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## An Investigation of the Preferences of Iraqi Students Studying English as a Foreign Language Regarding Written Corrective Feedback in College Level Writing Classrooms

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بحث ميول الطلاب العراقيين الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية بشأن التغذية  
الراجعة التصحيحية التحريرية في صفوف تعلم الكتابة على مستوى الكلية

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## **An Investigation of the Preferences of Iraqi Students Studying English as a Foreign Language Regarding Written Corrective Feedback in College Level Writing Classrooms**

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### المستخلص

أجريت هذه الدراسة لبحث ما تفضله عينة من طالبات الكليات العراقية والدارسات اللغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة أجنبية اجنبية بخصوص التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية في صفوف تعليم الكتابة. وقد تم بحث هذا الموضوع بالنظر لأهميته ولأنه لم يتطرق الباحثين ولم تتقدم أي دراسة من قبل تخص مفضلات العراقيين من طلاب الكليات العراقية والدارسين اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة اجنبية بخصوص التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية. تهدف الدراسة لاستقصاء مقدار التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية الذي تعتبره عينة من العراقيات من طالبات الكليات العراقية والدارسات اللغة الإنكليزية بوصفها لغة اجنبية مفيدا لها. كما تهدف الدراسة لبحث ما تفضله تلك العينة من أنواع التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية ولبحث الأسباب التي دفعت تلك العينة من الطالبات لاختيار تلك الأنواع. إضافة الى ذلك تهدف الدراسة الى تحديد أنواع الأخطاء التي نجد العينة المذكورة من الطالبات تصحيحها مفيدا من قبل الأستاذ والأسباب التي دفعت الطالبات لتفضيل أنواع معينة من الأخطاء لغرض التصحيح. ولتحقيق ذلك، وضفت الدراسة استبانة لجمع المعلومات. وتطوعت عينة مكونة من ٨٠ طالبة من طالبات قسم اللغة الإنكليزية من كلية التربية للبنات من الجامعة العراقية لملى الاستبانة. ولتحليل المعطيات الكمية الناتجة من الاستبانة فقد تم استخدام احصائيات وصفية مستخدمة التكرارات والنسب المئوية. وأظهرت النتائج اختلاف المشاركات في تفضيلهن للمقدار الأخطاء الواجب تصحيحها. حيث فضل العديد من المشاركات ان يقوم استاذهن بتصحيح كل الأخطاء ماعدا الصغيرة منها. كما فضل بعض المشاركات ان يقوم استاذهن بتصحيح كل الأخطاء. إضافة الى ذلك فضل العديد من المشاركات ان يقوم استاذهن بتصحيح الأخطاء المتكررة. اما بالنسبة لنوع التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية الذي تفضله المشاركات في الدراسة الحالية، فقد تبين ان العديد من المشاركات فضلن تقنية التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية المتضمنة تصحيح الاستاذ للخطأ الكتابي مع كتابة تعليق. وكذلك فضل نصف المشاركات تصحيح الأستاذ للخطأ الكتابي. كما فضل بعض المشاركات تقنية التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية المتضمنة إعطاء توجيهات تمكن الطالبة من تصحيح الخطأ ذاتيا.

الكلمات المفتاحية

ميول ، الطلاب الدارسين اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة اجنبية ، التغذية الراجعة التصحيحية، صفوف تعلم الكتابة في الكلية

### Abstract

This study was carried out to investigate the preferences of Iraqi college students studying English as Foreign Language (EFL) with respect to written Corrective Feedback (CF) in their writing classrooms. The present study seeks to fill the gap in research concerning written CF in Iraqi college EFL writing classrooms since the preferences of Iraqi college EFL students regarding written CF have not explored yet. It aims to examine the amount of written CF a sample of Iraqi college EFL students considers useful. It also aims to examine the types of written CF this sample of Iraqi college EFL students thinks most valuable, and their reasons for preferring certain kinds of corrective strategies. In addition, this research aims to find out the types of errors this sample of Iraqi college EFL students regard useful to be corrected, and why they prefer certain types of errors. To do this the current study employed a questionnaire for collecting data. A sample of 80 Iraqi college EFL female students of the department of English language of College of Education for women of Al Iraqyia university in Baghdad volunteered to fill the questionnaire. Descriptive statistics using frequencies and percentages were used to analyse the quantitative data from the questionnaire. The findings indicated that the participants in this study differed in their preferences concerning the amounts of errors to be corrected, since many of them preferred their instructor to correct all errors but not the minor ones. Other participants liked their instructor to correct all errors. It was also found that most of the participants in the present study preferred receiving written CF on repeated errors. Concerning written CF, the participants also differed in their preferable choices. For example, many of the participants in this research highly favoured the technique of written CF that was correction with comments. Over half of the participants liked the technique of teacher correction. Furthermore, some students preferred the technique of written CF which was clues or directions on how fix an error.

