

Written Corrective Feedback: Preferences and Justifications of Teachers and Students in a Thai Context

Douglas Aaron Black
dougblack85@gmail.com
Mahidol University, Thailand

Alexander Nanni
Alexander.nan@mahidol.ac.th
Mahidol University, Thailand

ABSTRACT

This study investigates the preferences and justifications of teachers and students on written corrective feedback (WCF) at a tertiary institution in Thailand and is aimed at expanding on prior similar studies conducted with smaller data sets in different contexts. Quantitative and qualitative questionnaire data were collected from 262 intermediate students and 21 teachers in order to test two hypotheses: (1) teachers' and students' WCF preferences would differ significantly, and (2) their justifications for their preferences would differ significantly. The hypotheses were confirmed: teachers rated indirect feedback with metalinguistic comment as being most useful while students most preferred direct feedback with metalinguistic comment. This trend extended to all types of direct feedback being preferred by students while teachers preferred all types of indirect feedback. The most common explanation for the teachers' preferences was the development of metacognitive skills, while accuracy was the greatest concern for students. The pedagogical implications of the results regarding expectations, student agency, and self-efficacy are discussed.

Keywords: Written Corrective Feedback (WCF); feedback types; metacognition; perceptions; second language writing

INTRODUCTION

This study analyzes and compares the attitudes and expectations of students and teachers at a post-secondary institution in Thailand with a greater sample size ($n_{student}=262$, $n_{teacher}=21$) than previous research on the subject. It also uses students from a different cultural background, Thai. In recent years much research has been conducted regarding the effectiveness of written corrective feedback (WCF), yet practitioners and researchers are still left without definitive answers regarding implementation (Truscott & Hsu, 2008; Ellis, 2009; Hartshorn, Evans, Merrill, Sudweeks, Anderson, 2010; Daneshvar & Rahmimi, 2014; Jiang & Xiao, 2014). As more researchers move beyond the initial questions on the effectiveness of WCF, recent studies have called for research into situational application, student and teacher attitudes and expectations of feedback, the context in which the feedback is given, and greater sample sizes of collected data (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Norouzian & Farahani, 2012; Sayyar & Zamanian, 2015). The potential metacognitive benefits of indirect feedback suggest that less direct feedback, i.e., providing an indication of the location and/or type of error to help the learner self-correct, is important to develop the higher-level writing abilities of students (Lalande, 1982; Hartshorn & Evans, 2012; Hashemnezhad & Mohammadnejad, 2012; Ebadi, 2014; Mansourizadeh & Abdullah, 2014). Less direct feedback, however, may be incompatible with some learners' preference for teacher-centered instruction. We hypothesize that this leads to a clash between the expectations of Thai students and the

pedagogy of their writing teachers. The implications of any gap between the attitudes or expectations of students and teachers include student dissatisfaction and loss of motivation (Brown, 2009; Schulz, 2001).

LITERATURE REVIEW

While WCF has many subtypes, this paper is primarily concerned with direct, indirect, and metalinguistic corrective feedback as outlined by Ellis (2009). In direct corrective feedback, the teacher marks the error by providing the correct form. In indirect corrective feedback, the existence of the error is denoted either by underlining the error itself or by simply noting the existence of an error in a given line. Metalinguistic feedback is a comment on the nature of the error, such as “wrong tense”, and is not exclusive to itself as a typology but can be combined with both direct and indirect corrective feedback.

Most students and teachers agree that the writing process should include some form of grammar correction (Corpuz, 2011), but WCF has had its share of cynics and detractors (Lalande, 1982; Robb, Ross & Shortseed, 1986; Semke, 1984, Truscott, 1996). Perhaps none is more infamous than Truscott, who in 1996 made the rather extreme claim that any grammar correction in L2 writing was not only theoretically and pragmatically pointless but even harmful to learning. He argued that there were other alternatives to correcting grammar and that not correcting it at all was actually the superior option (Truscott, 1996; 1999). Many academics, notably Ferris (1999), criticised Truscott’s claims. His response paper (Truscott, 1999), titled in direct response to Ferris, qualified his initial arguments and reasoning for writing his original criticisms, citing the lack of dissenting views on grammar pedagogy as reason enough to question it. One criticism of Truscott (1999) is that providing WCF wastes time and energy for both the teacher and student.

