

Written Corrective Feedback in Second Language Writing: A Review of Research

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Article information	Abstract
<p>Article history: Received: 17 Aug 2023 Accepted: 19 Aug 2024 Available online: 30 Aug 2024</p> <p>Keywords: Written corrective feedback Second language writing Research review</p>	<p><i>Written corrective feedback (WCF) has been widely deployed in teaching second language (L2) writing skills, partly because it is generally perceived to promote and consolidate learning. Whilst a burgeoning body of literature affirms its virtues pertaining to fostering L2 learners' writing performance, which method of correction could yield the greatest enhancement remains a point of contention among researchers. This research review is proposed to condense findings of contemporary studies on the use of WCF in teaching and learning writing in English as foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) setting. It commences with a summarization of key terms and proceeds to afford a brief discussion on students' and teachers' perceptions towards using WCF. Subsequently, a critical synthesis of findings from current studies into the effectiveness of different types of WCF, namely direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focused, and unfocused strategies, will be presented. Drawing on the empirical evidence thus far, we deduce that no one-size-fits-all WCF approach best facilitates L2 learners' writing development. Furthermore, any judgement on the effects of WCF should be taken into account in relation to personal and contextual factors as they are moderating variables affecting which WCF type is best suitable. Teachers, therefore, are recommended to consider numerous factors concerning learning environments and learners' differences in providing WCF. It is also suggested that more extensive studies into WCF's long-term effects and those regarding various aspects of L2 learners' writing performance apart from grammatical accuracy should be conducted.</i></p>

INTRODUCTION

Writing has generally been deemed the most challenging skill to master among the four English skills, which may stem from its complicated process of generating ideas and skilfully transferring them into written texts (Nunan, 2015). To this end, teachers, when reviewing second language (L2) learners' compositions, tend to give feedback so that learners can revise their errors (Ellis, 2008). Written corrective feedback (WCF) has garnered the most attention from teachers and researchers as one of the pedagogical techniques to assist students' writing development in

English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL) context (Van Beuningen, 2010). Numerous studies have investigated the usefulness of WCF as a whole and its different types on reducing learners' errors (Ekiert & Di Gennaro, 2019; Kang & Han, 2015); however, debate continues about which feedback strategy is most effective for L2 learners (Frear & Chiu, 2015; Rahimi, 2019). Another popular strand of research pertains to discovering the most crucial factors behind the effectiveness of WCF (Tatsanajamsuk & Saengboon, 2021; Yamashita, 2021). Among mounting research on WCF, there are varying findings, even contradictory ones, on the most effective WCF types to improve L2 writing performance. Hence, there is an increasing trend of studies attempting to synthesise research findings on WCF, such as Kang and Han (2015), Mao and Lee (2020), and Nakamura (2016), to offer teachers and researchers valuable insights into WCF, with condensed information about the impact of WCF on writing enhancement and synthesised methodologies. In response, this article aims to contribute to the growing area of research by providing a comprehensive overview of the latest empirical evidence on the efficacy of WCF on L2 learners' writing performance and drawing up implications for future research and teaching practices.

WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

Written corrective feedback (WCF) is defined as a written response to a second language (L2) learner's erroneous feature in their linguistic production (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Van Beuningen, 2010). Regarding its classification, there have been two main typologies to date. To begin with, Ellis (2008) presented six types of WCF: direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focus (focused/unfocused), electronic, and reformulated feedback. Afterwards, Sheen (2011) modified Ellis's categorization in a more pragmatic approach and listed seven types of WCF (direct non-metalinguistic written correction, direct metalinguistic written correction, indirect written correction (not located), indirect written correction (located), indirect written correction using error codes, indirect metalinguistic written correction and reformulation). Despite two distinctive ways of classification, WCF types are basically grouped according to the teacher's choice of strategies and the amount of implementation in English classroom contexts. In other words, the former pertaining to the clarity of the feedback, embraces direct, indirect, and metalinguistic feedback, whilst the latter regarding the scope of the feedback, entails focused and unfocused feedback.

The dichotomy between direct and indirect WCF concerns learners' engagement in rectifying non-target-like linguistic features (Van Beuningen, 2010). Direct WCF denotes indicating the locus of the error and affording its precise counterpart; on the other hand, indirect WCF merely signals that an error has been made, and learners are left to correct their own problems, which the teacher draws their attention to through underlining, circling or coding errors (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Kang & Han, 2015). Metalinguistic WCF (ME), albeit akin to indirect WCF in several aspects, i.e., encouraging learners to identify and address their problems (Ferris, 2011), differs from this feedback type in that ME necessitates the teacher's provision of explicit comments and explanations for students' errors (Ellis, 2008). Although Ellis (2008) classified the provision of error codes as a type of ME, studies on WCF tend to include the employment of a code to signal an error's category within the indirect category (Berkant et al., 2020;

Chen, 2018), which is congruent with Sheen's (2011) typology. In this regard, a further distinction has been drawn between indirect approaches employing codes and in the absence of codes. While coded WCF pinpoints the location of an error and deploys a code to signify the error type, uncoded WCF leaves learners to diagnose and rectify their erroneous issues (Bitchener et al., 2005). Another much-discussed contrast is related to focused vis-à-vis unfocused feedback, which differ in the comprehensiveness of the correction approach (Van Beuningen, 2010). In unfocused WCF, the provision of feedback is extensive in that manifold error types are treated irrespective of their categories; whereas focused WCF selects a limited range of issues to be rectified and overlooks the errors outside the chosen focal domain (Ellis et al., 2008).