## 1. Introduction

Corrective Feedback (CF), either oral or written, is defined as “responses to learner utterances that contain an error” (Ellis & Shitani, 2014, p.249). CF has a great value in language teaching and learning. The importance of written grammatical CF is stated by Ferris (1999) as follows: First, feedback allows language learners to refine their text. Second, feedback helps students to be more accurate in their writing over time. Third, giving and receiving CF is very useful for both instructors and their students. Finally, writing without errors is of a great value in the actual world.

Written CF is of three main kinds, namely; direct, indirect and metalinguistic written CF. Direct written CF is when “the teacher provides the student with the correct form” ( Ellis, 2008, p.99), indirect written CF “ The teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction” ( Ellis, 2008, p.98), and the metalinguistic written CF means that “The teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error”(Ellis, 2008, p.98).

In spite of the great benefits that written CF brings to language learners, little is known about the preferences of Iraqi college students studying English as Foreign Language (EFL) about written CF in the writing classrooms. The hope to ascertain the current state of written CF among Iraqi college EFL students led to a growing interest to investigate the preferences of a sample of Iraqi college EFL students with respect to written CF in their writing classrooms.

This study seeks to fill the gap in research concerning written CF in Iraqi college EFL writing classrooms since, as far as the researcher knows, no up to date study has been conducted to explore the preferences of Iraqi college EFL students regarding written CF. Thus, the present study aims:

- (1) To investigate the amount of written CF a sample of Iraqi college EFL students considers useful,
- (2) To examine the types of written CF a sample of Iraqi college EFL students thinks most useful, and their reasons for preferring certain kinds of corrective strategies,
- (3) To find out the types of errors a sample of Iraqi college EFL students regards useful to be corrected, their reasons for preferring certain types of errors.

More specifically, this study addresses the following research questions:

1. What amounts of written CF does a sample of Iraqi college EFL students think most useful?
2. What types of written CF does a sample of Iraqi college EFL students consider most useful? And why?
3. What types of errors does a sample of Iraqi college EFL students think most useful to be corrected? And why?

The layout of this research is as follows. Relevant research of written CF is reviewed in Section 2. Section 3 deals with the methodology of this study. The results of the present study will be presented in Section 4. Section 5 is devoted to a discussion of the research findings.

## 2. Review of the Literature

First of all, section 2 of this study defines the word preferences which is, according to Aydin and Ayranci (2018), when an individual chooses one thing over another because he or she favors it. This section also reviews the research investigating students' preferences in EFL writing, especially those concentrating on students' preferences of three constructs of written CF, namely; the amount of written CF, the strategies for providing written CF and the types of errors need to be corrected.

Under the amount of written CF, two types of written CF fall that are unfocused and focussed written CF. Unfocused written CF is defined as “Teachers can select to correct all of the students' errors” (Ellis, 2008, p.102). Whereas focused written CF means teachers can choose “specific error types for correction” (Ellis, 2008, p.102).

Regarding the strategies for providing written CF, there are three main strategies for namely; direct, indirect, and metalinguistic which are all defined in section 1 of this research.

Concerning the types of errors need to be corrected, these kinds include organisation grammar, content/ idea, punctuation, spelling, and vocabulary errors.

Written CF preferences of students have been examined by seven studies (Leki ,1991; Lee, 2005; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Chen, Nassaji & Liu, 2016; Haishan & Qingshun, 2017; Hartono, Anwar& Murtiningrum, 2019; Saragih, Madya, Siregar, Saragih,

2021) worldwide and one study (Al Hajri & Al-Mahrooqi, 2013) in the Arab Homeland.

Leki (1991) finds that the sample of college students studying English as second language in the United State of America mostly preferred their teachers to mark their errors to them. Many of the students in Leki's study (1991) also liked their grammatical errors to be corrected more than other errors in organisation and content. Furthermore, those students disliked their teachers' strategy of providing vague written CF on their grammatical errors by giving little hint about what is wrong with the form and how to correct the structure.

Lee (2005) finds that the written CF preferences of 320 Chinese secondary school students were as follows: first, 82% of those students preferred their teachers to mark all their errors by either underlining or circling (i.e. comprehensive correction). For those students this would be helpful to avoid repeating the same errors. Second, 75.2% of the students relied on their teachers to correct all their errors since this would make the correction easier for them. Third, 75.7% wished their teachers to use the correction codes because these "codes would enable them to understand the type of error they made. Also the codes could facilitate the error identification" (Lee, 2005, p.8).

Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) reveal the written CF preferences of 33 adult students who were studying English as a second language at two private English schools in Canada. Concerning the amount of written CF, 93.9% preferred their teachers to correct all their errors because they thought that written CF is useful for

learning how to write effectively. Also 9.1% liked all majors errors to corrected but not the minor ones. In addition, many of those students (78.1%) accepted the idea that their instructor should correct their repeated errors every time they occur. Regarding the type of written CF, the students liked their errors to be corrected explicitly by using a comment and clear explanation of the errors. Those students justified their choice of explicit written CF by saying that “explicit types of WCF allow them to remember their errors and understand how to fix them. Most students explained that a clue with no correction is not useful because students need more specific advice” (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010, p.115). Concerning, the types of errors the students think useful to be corrected, those students approved the correction of errors in the areas of grammar, punctuation, spelling and vocabulary. Receiving written CF on errors in these areas, those students wanted to reduce the number of errors in their writing and to produce well-written texts.