Contrary to Truscott’s (1996; 1999) assertions, there are many studies that support the argument that time and energy used for WCF are not worthless. Ferris (1999) claimed that the effectiveness of WCF correlated with learner motivation as well as students becoming more independent learners in terms of self-correction and metalinguistic awareness of mistakes. Ferris and Roberts (2001) found that feedback, regardless of whether it was direct, coded or indirect, had positive effects on L2 learners’ writing in subsequent drafts. Theoretical support for WCF is found in Dekeyser’s (2007) skill acquisition theory, which states that improving any skill necessitates both implicitly and explicitly formed knowledge through practice. Meta-analysis performed by Biber, Nekrasova, and Horn (2011) determined that WCF had a positive effect on accuracy as well as that a focus on content and form was more effective than a focus purely on form. Thus, authentic writing and receipt of feedback are theoretically highly important for an L2 learner to become proficient in English. Biber, Nekrasova, and Horn (2011) cautioned that their conclusions should be taken lightly as the data sets for meta-analysis were not “mature” (p. 53): at the time of the study, there were nearly 300 papers published regarding writing feedback yet less than 10 percent were deemed of sufficient quality for meta-analysis. Another recent meta-analysis of 22 studies by Kang and Han (2015) echoed the finding that WCF had a moderate to great effect on writing accuracy.

There are a number of possible reasons for the disparity between measured effectiveness of WCF in earlier studies. One possibility is that in some situations students simply do not understand much of the WCF they receive on their writing (Ferris, 1995; Hyland, 1998). Another possibility is that students are more likely to pay attention to WCF they receive when it is in the format they prefer, and they are more likely to disregard it when not (Schulz, 2001). In Kang and Han’s (2015) meta-analysis, specific “moderator variables” (p. 9) were determined, which they believed to be responsible for the different-sized effects

of WCF between various studies. They noted the variables of study setting, proficiency, scope of feedback, type of feedback, and number of treatment sessions all affected the outcome of WCF treatments (Kang & Han, 2015). Thus, the high level of complexity in a typical classroom setting and all the variables entailed make quantitatively measuring individual aspects of WCF problematic. Beyond efficacy, many studies focused more on the characteristics and potential effects of different types (i.e. direct vs. indirect, selective, etc.) of WCF (Ellis, 2009; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Ferris, 2006; Hosseiny, 2014; Sheen, 2007). Research has focused on the context in which the feedback is given and what, if any, the impacts are on differences between student and teachers' views of WCF (Enginarlar, 1993; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Diab, 2005; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Sayyar & Zamanian, 2015; Kang & Han, 2015).

The views of students on the feedback process are varied in terms of preferences, but most research on the subject corroborates that the act of the teacher giving feedback is viewed as a highly important and cooperative part of the writing process (Enginarlar, 1993), regardless of actual effect. Considering that L2 learners' perceptions may affect their success with WCF as a tool in the classroom (Schulz, 2001), the views and expectations of teachers and students regarding WCF is an important area of study.

Given that one of Truscott's (1999) unanswered criticisms of WCF is that it is time and energy-consuming for both teachers and students, it is imperative to understand more about the effects and usage of WCF in different environments, as well as how WCF can be made more effective. In recent years, several studies have compared teacher and student views of WCF. Two of them (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Sayyar & Zamanian, 2015) use the same questionnaire we distributed for the present study and can provide comparisons of results across contexts. Amrhein and Nassaji's (2010) survey of students found significant discrepancies between their preferences and that of their teachers': students preferred direct feedback while teachers preferred indirect, leading to questions of whether the feedback should match students' or teachers' expectations and preferences. The results implied that teachers should explain the procedures, purpose, and justification of WCF in order for students to "shoulder responsibility for error correction" (Amrhein & Nassaji, p. 116). However, Sayyar and Zamanian (2015) found little difference between the views of teachers and students, with both students and teachers preferring direct WCF. Norouzian and Farahani (2012) found a striking discrepancy between student and teacher understanding of which elements were more important: 80% of students claimed they had no knowledge of the principles governing error selection or correction by their teachers. Additionally, a major disconnect was found between the progress of the students as perceived by their teachers compared to the perceptions of the students themselves. Students viewed their progress overwhelmingly negatively while the teachers' views on student progress were positive. In addition to the conflicting results, these three studies were conducted with smaller sample sizes (*n* ranging from 40 to 80) compared to this study of 262 students and 21 teachers.

