Teacher Styles and Learners' Responses

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Abstract— This qualitative study examined the written corrective feedback (WCF) style employed by an English teacher in correcting Grade 7 learners' written narratives and explored the learners' responses to that feedback. Anchored in constructionism and symbolic interactionism, the study used a single-case design involving 20 purposively selected Grade 7 learners and one English teacher in a public secondary school. Data were gathered through learners' original and revised written narratives, an audio-recorded in-depth interview with the teacher, and a video-recorded focus group discussion with the learners. Thematic analysis revealed that the teacher predominantly employed direct written corrective feedback through encircling, underlining, crossing out errors, explicitly correcting spelling, word choice, and verb tense, and adding words or sentences to improve construction. Learners generally preferred direct WCF because it helped them detect errors easily and understand corrections better. Their uptake was largely successful, as most were able to incorporate the teacher's corrections into revised drafts. While some scholars question the long-term effectiveness of grammar correction, the findings of this study suggest that direct WCF remains valuable for beginner L2 writers. The results highlight the importance of scaffolding feedback within classroom writing instruction, particularly for early secondary learners.

Keywords— Learner Responses, Narratives, Teacher Feedback, Written Corrective Feedback.

I. INTRODUCTION

Written corrective feedback (WCF) remains one of the most widely used instructional strategies in second language writing classrooms. Many teachers consider it essential in helping learners improve writing accuracy, grammar, spelling, punctuation, and overall clarity. However, despite its widespread use, its effectiveness continues to be debated in second language acquisition and L2 writing research.

In classroom practice, teachers devote considerable time to correcting learner errors, yet students often continue to make the same mistakes. This has led some scholars to question whether error correction truly leads to long-term improvement. Others maintain that WCF is indispensable because it guides, motivates, and supports learners in developing better writing habits.

This study focused on Grade 7 learners' written narratives and the English teacher's feedback practices. Specifically, it sought to identify the WCF style employed by the teacher, describe how that style was implemented, and examine learners' responses to

it. The study is grounded in the belief that the early secondary level is a crucial stage for developing writing competence, especially among learners beginning more formal L2 writing tasks.

II. THEORETICAL AND RESEARCH PERSPECTIVES

The study was anchored on constructionism as its epistemological perspective and interpretivism, specifically symbolic interactionism, as its theoretical perspective. Constructionism views knowledge as socially constructed through interaction between people and their world. In this study, meanings about teacher feedback and learner response were understood as emerging from classroom interaction.

Symbolic interactionism further supported the study by emphasizing that people act based on meanings developed through social interaction and modified through interpretation. This perspective was suitable for examining how learners interpreted their teacher's feedback and how those interpretations shaped their responses.

The study was also informed by Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) and the concept of scaffolding. The teacher, as the more knowledgeable other, provided guidance through written corrective feedback, allowing learners to improve their writing performance with support.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) has long been discussed in both L2 writing and SLA research. Supporters argue that WCF helps learners notice gaps between their current interlanguage and the target language. The Noticing Hypothesis proposed by Schmidt (1990) suggests that learners must consciously notice language forms to acquire them, while the Output Hypothesis advanced by Swain (1985) proposes that writing and revising push learners to process language more deeply.

At the same time, scholars such as Truscott (1996) have objected to grammar correction, arguing that it may lead only to explicit knowledge rather than genuine acquisition, may not align with learners'

developmental readiness, and may even create anxiety or dependence.

Three major WCF types commonly appear in the literature: 1. Direct WCF: the teacher provides the correct form; 2. Indirect WCF: the teacher indicates an error without supplying the correction; 3. Metalinguistic WCF: the teacher uses codes or comments to identify error types.

Prior studies have shown mixed results, but several suggest that beginner learners often prefer and benefit from direct WCF because it is more explicit and easier to understand.

IV. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This study used a qualitative single-case study design. It focused on one group of 20 Grade 7 learners and their English teacher in a public secondary school. Document analysis was used alongside interviews and focus group discussion to capture both feedback practices and learner responses.