Al Hajri and Al-Mahrooqi (2013) find that the majority of the sample that consisted of 75 Omani EFL students “view feedback positively, for they contend that feedback is essential for their writing development. They also prefer comprehensible feedback that targets as many errors as possible by underlining them and providing codes for each error type” ( Al Hajri and Al-Mahrooqi, 2013, p. 91). Most of those EFL Omani students preferred written CF that focused on errors in all language areas, such as grammar, spelling, vocabulary, organisation of ideas and paragraphs. Concerning the amount of written CF provided by teachers, most of the students liked all their errors to be marked in order to learn from these errors and avoid repeating them.



Chen et.al. (2016) find that the majority of the sample that consisted of 64 college EFL students in Mainland China showed great interest in comprehensive written CF that is thorough and filled of details since such type of written CF enables them to identify their repeated errors and it improves their ability to write efficiently. Asking those students about the most preferred error type to be marked, they mostly liked errors of organisation, followed by errors in grammar and vocabulary choice. Many of those participants also preferred the strategy of providing written CF that depended mainly on “locating the error and also indicating the type of error” (Chen et.al., 2016, p.9). The participants’ second favourite strategy was “correcting the error and then providing an explanation for the correction” (Chen et.al., 2016, p.10).

Haishan and Qingshun (2017) reveal the written CF preferences of 64 Chinese EFL secondary school students. The results showed that most of the participants liked to receive written CF from their teachers and that half of those participants preferred their teachers to mark all their errors. Asking those students about their favourite written CF strategy, they showed great interest in indirect written CF that included symbols referring to their errors and making it easier for them to correct those errors.

Hartono et.al. (2019) find that the sample that consisted of 42 Indonesian college EFL students preferred receiving comprehensive written CF from their lecturers since they regarded such CF valuable to enhance their writing skills. The participants liked written CF provided on types of errors such as grammar, vocabulary, spelling, organisation, and punctuation. They mostly preferred written CF on grammatical errors. They also preferred

the direct strategy of written CF in which the lecturers underlined and made notes of students' errors.

Saragih et.al. (2021) reveal the written CF preferences of 387 Indonesian EFL college students. The results showed that most of the participants liked to receive written CF from their lecturers because they believed that written CF helped them to realise their errors and to avoid making these reoccurring errors. In addition, the direct written CF was the most preferable technique for those participants followed by the metalinguistic and the indirect one.

The review of the literature shows that comprehensive written CF was a students' popular preference. That written CF was the one that focused on correcting all students' errors especially in grammar, vocabulary, spelling, organisation and punctuation. The most preferable technique for most of the students was the direct written CF which means the teacher identifies students' errors by underlining, circling and, making notes.

### **3. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1 The Participants**

The participants of the present study were 80 Iraqi college EFL female students of the department of English language of College of Education for women of Al Iraqyia university in Baghdad. All of the participants were from the second academic college stage and who were taking a course in academic writing.

#### **3.2. The Research Instrument**

The instrument designed, especially for this study is a six-page questionnaire

(the Student Questionnaire) ( see Appendix A), and it is about the students' preferences of written CF in their college level EFL writing classrooms. It is constructed and based on Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) and Chen et.al. (2016). It consists of five questions that have mainly aimed at identifying the sample of Iraqi EFL students' preferences of written CF. These questions are of various types which include close-ended (e.g. multiple choice and yes-no questions), open-ended questions, and Likert-scale items.

#### **3.3 The Research Procedure**

To ensure the content validity of the questionnaire used in this study, a panel of experts in applied linguistics reviewed the primary version of the questionnaire and changes were made in the survey based on their feedback. The validated questionnaire was tested by conducting a pilot study from 2 to 29 February, 2021. A reliability analysis was used to ascertain the reliability of the questionnaire and it yielded a Cronback Alfa 7.2 for the questionnaire items. The study was conducted during the month of March, 2021 and the participants were requested to complete the

six-page questionnaire. The data collected by the student questionnaire were calculated by the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) (14.0). All the questions of the student questionnaire were coded and entered into SPSS. After entering the data obtained by the questionnaire, descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages) were calculated for the questions addressing the students' preferences of written CF in their college level EFL writing classrooms.

#### **4. Data Analysis and Results**

Section four reports the data analysis and the results of the present study. The results obtained from analysing the data collected by the student questionnaire are presented. They are presented with regard to the following points:

1. Amounts of written CF
2. Types of written CF
3. Types of errors to be corrected

##### **4.1 Amounts of written CF**

Question 1 (Q1) reads, *If there are many errors in your writing, what do you prefer your instructor to do?* The results of Q1 showed that 47.5% of the participants in this study preferred their instructor to correct all errors but not the minor ones and that 36.3% liked their instructor to correct all errors. Only 22.5% of the students in this research showed interest in the response that their instructor should correct most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them ( see Table 1).