An additional variable to consider regarding the opinions of students in this context is the state of the Thai educational system. In the late 1990s, Thai academics and leaders began acknowledging that rote learning was creating problems. Former Thai Minister of Education Dr. Sippanondha Ketudat asserted that poor student performance was a result of learning by rote and multiple-choice tests (Bunnag, 1997). Others went so far as to warn that the continuation of such educational policy would lead to a national catastrophe (Wasi, 1998). Hence, over the past decade the Thai educational system has been in a state of near constant reform. Despite education officials pushing for a change from teacher-centered to learner-centered education there has been little improvement (Hallinger & Lee, 2011). Poor top-down implementation of the reforms has led to unconvinced Thai teachers referring to learner-centered education as "buffalo-centered education," because buffalos are considered

slow and unintelligent in Thai culture (Phungphol, 2005, p.11). At the same time, students are uncomfortable with the change to learner-centered pedagogy as well, with one primary school student referring to the learner-centered lesson she had just experienced as “buffalo learning,” i.e. “learning from ignorance” (Kantamara, Hallinger & Jatiket, 2006, p.8). Given that nearly all of the students in the sample population come from Thai educational backgrounds, it is important to realize that there is a likelihood that the surveyed students may have similarly negative attitudes regarding the learner-centered approach. In practical terms, this attitude may translate to the students simply wanting their teachers to spoon-feed them their corrections using a direct approach to feedback.

The purpose of this study is to examine the beliefs and expectations between students and teachers regarding WCF in a Thai EFL context with a much larger sample size than previous research ($n = 283$) to increase the generalizability of the conclusions drawn. Additionally, this study aims to fill the literature gap regarding the opinions and justifications of teachers and students on WCF in a Thai context. The Thai context is of note because the students are more likely used to a teacher-centered style of learning, and will have only recently been exposed to the student-centered approach since entering tertiary schooling.

METHODOLOGY

Given the broad and varied history of WCF research, it is important to realize the likelihood that there will be no definitive “right” recipe for WCF in the near future; the question of the most effective form of WCF likely does not have a single answer. As such, the focus of this research is not to determine whether the views held by teachers or students are “correct”, but rather to better understand their preferences and justifications regarding WCF with the goals of improving pedagogical implementation.

HYPOTHESES

Based on the literature review and results of similar studies, two outcomes were hypothesized. The first hypothesis was that teachers and students would have different preferences for WCF typology. Because teachers are primarily concerned with long-term skill development, we believed that teachers would prefer providing indirect and metalinguistic feedback while students would prefer receiving direct feedback. This belief is informed by previous research by Hartshorn and Evans (2012), Hashemnezhad and Mohammadnejad (2012), and Ebadi (2014), who made connections between WCF and metalinguistic language skill development.

The second hypothesis was that teachers’ and students’ justifications for their preferences in WCF would differ significantly. Support for this hypothesis comes from two main sources: previous research on the Thai educational system, which is largely teacher-centered (Kantamara, Hallinger, & Jatiket, 2006; Phungphol, 2005); and WCF research that found significant differences between students’ and teachers’ beliefs about various forms of WCF (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010).

H0: Teachers’ and students’ WCF preferences will differ significantly

H1: Teachers’ and students’ justifications for their preferences in WCF will differ significantly

QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

Two questionnaires were developed: one for teachers and one for students. The design of the questionnaire for each target group was similar, as they were based on the same set of

questions, but the perspective from which the questions were presented was adapted to each group (see Appendices A and B). The Likert-scale was used for quantitative data and the qualitative data was collected through open-ended questions. The questionnaires were based on those used by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) and Sayyar and Zamanian (2015) with small changes to the wording and descriptors of the Likert-scale in order to increase clarity and accuracy. Similar questionnaires have been examined before (Ferris, 1995) and used by other WCF studies, so using these questionnaires as a base for this study should support validity and allow productive comparison with earlier research.

PARTICIPANT SELECTION

After obtaining Institutional Review Board approval, the survey questionnaires were distributed to all teachers and students in an intensive English for Academic Purposes program at a major Thai university. The questionnaires were distributed early in the second week of a 10-week term, and participants completed the informed consent form prior to beginning the survey. Participation by both teachers and students was voluntary.

At the time we distributed the questionnaires, a total of 361 students were enrolled, and a total of 21 teachers were employed. All 21 teachers completed the survey, yielding a 100% response rate. The student response rate was approximately 73%, with 262 of the 361 students submitting responses.

The English levels of student respondents spanned between intermediate to upper-intermediate. Nearly all student respondents are Thai and aged between 17 and 20. The student respondents are 43% male and 57% female.

Of the 21 teachers, all are native English speakers. Males comprised 90% of the surveyed teaching staff and nearly all had either Cambridge CELTA or Trinity TESOL credentials. Roughly half had post-graduate degrees.

DATA ANALYSIS

The questionnaires were administered in Google Forms. Google Forms automatically stores data in spreadsheet format, so no paper-to-electronic data transcription was necessary.

Each of the hypotheses was matched to a set of specific questions from the questionnaire. H0 (Teachers' and students' WCF preferences will differ significantly) was matched to question 2. For question 2, a refers to indirect with study suggestion, b to indirect, c to direct with metalinguistic comment, d to direct, e to metalinguistic comment, f to no correction, and g to comment on content. H1 (Teachers' and students' justifications for their preferences in WCF will differ significantly) was matched to questions 1, 3, 4, and 5 on the teachers' and the students' questionnaires (see Table 1).