B. Research Participants

Participant/Group	Number	Description
English teacher	1	Teacher handling Grade 7 writing class
Grade 7 learners	20	Purposively selected regular class learners

The 20 learners were chosen based on their suitability as informants for the study. They were from one Grade

7 regular section and represented a mix of average and advanced learners.

C. Data Sources

The study used multiple sources of data for triangulation:

Research Question	Data Sources
WCF style used by teacher	Teacher interview, learner FGD, corrected narratives
How teacher employed WCF	Corrected narratives, learner FGD
Learner responses to WCF	Learner FGD, revised narratives

D. Data Gathering Procedures

The teacher assigned three narrative writing tasks: 1. My Favorite Dish; 2. My Most Unforgettable Experience; and 3. What I Want to Become in the Future.

For each task, learners submitted an original draft, the teacher corrected it, and learners then revised their

work by incorporating the feedback. In total, 60 written outputs were corrected.

The researcher also conducted an audio-recorded in-depth interview with the teacher and a video-recorded focus group discussion with the learners.

E. Data Analysis

The study used thematic analysis following Braun and Clarke's process: familiarizing with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the report.

Learners' narratives and revised outputs were also analyzed to determine uptake.

F. Ethical Considerations

Consent was secured from the teacher, learners, and parents. Confidentiality was observed through pseudonyms, and participants were informed that participation was voluntary and withdrawal was allowed at any time.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Teacher's Practice of WCF

Findings showed that the teacher predominantly employed direct written corrective feedback. In the interview, she explained that she explicitly provided the correct form for learners' errors in spelling, capitalization, punctuation, and sentence construction.

The learners' accounts confirmed this. They described the teacher as someone who encircled, crossed out, replaced, and added words directly on their papers.

B. How the Teacher Employed Direct WCF

Three major themes emerged regarding how the teacher implemented direct WCF:

1) Encircles, underlines, and crosses out errors

The teacher marked error locations clearly through encircling, underlining, and crossing out. These visible markings drew learners' attention to specific language problems.

2) Makes explicit corrections on spelling, word choice, and verb tense

She directly wrote correct forms beside learner errors. Corrections commonly addressed: spelling, capitalization, punctuation, verb tense, and word choice.

3) Adds words or sentences to improve construction

The teacher also expanded or rephrased learner sentences to make ideas clearer and grammatically acceptable. This showed that her feedback addressed not only form but also sentence construction and meaning.

C. Learners' Preferred WCF Style

The learners unanimously preferred direct WCF. They wanted the teacher to provide the correct form immediately rather than use error codes or leave errors for them to solve independently.

D. Reasons for Learners' Preference

Two themes emerged:

1) Detect error easily

Learners said direct feedback made it easier to identify what was wrong in their writing.

2) Understand the correction better

They also said direct corrections helped them understand the proper form more clearly and avoid repeating the same mistake.

E. Learner Uptake

Learner uptake was generally successful. Most learners incorporated the teacher's corrections into their revised drafts. This was observed across corrections involving capitalization, spelling, verb tense, plurality, and sentence construction.

Some instances of unsuccessful uptake were still noted, especially when learners failed to apply a correction consistently across the entire text. Even so, most revisions reflected understanding and application of teacher feedback.

F. Learners' Reflections

Two major reflections emerged from the focus group discussion:

1) The teacher's role in giving WCF is very important

Learners recognized the value of teacher correction in improving their writing.

2) Learners can correct their errors and improve through teacher help

They acknowledged that teacher feedback enabled them to revise their work and write better. At the same time, one learner emphasized the need to eventually learn self-correction, suggesting the importance of learner autonomy.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study found that the teacher employed direct written corrective feedback as the dominant strategy in correcting Grade 7 learners' written narratives. This was manifested through explicit corrections, visible error marking, and sentence-level reformulation.

Learners responded positively to this feedback style. They preferred it because it made errors easier to identify and corrections easier to understand. Their revised outputs further showed largely successful uptake.

These findings suggest that direct WCF is particularly appropriate for beginner or lower-proficiency L2 writers. However, while direct feedback is effective for immediate revision, teachers may also need to gradually introduce strategies that promote self-editing and learner independence.

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