The participants in this research gave explanations for their preferences. In general, 22.5% of the students in this study

explained their choices of the amount of written CF by saying that they “want to learn from mistakes and develop their writing”. More specifically, 15.3% of the participants commented on their preference that *their instructor should correct all their errors* by saying that they “ liked receiving this amount of written CF because they want to know their mistakes and to avoid making them again”. The other participants 20.0% whose favoured choice was that *My instructor should correct all errors, but not the minor ones* commented on their choice by saying “it can be discouraging to correct too many errors ”.

**Table 1 Students’ responses to different amounts of CF**

Question No.	My instructor should correct all errors.	My instructor should correct all errors, but not the minor ones.	My instructor should correct most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them.	My instructor should correct a few of the major errors.	My instructor should correct only the errors that interfere with communicating my ideas	My instructor should correct no errors and respond only to the ideas and content.
Q.1	36.3%	47.5%	22.5%	11.3%	10.0%	10.0%

To further examine the amount of written CF, the participants were requested to answer question 2 (Q2) that reads, *If an error is repeated in a student’s writing more than once do you think it is useful to correct it each time it occurs?* The results of Q2 showed that 91.3% of the participants preferred receiving written CF on repeated errors ( see Table 2).

**Table 2 Students' responses to correction of repeated errors**

Question No.	Yes	No
Q.2	91.3%	8.8%

#### 4.2 The Types of Written CF

Item three of the student questionnaire investigated the students' preferences of different kinds of written CF. The kinds of written CF were shown by an example for each (see Table 3 and appendix A), and the participants were asked to rate them (1 = *not very useful*, 2 = *not useful*, 3 = *doesn't matter*, 4 = *quite useful*, and 5 = *very useful*). The results showed that 66.3% of the participants highly preferred the technique of written CF that was *correction with comments* (i.e. the instructor corrects errors and makes comments). The second preferable choice of 47.5% of the students in this study was the technique of *teacher correction* (i.e. the instructor corrects errors). In addition, 32.5% of the participants found this technique quite useful. The third favourable technique of written CF chosen by 28.8% of the students in this research was *clues or directions on how fix an error* (i.e. the instructor gives clues and directions on how a student corrects his or her errors). However, 27.5% of the students rated this technique as *Not very useful*. The results also uncovered the techniques of written CF that were unfavourable by the participants in this study and they were as follows: 53.8% of the participants rated the technique of *No feedback on an error* as *Not very useful*. Also, 41.3% of the students disliked the technique of *Error identification* (i.e. the instructor points out where the errors occur, but no errors are

corrected) and rated it as *Not very useful*. In addition, 40.0% of the students in this study did not favour the technique of *Commentary* (i.e. the instructor gives feedback by making comments about errors, but no errors are corrected) and rated it *Not useful*. Finally, 27.5% and 21.3% of the participants in this research found the technique of *A personal comment on the content* (i.e. the instructor gives feedback by making comments on the ideas and content, but no errors are corrected) as *Not very useful* and *Not useful* respectively ( see Table 3).

**Table 3 Participants’ responses to different types of written CF**

Types of written CF	Not very useful	Not useful	doesn't matter	Quite useful	Very useful
Clues or directions on how to fix an error.	27.5	13.8	18.8	11.3	28.8
Error identification	41.3	30.0	8.8	11.3	8.8
Correction with comments	10.0	6.3	7.5	10.0	66.3
Teacher correction	8.8	5.0	6.3	32.5	47.5
Commentary	27.5	40.0	15.0	7.5	10.0
No feedback on an error	53.8	26.3	18.8	1.3	0
A personal comment on the content	27.5	21.3	16.3	18.8	16.3

Item 4 of the students questionnaire requested the participants in this study to give reasons for their choices for each type of feedback in item 3.

*For clues or directions of how to fix an error* (i.e. the instructor gives clues and directions on how a student corrects his or her errors), 13.75% of the participants believed that this technique of providing written CF was not useful and helpful because as the students in this research wrote “the book referred to by the instructor may include lots of information and it is difficult for the student to find the correct answer, and therefore, he or she may leave the error without any correction”. The participants commented on this

procedure of written CF by saying “the instructor is responsible for providing the correct answer”. One participant mentioned that “this technique of written CF is not suitable for students of different proficiency levels”.

On the other hand, seven of the participants in this study gave another explanation for their choice of this procedure of providing written CF by saying that “it is a very useful and interesting procedure which motivates the student to look for the correction of his or her mistake in the book referred to by his or her instructor and to learn from the mistake, and thus to avoid making the same mistake again”. One participant commented that “this technique of providing written CF makes it easy for the student to find the correction of his or her error”.