TABLE 1. Hypotheses matched to questionnaire content

Hypothesis	Corresponding Questions
H0: (Teachers' and students' WCF preferences will differ significantly)	<p>(Both teacher and student questionnaire)</p> <p>(2) The following sentences all have the same error and the teacher has given a different type of feedback for each. Circle the number that best describes the usefulness of the feedback for an intermediate to advanced EFL student for each sentence.</p> <p>1= least useful 2= slightly useful 3= somewhat useful 4= quite useful 5= most useful</p> <p>a) Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>look at unit 3 in your book</i> 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>b) Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>c) Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>have been (wrong tense)</i> 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>d) Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>have been</i> 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>e) Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>wrong tense</i> 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>f) Since I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. 1 2 3 4 5</p> <p>g) Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>I'm sorry to hear that</i> 1 2 3 4 5</p>

<p>H1: (Teachers' and students' justifications for their preferences in WCF will differ significantly)</p>	<p>(Teachers' Questionnaire)</p> <p>(1) If there are many errors in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's writing, what do you think is most useful to do? Please check all that apply.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> mark all errors <input type="checkbox"/> mark all major errors but not minor ones <input type="checkbox"/> mark most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them <input type="checkbox"/> mark only a few of the major errors <input type="checkbox"/> mark only the errors that interfere with communicating your ideas <input type="checkbox"/> mark no errors and respond only to the ideas and content <p>Please explain the reason for your choice(s).</p> <p>(3) Please explain the reasons for your choices for each type of feedback in item 2.</p> <p>(4) If an error is repeated in an intermediate to advanced EFL students' writing more than once do you think it is useful to mark it every time it occurs? Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Please explain the reason for your choice.</p> <p>(5) For each of the following questions circle one number that best describes its usefulness for an intermediate to advanced EFL student. 1= least useful 2= slightly useful 3= somewhat useful 4= very useful 5= most useful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) How useful is it to point out organization errors in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work? 1 2 3 4 5 b) How useful is it to point out grammatical errors in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work? 1 2 3 4 5 c) How useful is it to point out content/idea errors in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work? 1 2 3 4 5 d) How useful is it to point out punctuation errors in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work? 1 2 3 4 5 e) How useful is it to point out spelling errors in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work? 1 2 3 4 5 f) How useful is it to point out vocabulary errors in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work? 1 2 3 4 5 <p>Please explain the reason for your choice(s).</p>
	<p>(Students' Questionnaire)</p> <p>(1) If there are many errors in your writing, what do you think your English teacher should do? You can check (✓) more than one answer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher should mark all errors <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher should mark all major errors but not minor ones <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher should mark most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher should mark only a few of the major errors <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher should mark only the errors that interfere with communicating your ideas <input type="checkbox"/> Teacher should mark no errors and respond only to the ideas and content <p>Please explain the reason for your choice(s).</p> <p>(3) Please explain the reasons for your choices for each type of feedback in question 2.</p> <p>(4) If you keep on repeating the same error in a piece of writing do you think it is useful for your teacher to make it each time it occurs?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <p>Please explain the reason for your choice.</p> <p>(5) If there are many different types errors in your written work, how useful is it for your teacher to point out that category of error? Circle one number that describes the usefulness to you of pointing out that error. 1= least useful 2= slightly useful 3= somewhat useful 4= very useful 5= most useful</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Organization errors. (Example: paragraph structure, sentence order) 1 2 3 4 5 b) Grammatical errors. (Example: word order, sentence structure) 1 2 3 4 5 c) Content/idea errors. (Example: comments on your ideas) 1 2 3 4 5 d) Teacher points out punctuation errors. (Example: ? !, . .) 1 2 3 4 5

	e) Teacher points out spelling errors. (Example: word is spelled wrong) 1 2 3 4 5 f) Teacher points out vocabulary errors. (Example: wrong word choice, wrong meaning) 1 2 3 4 5 g) Other (please write) _____ Please explain the reason for your choice.
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H0 was determined quantitatively using data from the Likert-scale questions, where respondents are asked to rate the corrective feedback type on a scale of 1-5 corresponding to its usefulness. In this context, a “1” means the respondent found the feedback least useful, while a “5” means the respondent considered the feedback most useful. The numerical values regarding the students’ WCF preferences for those questions were averaged then compared across student and teacher groups.