For *error identification* (i.e. the instructor points out where the errors occur, but no errors are corrected) 22.5% of the participants in this study demonstrated that this technique of providing written CF “is not very useful and misleading because the student does not exactly know the correct answer, and therefore he or she does not learn from his or her error”. One participant further commented by saying that “this procedure of written CF is not very useful since it may lead the students to find different correct answers to an error because they do not know the exact correct answer”. Three participants added that “the instructor should write the correct answer of an error. Doing this, the instructor helps his or her students to learn from their errors and to avoid repeating them”. Conversely, five of the students in this study had different opinion concerning this procedure of written CF and they regarded it very useful as “it motivates the student to look for the correct answer of an error in the book or any other sources and consequently, this student will gain more knowledge about his or her error and its correction”.

For *correction with comments* (i.e. the instructor corrects errors and makes comments), 38.75% of the participants in this study provided explanations showing that those participants believed that “this technique of written CF is very useful since it explains why the response is wrong and it provides information about the correct answer, and as a result this information prevents the student from repeating the same error”. Six of the participants further explained their positive preferences concerning this technique by saying that



“it is a fast way to learn about the errors in short time because the correct answer of an error is written by the instructor”. Two of the participants in this research added that “this explicit procedure of giving written CF can support the students of different language proficiency levels”.

For *teacher correction* (i.e. the instructor corrects errors), 25.0% of the participants in this study demonstrated that this technique of providing written CF “is very useful since it enables the student to know why his or her answer is wrong as well as it provides the correct answer”. Seven students commented on this procedure by saying “it is a very useful technique to learn from errors as well as to avoid repeating the same mistake”. One student added that “it is a fast way to learn”. Whereas, two students explained just the opposite by saying “this technique is not very useful and misleading because they do not what are their errors”.

For *commentary* (i.e. the instructor gives feedback by making comments about errors, but no errors are corrected), 25% of the participants in this research believed that “*commentary* is not very useful and a misleading procedure of written CF since it provides unclear and incomplete correction of an error, and therefore it makes the student neither knows his or her error nor understands the correction. Not knowing the error, the student cannot avoid making it again”. Two students mentioned that “this strategy of providing written CF is unhelpful to learn from errors”.

For *no feedback on an error*, 31.25% of the participants in this study regarded this technique of providing written CF as “not very useful and misleading since neither an explanation of the student’s error nor a correction of this error is given. The student does not understand what is the error and how to correct it”. Four students mentioned that “they do not benefit from the correction because the instructor does not write anything”.

For *a personal comment on the content* (i.e. the instructor gives feedback by making comments on the ideas and content, but no errors are corrected), 18.75% of the participants in this study gave an explanation showing that those participants believed that this technique of providing written feedback “is not very useful and misleading since it provides neither identification of

an error and nor a correction of it, and thus it adds nothing to the student's knowledge". Two students further commented on a *personal comment on the content* by saying that "this technique is discouraging". While, two other participants explained just the opposite by saying that "when the instructor uses this technique of written CF, he or she takes for granted the student's feelings".

### 4.3 Types of errors to be corrected

Question 5 (Q5) reads, *If there are many different types of errors in your written work, what is your most preferred error type for correction?* The participants were requested to express their preferences and rate six different types of errors in terms of Likert-scale items (1 = *not very useful*, 2 = *not useful*, 3 = *doesn't matter*, 4 = *quite useful*, and 5 = *very useful*) (see Appendix A and Table 4). The results showed that 65.0% of the students in this study expressed their preference for *Grammatical errors* and rated them very useful for receiving written CF. The second preferable type of error to be corrected was *Organisation errors* that were rated by 51.3% and 31.3% of the participants as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively. The third favourable type of error for correction was *Content/ Ideas errors* that were rated by 50.0% and 15.0% of the participants as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively. The fourth type of error to be corrected was *Punctuation errors* that were rated by 35.0% and 16.3% of the students in this research as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively. The participants also showed interest in *Vocabulary errors*, for explanation, 31.3% and 26.3% of the participants rated these errors as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively. Last but not least, *Spelling errors* had given different ratings by the students in this study, for example, 27.5% and 25.0% of the participants rated these errors as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively, whereas, 27.5% of the participants rated these errors as *Not Very useful* (see Table 4).

**Table 4 Participants’ responses to correction of different types of errors**

Types of errors to be corrected	Not very useful	Not useful	doesn't matter	Quite useful	Very useful
Organization errors	2.5	1.3	13.8	31.3	51.3
Grammatical errors	5.0	3.8	13.8	12.5	65.0
Content/ idea errors	13.8	11.3	10.0	15.0	50.0
Punctuation errors	18.8	17.5	12.5	16.3	35.0
Spelling errors	27.5	11.3	8.8	25.0	27.5
Vocabulary errors	10.0	16.3	16.3	26.3	31.3

The students in this study gave different explanations for their choices of error types showing that they regard written CF of *grammatical, spelling, vocabulary, content/idea, and punctuation errors* as a learning technique. Ten of the participants mentioned that “it is very useful to provide written CF to all types of errors because it is a good way to learn from errors and improve language skills”.