H1 was determined through coded analysis of qualitative data (students’ and teachers’ justifications for their preferences). In the first stage of coding, In Vivo coding was applied to the data. In this type of coding, short quotations from the participants are used as the initial codes. This is a way for the researcher to “prioritize and honor the participant’s voice” (Saldana, 2012, p. 74). In Vivo coding was selected because we deemed that it was particularly appropriate in developing our understanding of participants’ justifications. In the second stage of coding, axial coding was applied. Axial coding classifies codes generated in first-cycle coding into categories (Saldana, 2012). Using axial coding, we were able to reduce the large number of codes generated using In Vivo coding into a much smaller number of categories. By applying these two rounds of coding, we were able to identify trends in the data in order to investigate our hypotheses.

RESULTS

The hypothesis that teachers’ and students’ WCF preferences would significantly differ was confirmed. The responses to question 2 (summarized in Table 2) revealed that teachers overwhelmingly favored indirect feedback with metalinguistic comment (average value of 4.22 out of 5). This choice was followed by indirect and direct with metalinguistic comment (3.47 and 3.42, respectively). While teachers favored feedback that contributed to students’ metalinguistic and long-term language skill development (through indirect or metalinguistic comment), students strongly preferred to have their errors corrected by the teacher via direct feedback, with “Direct w/ metalinguistic comment” being the most highly rated WCF (4.43). Both students and teachers agreed that no feedback and content-only feedback were least useful.

TABLE 2. H0: Mean scores of Student and Teacher WCF Preferences

Survey Question	Q2a	Q2b	Q2c	Q2d	Q2e	Q2f	Q2g
WCF Type	Indirect w/ study suggestion	Indirect	Direct w/ metalinguistic comment	Direct	Indirect w/ metalinguistic comment	None	Content-only
Teachers’ Avg	2.89	3.47	3.42	2.68	4.22	1.11	1.21
Students’ Avg	2.55	2.41	4.43	3.87	3.22	1.17	1.53

H1, that teachers and students would have significantly different justifications for their preferences, was also confirmed. The major themes of each group’s justifications, distilled through axial coding, are seen below in Table 3.

TABLE 3. H1: Teachers’ and students’ justifications for their preferences in WCF

Teachers	Students
Metacognition Situational	Accuracy Disregard task and time

Student agency important	Teacher-centered learning
Providing direct WCF is inefficient	Editing based on indirect WCF too time-consuming

MOST COMMON THEMES FOR JUSTIFICATION OF WCF PREFERENCES BY EACH GROUP.

The most frequent comment by teachers regarding their reasons for their preferences are related to metacognition. Common explanatory phrases included “help students understand” or “make students think.” In contrast, very few students showed concern for metacognition, instead focusing overwhelmingly on simply arriving at the “right” grammar correction as quickly as possible. A fairly representative justification was “so I can know all my mistakes.” Students also seemed to lack confidence in their ability to correctly identify and fix indirectly marked errors without teacher help, with many commenting that they needed more information on how to correct a mistake than just an underline or comment on the type of error.

Many of the teachers gave conditional responses where the feedback depended on the English proficiency of the student and their motivation, the length and priority of the assignment, or which in draft the errors occurred. These situational considerations seemed to be completely absent from students’ responses.

Teachers often cited getting the students to be more active and engaged in further activities as a reason for a particular form of corrective feedback; there was clear trend in having students take some agency in their learning. Conversely, the students tended to shift the agency away from them and back to the teacher. Many comments, such as “[the] teacher should point out [the error], not telling the student to go and see by themselves,” suggested a preference for teacher-centered learning.

A final theme for WCF preference justification highlighted the differences in the way indirect and direct feedback were regarded by teachers and students. Teachers mostly described direct feedback as “inefficient,” in that it takes time and lacks impetus for student learning. Interestingly — yet not surprisingly — students viewed indirect feedback as a waste of time, referring to it as “time-consuming” and even “lazy corrections.” However, despite the need of more time to add metalinguistic comment, teachers tended to favor any kind of WCF with metalinguistic comment over WCF without it.

DISCUSSION

One of the objectives of this study was to build off previous similar studies by conducting research on student and teacher preferences in a new context — SouthEast Asia — with a larger sample size. Our results regarding WCF preferences matched those of one similar study on Iranian English students by Amrhein and Nassaji (2010). They found that students most highly valued direct feedback and direct feedback with metalinguistic comment equally while teachers preferred indirect with metalinguistic comment. Sayyar and Zamanian (2015) found that both students and teachers most valued direct WCF with metalinguistic comment. Interestingly, the majority of teachers surveyed in that study did not find indirect WCF useful.

This section discusses the results of our study in light of previous research. Each heading will be organized by each key finding. The potential reasons for the finding will be followed by any implications the results may have on application of WCF in similar contexts, and a recommendation, if appropriate. The preferences (H0) and justifications (H1) will be discussed together throughout as they are closely related.

DIRECT VS. INDIRECT

The results confirmed our hypothesis that the student and teacher groups had significantly different views on WCF. Teachers favored indirect feedback with metalinguistic comment the most, followed by indirect, and direct with metalinguistic comment. Students strongly preferred to have their errors corrected via direct feedback with metalinguistic comment, followed by direct WCF (only correction, no comment). The main contrast here is between direct and indirect WCF, because both students and teachers rated WCF with metalinguistic comment higher than WCF without. Based on the collected

data, we believe the students and teachers had different reasons for rating metalinguistic feedback highly.

The justifications (summarized in Table 3 above) collected for our second hypothesis revealed that teachers' greatest concern when giving WCF was the metacognition of students. It has been theorized that metalinguistic WCF contributes more to metacognitive development and long-term language acquisition (Sheen, 2007, Ebadi, 2014), which likely explains why feedback with metalinguistic comment was teachers' most preferred form of WCF.

Students made it quite clear why they most preferred direct feedback: they valued accuracy above all else, and they were most concerned with whether their errors were corrected and with getting a high grade on the assignment. The students' higher ratings for direct with metalinguistic comment over simply direct WCF, along with their justifications, showed that though many students wanted to understand the nature of their errors, they also wanted to have that understanding immediately. From the perspective of students, it is not hard to appreciate why they feel the need to get the correction quickly and accurately: Their grades are directly impacted by grammar errors as all writing is marked according to a three-category rubric based on content, vocabulary and sentence complexity, and grammatical control.

It is important to recognize that both the teachers' and students' preferences for correction have some support in literature. In a study of oral English accuracy, Varnosfadrani and Basturkmen (2009) found that directly-corrected students displayed increased accuracy in post-tests compared to indirectly corrected students when the errors were developmentally early grammar features. When the errors in question were regarding developmentally late features of grammar, indirect correction yielded higher accuracy scores. These findings suggest that teachers who employ indirect WCF should consider either doing a second round of WCF or making themselves available for students to come and double-check their own corrections. This may be the best compromise for teachers, as the first round of feedback will be slightly timelier, and it allows students the potential metacognitive benefits of indirect feedback while still fulfilling their need for accuracy.

EXPECTATIONS

Many of the teachers surveyed mentioned situational variables in their justifications, such as "ok for less time," "good if the student is motivated," or "for final drafts only." While it is generally accepted by teachers and researchers that the best form of WCF depends on the situation (Hyland & Hyland, 2006), the surveyed students did not seem to consider this variable. Because most teachers will change the type/amount of WCF depending on situational variables such as student motivation, level, or task, students will not be receiving the same type of WCF on all assignments throughout the term. By extension, this means that no matter what preferences a student has, at some point students will be faced with a situation where they will receive a type of WCF that they think is insufficient, inefficient, or just not useful at all.

The likelihood of a mismatch between student expectations and the classroom practice of WCF has some implications for student satisfaction. Research suggests that students have a "low tolerance for challenge" (Hansen & Stephens, 2000, p. 43) and so when put in positions where they have to do more work, or different types of work (i.e. self-research) than they are used to, they may react with increased negativity towards the teacher and class and with decreased motivation. Moreover, students might find a high number of corrections demotivating (Vengadasamy, 2002). Therefore, it is recommended that teachers make an effort early in the term to discuss the task-dependant nature of WCF, in that it will depend on what the focus is, what sort of errors are most systemic, etc., and negotiate expectations with students. This is more highly recommended in contexts similar to that of this study due to the strongly negative opinions held by students regarding indirect-only feedback (2.41) versus the teachers' negative views of direct-only feedback (2.68).

AGENCY AND SELF-EFFICACY

The teachers' preference for indirect feedback and negative views of direct-only feedback were justified by emphasizing student agency and independence. Many teachers used the phrases "do the

work,” “find out what’s wrong,” and “facilitate learning,” showing a focus on the importance of student agency. The teachers surveyed seemed to have made a connection between agency, metacognition, and general academic success. This view was not very surprising as agency and metacognition are both characteristics of a learner-centered classroom, and are generally considered to be characteristic of effective instruction (Jones, 2007). The fact that all of the surveyed teachers were native-speakers from western countries may influence their positive view of the learner-centered model.