Two students participating in this research commented on correcting *grammatical errors* by saying “it is very useful to correct grammatical errors because grammar is the basis of writing composition”. One participant in this study preferred the correction of three types of errors namely, grammatical, spelling and vocabulary to improve her writing. Other participant mentioned that “grammatical errors affect the meaning of the written text so it very useful to provide written CF to them”. Thirteen participants in this study considered “correcting grammatical errors as very useful and necessary to know their errors and learn from them”.

Concerning *organisation errors*, six participants in this study commented that “it is very useful and necessary to provide written CF on organisation errors so students can learn from their errors”. One participant mentioned that “it is necessary to learn how to build a written text that is clear, simple, and tidy”.

Regarding *content/idea errors*, three students participating in this study believed that providing written CF on these errors necessary for them to learn from their errors. One participant in this research expressed her belief that “providing written CF on content/idea errors is not very useful since it will limit the student’s ideas and content”.

Four participants in this study explained their like and dislike of *punctuation errors*, to illustrate, two participants mentioned that “it is very useful to receive written CF on punctuation errors in order for students to learn the correct writing of a sentence and a paragraph”. One participant said that “it is not very useful and discouraging to receive written CF on punctuation and spelling”. Other participant mentioned that “it is not very useful to receive written CF on punctuation errors because these errors are not as important as the grammatical errors and marking errors in punctuation may lead to lose grades”.

With regard to *spelling errors*, two participants in this research mentioned that “it is quite useful to receive written CF of wrong spelling in order for students to learn from their errors”. One participant believed that “written CF of spelling errors is very useful since wrong spelling can affect a written text negatively”. Three participants showed their dislike to correcting spelling

errors, for example, one participant commented that “receiving written CF on spelling errors is not very useful and discouraging since students face difficulties in memorizing the spelling of English words”. Other participant said that “any student can learn the spelling of words by himself or herself so it is not very helpful to correct spelling errors by the instructor”. One participant believed that “what is important for any student to write a good text is the vocabulary and the ideas so there is no need to focus on and to correct spelling errors”.

Concerning *vocabulary errors*, two participants in this study demonstrated that “it is very useful to receive written CF on vocabulary errors in order for students to learn from their errors”. One participant mentioned that “it is not very useful to correct vocabulary errors because any student may not use the exact vocabulary and may use the synonym of it, so the instructor’s feedback in this situation is useless”.

This section included a detailed description of the results of this study. Section five presents the discussion and the conclusion of the research.

## 5. Discussion and Conclusion

Section 5 provides answers to the research questions of this study ( see Section 1) by comparing and discussing the results of the quantitative (the student questionnaire) research method. This section also draws a conclusion based on the findings of this research. In addition, it discusses the main findings of the present study in relation to earlier studies ( see Section 2). The results of this study showed the following:

### 5.1 Summary of the main findings

1. Concerning the amounts of written CF, the highest percentage of (47.5%) of the participants in this study preferred *their instructor to correct all errors but not the minor ones* and 20% of these participants explained their choice *errors* by saying that “it can be discouraging to correct too many errors”.
2. The second high percentage (36.3%) of the students in this study liked *their instructor to correct all errors*, and they commented on this by saying that they “liked receiving this amount of written CF because they want to know their mistakes and to avoid making them again”.
3. Only 22.5% of the students in this research favoured their *instructor to correct most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them*.
4. The highest percentage (91.3%) of the participants in the present study preferred receiving written CF on repeated errors.

5. With regard to the type of written CF, many (66.3%) of the participants in this research highly preferred the technique of written CF that was *correction with comments*. 38.75% of the students in this study provided an explanation showing that they believed that “this technique of written CF is very useful since it explains why the response is wrong and provides information about the correct answer, and as a result this information prevents the student from repeating the same error”.
6. The second preferable choice of 47.5% of the students in this study was the technique of *teacher correction*. 25.0% of the participants in this research commented on this technique of providing written CF by saying “it is very useful because it enables the student to know why his or her answer is wrong as well as it provides the correct answer”.
7. The third favourable technique of written CF chosen by 28.8% of the students in this research was *clues or directions on how fix an error*. seven of the participants in this study explained their choice of this procedure of providing written CF by saying that “it is a very useful and interesting procedure which motivates the student to look for the correction of his or her mistake in the book referred to by his or her instructor and to learn from the mistake, and thus to avoid making the same mistake again” However, 27.5% of the participants rated this technique as *Not very useful*.13.75% of the participants believed that this technique of providing written CF was not useful because “the book referred to by the instructor may include lots of information and it is difficult for the student to find the