As noted by Hallinger and Lee (2011) in the literature review, given the background of the students in the Thai education system, it was expected that students would make comments which reflected a teacher-centered mindset regarding learning writing. However, it is notable that they also made comments revealing a lack of self-efficacy, such as “I won’t be able to figure it out as the teacher did not point out where I am wrong.” This may be a concern as a key component of Self-Determination Theory is competence (Ryan, Kuhl, & Deci, 1997). It follows that if the students lack belief in their own competence, then the teachers’ desire for a student-centered approach in writing will continue to face obstacles. This mindset is a significant hurdle for the surveyed teachers and students as well as others in similar contexts. Norouzian and Farahani (2012) found a large discrepancy in the notions of progress between teachers and students. An incredible 84.5% of surveyed students felt they had made little or no progress as a result of teacher feedback. While we did not collect data on perceived progress and writing ability, Norouzian and Farahani’s (2012) results regarding perceptions of progress may be generalizable to the students surveyed here. Low self-efficacy and sense of progress are certainly demotivating factors which should be addressed to help achieve a student-centered learning environment.

One approach to help increase student perceptions of progress and ability may be to revisit earlier work periodically. For example, by writing a “baseline” essay at the start of the term and then returning to it after several weeks of instruction, students could examine and revise their essays by themselves or through peer-editing. While they may not find all the errors without help, their ability to note some of their previous mistakes will help instill a sense that they are learning and progressing.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDY

Nearly all of the students surveyed came from a Thai educational background. Thus, the results are likely generalizable to other students of similar proficiencies (upper-intermediate) and cultural contexts (greater prior exposure to teacher-centered learning). It would be an interesting comparison to perform the same survey in contexts where the students were more accustomed to a student-centered educational model or were of a lower proficiency level. We encourage researchers in other contexts to use the survey and compare results.

All of the teachers surveyed were native English speakers with CELTA/Trinity TESOL or graduate degree credentials. As a contrast, performing the survey in a government-run Thai secondary school with Thai staff could provide more concrete information about the environment from which our tertiary students have graduated.

When we surveyed students’ justifications for their ratings of different types of WCF, we received a wide range of comments indicating a lack of self-efficacy for accurate corrections. Understanding the reasons for their poor self-efficacy could help writing teachers give more effective feedback that would be better utilized. A pertinent point to note is why the students hold these negative beliefs — be it because of lack of internalized grammar, or because of an inability to research or use reference materials effectively — is an area of further study.

Since the researchers did not collect information regarding students’ prior experiences with learning writing, it was unknown how many terms of instruction under the school’s educational model each student had undergone prior to the survey. Isolating these variables and correlating them to the students’ views and justifications would help us determine to what extent these experiences inform the students’ WCF preferences.

Finally, as the data was all reported by the participants themselves, the validity of the survey and the accuracy of the data collected are difficult to measure. Whether or not the participating

students and teachers reported their genuine preferences and behaviors is an important question to be answered through further research.

CONCLUSION

Much remains unknown about WCF, particularly regarding its application in diverse situations and contexts. By highlighting the gaps between students and teacher perceptions and preferences of WCF, this study hopes to contribute to the understanding of this widely used, but at times poorly understood, teaching tool. The results presented and discussed in previous sections indicate that students' and teachers' preferences differ significantly, as do the justifications for their preferences. Understanding these differences may be a first step toward reconciling the differing expectations between those giving feedback (i.e., teachers) and those receiving it (i.e., students), thus enhancing the effectiveness of this common teaching tool.

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APPENDIX A

Teacher's Questionnaire

We are conducting a survey on student and teacher's views of written corrective feedback for research and pedagogical purposes. We would greatly appreciate your assistance of completing this questionnaire.

Age: Gender: male female Highest degree reached:
Years of teaching: Level of classes taught this term:

(1) If there are many errors in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's writing, what do you think is most useful to do? Please check all that apply.

- mark all errors
- mark all major errors but not minor ones
- mark most of the major errors, but not necessarily all of them
- mark only a few of the major errors
- mark only the errors that interfere with communicating your ideas
- mark no errors and respond only to the ideas and content

Please explain the reason for your choice(s).

(2) The following sentences all have the same error and the teacher has given a different type of feedback for each. Circle the number that best describes the usefulness of the feedback for an intermediate to advanced EFL student for each sentence.

1= least useful 2= slightly useful 3= somewhat useful 4= quite useful 5= most useful

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. look at unit 3 in your book | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>has been</u> very lonely. (wrong tense) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. has been | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. wrong tense | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. I'm sorry to hear that | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(3) Please explain the reasons for your choices for each type of feedback in item 2.

a- Clues or directions on how to fix an error (the teacher gives clues or directions on how a student can correct his/her work)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

b- Error identification (the teacher points out where the errors occur, but no errors are corrected)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

c- Correction with comments (the teacher corrects errors and makes comments)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

d- Teacher correction (the teacher corrects errors)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

e- Commentary (the teacher gives feedback by making comments about errors, but no errors are corrected) Please explain the reason for your choice.

f- No feedback on an error

Please explain the reason for your choice

g- A personal comment on the content (the teacher gives feedback by making comments on the ideas or content, but no errors are corrected)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

(4) If an error is repeated in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's writing more than once do you think it is useful to mark it every time it occurs? Yes No

Please explain the reason for your choice.

(5) For each of the following questions circle one number that best describes its usefulness for an intermediate to advanced EFL student.

1= least useful 2= slightly useful 3= somewhat useful 4= very useful 5= most useful

- a) How useful is it to point out **organization errors** in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work?
1 2 3 4 5
- b) How useful is it to point out **grammatical errors** in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work? **1 2 3 4 5**
- c) How useful is it to point out **content/idea errors** in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work?
1 2 3 4 5
- d) How useful is it to point out **punctuation errors** in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work?
1 2 3 4 5
- e) How useful is it to point out **spelling errors** in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work? **1 2 3 4 5**
- f) How useful is it to point out **vocabulary errors** in an intermediate to advanced EFL student's written work?
1 2 3 4 5

Please explain the reason for your choice(s).

(End of questionnaire)

APPENDIX B

Student's Questionnaire

We are conducting a survey on students' views of written corrective feedback for research and pedagogical purposes. We would greatly appreciate your assistance of completing this questionnaire.

Age: Gender: male female PC level: First term studying at PC

(1) If there are many errors in your writing, what do you think your English teacher should do? You can check (✓) more than one answer.

- Teacher should mark **all** errors
- Teacher should mark **all major errors** but **not minor** ones
- Teacher should mark **most of the major errors**, but **not necessarily all** of them
- Teacher should mark **only a few** of the major errors
- Teacher should mark **only the errors that interfere with communicating** your ideas
- Teacher should mark **no errors and respond only to the ideas and content**

Please explain the reason for your choice(s).

(2) The following sentences all have the same error and the teacher has given a different type of feedback for each. Circle the number that best describes the usefulness of the feedback.

1= least useful 2= slightly useful 3= somewhat useful 4= very useful 5= most useful

- | | | | | | | |
|----|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| a) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>look at unit 3 in your book</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>have been (wrong tense)</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>have been</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>wrong tense</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I am very lonely. | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g) | Since I arrived in Victoria, I <u>am</u> very lonely. <i>I'm sorry to hear that</i> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

(3) Please explain the reasons for your choices for each type of feedback in question 2.

a- Clues or directions on how to fix an error (the teacher gives clues or directions on how a student can correct his/her work)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

b- Error identification (the teacher points out where the errors occur, but no errors are corrected)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

c- Correction with comments (the teacher corrects errors and makes comments)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

d- Teacher correction (the teacher corrects errors)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

e- Commentary (the teacher gives feedback by making comments about errors, but no errors are corrected) Please explain the reason for your choice.

f- No feedback on an error

Please explain the reason for your choice.

g- A personal comment on the content (the teacher gives feedback by making comments on the ideas or content, but no errors are corrected)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

(4) If you keep on repeating the same error in a piece of writing do you think it is useful for your teacher to make it each time it occurs?

- Yes
 No

Please explain the reason for your choice.

(5) If there are many different types errors in your written work, how useful is it for your teacher to point out that category of error? Circle one number that describes the usefulness to you of pointing out that error.

1= least useful 2= slightly useful 3= somewhat useful 4= very useful 5= most useful

a) Organization errors. (Example: paragraph structure, sentence order)

1 2 3 4 5

b) Grammatical errors. (Example: word order, sentence structure)

1 2 3 4 5

c) Content/idea errors. (Example: comments on your ideas)

1 2 3 4 5

d) Teacher points out punctuation errors. (Example: ? !, .)

1 2 3 4 5

e) Teacher points out spelling errors. (Example: word is spelled wrong)

1 2 3 4 5

f) Teacher points out vocabulary errors. (Example: wrong word choice, wrong meaning)

1 2 3 4 5

g) Other (please write)

Please explain the reason for your choice.

(End of questionnaire)

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Douglas Black is an Instructor at the Preparation Center for Languages and Mathematics and Mahidol University International College in Salaya, Thailand. He has worked in the TESOL field in the USA, South Korea, China, Hong Kong, and Thailand for over 9 years. He completed both an M.Ed. in Applied Linguistics from the University of Southern Queensland and a CELTA in 2014. His research interests include writing pedagogy and written corrective feedback.

Alexander Nanni is the Director of the Preparation Center for Languages and Mathematics at Mahidol University International College in Salaya, Thailand. He completed an M.Ed. in TESL at Rhode Island College in 2009 and an Ed.D. in Curriculum, Teaching, Learning, and Leadership at Northeastern University in 2016. His current research interests include educational technology, education for sustainability, and written corrective feedback.