- correct answer, and therefore, he or she may leave the error without any correction”.
8. Many (53.8%) of the participants in the present study rated the technique of *No feedback on an error* as *Not very useful*. 31.25% of the students in this study regarded this technique as “not very useful and misleading because neither an explanation of the student’s error nor a correction of this error is given, therefore the student does not understand what is the error and how to correct it”.
  9. High percentage (41.3%) of the students in this study disliked the technique of *Error identification*. 22.5% of the participants in the present research demonstrated that this technique “is not very useful and misleading because the student does not exactly know the correct answer, and therefore he or she does not learn from his or her error”.
  10. High percentage (40.0%) of the participants in the present research did not favour the technique of *Commentary* and rated it as *Not useful*. 25% of the students in the present study believed that “*commentary* is not a very useful and misleading procedure of written CF since it provides unclear and incomplete correction of an error, and therefore it makes the student neither knows his or her error nor understands the correction. Not knowing the error, the student can not avoid making it again”.
  11. Some (27.5%) and (21.3%) of the participants in this research found the technique of *A personal comment on the content* as *Not very useful* and *Not useful* respectively. 18.75% of the students in this study gave an



explanation showing that those students believed that this technique of providing written feedback “is not very useful and misleading as it provides neither identification of an error and nor a correction of it, and thus it adds nothing to the student’s knowledge”.

12. Concerning the type of error to be corrected, many (65.0%) of the students in this study expressed their preference for *grammatical errors* and rated them as *very useful* for receiving written CF. Some (16.25%) of the participants in this study explained their choice by saying “correcting grammatical errors is very useful and necessary to know their errors and learn from them”.
13. Many (51.3%) and (31.3% ) of the participants in this research rated receiving written CF on *organisation errors* as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively. Few (7.5%) of them gave an explanation for their preference by saying “correcting organisation errors is very useful and necessary to know their errors and learn from them”. One participant mentioned that “it is necessary to learn how to build a written text that is clear, simple, and tidy”.
14. Many (50.0%) and (15.0%) of the participants in this study rated receiving written CF on *content/idea errors* as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively. Three students participating in this study believed that providing written CF on these errors necessary for them to learn from their errors.
15. The fourth type of error to be corrected was *Punctuation errors* that were rated by 35.0% and 16.3% of the students in this research as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively. Two participants mentioned that “it is very useful to receive

- written CF on punctuation errors in order for students to learn the correct writing of a sentence and a paragraph”.
16. The participants also showed interest in *Vocabulary errors*, for explanation, 31.3% and 26.3% of the participants rated these errors as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively.
17. *Spelling errors* had given different ratings by the students in this study, for example, 27.5% and 25.0% of the participants rated these errors as *Very useful* and *Quite useful* respectively. However, 27.5% of the participants rated these errors as *Not Very useful*. Two participants in this research mentioned that “it is quite useful to receive written CF on wrong spelling in order for students to learn from their errors”.

## 5.2 Discussing the findings of the present study in relation to previous studies

Concerning the amounts of written CF, the previous studies (Leki ,1991; Lee, 2005; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Chen et.al., 2016; Haishan & Qingshun, 2017; Hartono, et.al., 2019; Saragih et. al., 2021; Al Hajri & Al-Mahrooqi, 2013) found that comprehensive written CF was a students’ popular preference. The findings ( see Sub-Section 5.1, No. 1) of the current investigation lent support to these studies (Leki ,1991; Lee, 2005; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Chen et.al., 2016; Haishan & Qingshun, 2017; Hartono, et.al., 2019; Saragih et.al., 2021; Al Hajri & Al-Mahrooqi, 2013).

In a previous study conducted by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), 93.9% of the participants preferred their teachers to correct all

their errors because they thought that written CF is useful for learning how to write effectively. Also 9.1 % liked all majors errors to be corrected but not the minor ones. The finding of the present investigation ( see Sub-section 5.1, No1) did not conform to the finding of the research done by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), since the highest percentage of (47.5%) of the participants in this study preferred *their instructor to correct all errors but not the minor ones* and 20% of these participants explained their choice by saying that “it can be discouraging to correct too many errors”.

With regard to the type of written CF, the outcomes of the previous studies (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Hartono, et.al., 2019; Saragih et.al., 2021) revealed that the respondents preferred direct written CF in which the instructor underlined and gave a comment and clear explanation of the errors. The finding of the current study ( see Sub-section 5.1, No.5) lent support to the findings of the previous studies (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Hartono, et.al., 2019; Saragih et.al., 2021).

The students in Amrhein and Nassaji’s study ( 2010) justified their choice of explicit written CF by saying that “explicit types of WCF allow them to remember their errors and understand how to fix them. Most students explained that a clue with no correction is not useful because students need more specific advice” (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010, p.115). The findings of the present study ( see Sub-section 5.1, No.5) conformed to the findings of the previous research (Amrhein and Nassaji, 2010).

Concerning the type of error to be corrected, a previous study by Hartono et.al. (2019) found that the participants liked written CF provided on types of errors such as grammar, vocabulary,

spelling, organisation, and punctuation. They mostly preferred written CF on grammatical errors. The findings of the present study ( see Sub-section 5.1, No. 12, 13,14,15, 16, 17) lent support to the findings of the previous study (Hartono et.al., 2019).

### 5.3 Conclusion

It is concluded, that the participants in this study differed in their preferences concerning the amounts of errors to be corrected, since many of them preferred their instructor to correct all errors but not the minor ones. Other participants liked their instructor to correct all errors. Some of the students in this research favoured their instructor to correct most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them. In addition, most of the participants in the present study preferred receiving written CF on repeated errors. With regard to the type of written CF, the participants also differed in their preferable choices. For example, many of the participants in this research highly preferred the technique of written CF that was correction with comments. Over half of the participants in the current study liked the technique of teacher correction. Furthermore, some students preferred the technique of written CF which was clues or directions on how fix an error. The participants in this study also showed their dislike of some written CF strategies, in that, Many of them rated the technique of No feedback on an error as Not very useful, and over half of them disliked the technique of Error identification. Besides, half of the participants in the present research did not favour the technique of Commentary and rated it as Not useful. Some of the participants in this research found the technique of A personal comment on the content as Not very useful and Not useful. The differences also

appeared in the participants' preferences of the type of error to be corrected. To explain, many of the students in this study expressed their preference for grammatical errors and rated them as very useful for receiving written CF. Also many of the participants in the present research liked receiving written CF on organisation and content/idea errors . Additionally, some of the participants in the current study preferred receiving written CF on punctuation, vocabulary, and spelling errors.

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## Appendix A

### Students' Questionnaire

**(1) If there are many errors in your writing, what do you prefer your instructor to do? You can answer this question by circling the letter of the appropriate response.**

**( please circle all that apply)**

- a. My instructor should correct all errors.
- b. My instructor should correct all errors, but not the minor ones.
- c. My instructor should correct most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them.
- d. My instructor should correct a few of the major errors.
- e. My instructor should correct only the errors that interfere with Communicating my ideas.
- f. My instructor should correct no errors and respond only to the ideas and Content.

Please give the reasons for your choice(s).

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**(2) If an error is repeated in a students' writing more than once do you think it is useful to correct it each time it occurs?**

{ } Yes.

{ } No

(3) The following sentences all have the same errors which have been responded to in various ways by different Instructors. Look over the different possible responses and rate each one. If you think the mark/comment is a very useful way to indicate an error on a paper, tick the column #5. If you think the mark/comment is a not very useful (useless) way to indicate an error on a paper, tick the column #1. If you think it is somewhere in between, tick one of the columns between #1 and #5 that best represents your opinion.

No	The statement	Very useful 5	quite useful 4	doesn't matter 3	Not Useful 2	Not very useful 1
A	Look at Section 2 in your grammar book Since I arrived in Italy, I <u>am</u> very lonely.					
B	Since I arrived in Italy, I <u>am</u> very lonely.					
C	have been (Wrong tense) Since I arrived in Italy, I <u>am</u> very lonely.					
D	have been Since I arrived in Italy, I <u>am</u> very lonely.					
E	WRONG TENSE Since I arrived in Italy, I am very lonely.					
F	Since I arrived in Italy, I am very lonely.					
G	I'm sorry to hear that Since I arrived in Italy, I am very lonely.					



**(4) Please give the reason for your choices for each type of feedback in item 3**

**A. Clues or directions on how to fix an error** ( the instructor gives clues and directions on how a student correct his or her work).

Please, give the reason for your choice.

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**B. Error identification** ( the instructor points out where the errors occur, but no errors are corrected).

Please give the reason for your choice.

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**C. Correction with comments** ( the instructor corrects errors and makes comments).

Please give the reason for your choice.

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**D. Teacher correction** ( the instructor corrects errors).

Please, give the reason for your choice.

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**E. Commentary** ( the instructor gives feedback by making comments about errors, but no errors are corrected ).

Please, give the reason for your choice.

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**F. No feedback on an error.**

Please, give the reason for your choice.

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**G. A personal comment on the content** ( the instructor gives feedback by making comments on the ideas or content, but no errors are corrected).

Please, give the reason for your choice.

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**(5) If there are many different types of errors in your written work, What is your most preferred error type for correction? Tick the column between #1 and #5 that best represents your opinion**

No	The statement	Very useful 5	quite usefu l 4	doesn't matter 3	Not Useful 2	Not very useful 1
A	My instructor indicates <i>organisation errors</i> (example: paragraph structure, sentence order).					
B	My instructor indicates <i>grammatical errors</i> ( example: tense, word order, sentence structure).					
C	My instructor indicates <i>content/idea errors</i> (example: comments on your ideas).					
D	My instructor points out <i>punctuation errors</i> ( example: , . ? ! ).					
E	My instructor points out <i>spelling errors</i> (example: a word that is spelled wrong).					
F.	My instructor indicates <i>vocabulary errors</i> ( example: wrong word choice, wrong meaning).					

G.

Others

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Please, give the reason for your choice (s).

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Thank you to all students who participated in this study