RESEARCH ON WCF IN L2 WRITING

This section seeks to provide an overview of findings that have recently been reported on the efficacy of each type of WCF. In accordance with Kang and Han (2015) meta-analysis and Nakamura (2016) review, a timeframe of approximately 10 years has been chosen as a reasonable overview of nearly recent studies. A search of the literature has revealed considerable studies investigating the use of WCF as a pedagogical approach to boost L2 students' writing performance, whose findings have shed light on two notable points, including learners' and teachers' views on WCF and its actual impacts on classroom practices. Hence, in this section, studies of WCF in L2 writing are reviewed according to two groups: those investigating students' and teachers' perceptions of WCF and those examining the effects of WCF in L2 writing instructions. The latter strand of research entails studies exploring and comparing the effects of different WCF types, which are divided based on the clarity of WCF (direct, indirect, and ME) and its scope (focused and unfocused). Whilst most studies have adopted a quantitative approach, those on perspectives are mostly based on interviews and questionnaires using Likert scale items or open-ended questions, or a combination of both, those on effectiveness are quasi-experimental studies with a pretest-posttest design.

As a dynamic area of study, the importance of WCF has increasingly received considerable critical attention from researchers (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Kang and Han (2015) conducted a comprehensive meta-analysis of 21 empirical investigations and confirmed that WCF could contribute to improved grammatical accuracy in L2 writing, and found no differences between direct and indirect WCF, or between unfocused and focused WCF. The effectiveness of providing WCF was moderated by a number of variables, such as learners' proficiency, the setting, and the genre of the writing task, which is in line with Van Beuningen's (2010) argument. Especially, the efficacy of direct and indirect WCF might be dependent on the learners' current grammatical knowledge (Ellis, 2008). For example, in writing instruction for English majors in Chen's (2018) study, indirect WCF (coded and uncoded) was mainly employed, followed by direct WCF. Supporting this view, Tatsanajamsuk and Saengboon's (2021) study has brought to light factors influencing Thai undergraduates' ability to benefit from feedback, which could be highly attributable to individual differences, such as carelessness, insufficient English proficiency, the first language, learning styles, and learning strategies. In another specific context, Yamashita (2021) has explored the effects of WCF during in-class computer-mediated collaborative writing on the grammatical accuracy of 48 ESL students at an American university. His research indicated

a correlation between WCF and accuracy enhancement over time. It also revealed that the long-term development of L2 writing in individual learners differed depending on the degree of their contributions to the revision process. Hence, it can be deduced that WCF has proven to aid accuracy gains in L2 writing despite being contingent on several factors derived from learners' differences.

Students' and teachers' perspectives on WCF

Regarding students' perceptions towards WCF, it is widely acknowledged that students hold a positive view towards this implementation in L2 writing instructions and regard it as a valuable tool to improve their performance, even those at a high level of English proficiency as English majors in Chen's (2018) study. Students' growing appreciation for teacher WCF is compared with other feedback forms in Bitchener and Ferris's (2012) research, demonstrating that students prefer this feedback form to oral or peer feedback. Among WCF types, direct WCF tends to gain learners' favour over other types, such as indirect WCF or ME. This is well documented in Rashtchi and Bakar's (2019) study, which explored types of WCF preferred by 103 ESL Malaysian students. Its findings from questionnaires pointed out that most students tended to favour direct WCF and were less tolerant of marking the error without explanation. Similarly, the latest research by Kara and Abdulrahman (2022) with the questionnaire and interview analysis of 40 Foundation English students' responses to two WCF types also highlighted that direct WCF was supported by more students when compared to ME on IELTS Academic Writing. Another recent study investigating the effects of different types of WCF on students' writing mistakes (Berkant et al., 2020) also uncovered students' opinions. It was reported that they considered coded indirect WCF, in which the error is coded and the information is given, to be the most effective type, as opposed to uncoded indirect WCF where only the wrong word is underlined as the least effective. Additionally, 457 EFL students in Turkey in Seker and Dincer's (2014) study expressed strong preferences for receiving feedback focused on grammatical accuracy and having all the mistakes corrected. In contrast, over half of Master of Teaching EFL students in Aliakbari and Raeesi's (2014) study regarded organisation as the top priority among different aspects of academic writing, and 40 percent of them chose grammar as the least important aspect in WCF received from their teacher. Hence, it can be inferred that the generalizability of published studies on this issue can be controversial, as students' views on WCF may vary depending on factors such as their learning environment, individual attributes, age, and L2 level of proficiency (Khadawardi, 2020).

Students' perceptions on WCF have also been compared to teachers' in extensive research, which displays varying findings, even contradictory ones between the two groups. In Sayyar and Zamanian's (2015) research, there was a consensus among students and teachers regarding the types of errors for which they found WCF most beneficial, with grammar once more being the most frequently mentioned. In Nanni and Black's (2017) study, while students showed a preference for WCF on grammatical errors, teachers considered organisation as the most useful, followed by ideas and content, vocabulary, and grammar. Regarding the amount of WCF should be provided, Hopper and Bowen's (2023) research findings indicated that most students and nearly half of teachers believed comprehensive WCF was most beneficial even though the majority of teachers preferred a more selective approach in providing WCF due to

the increasing heavy workloads. Their study also revealed students' desire to receive direct WCF for grammatical errors, while teachers assumed indirect WCF and ME as the most useful to develop students' habit of self-correction. The mismatch between teachers and students' perceptions may derive heavily from the clear distinction between teachers' assumptions of the best practices on giving WCF and their students' needs, which teachers should be aware of and take into consideration.

Effects of different WCF types

Despite extensive research on different kinds of WCF, the findings are debatable and there is still no consensus on the type of WCF that would best enable EFL students to write effectively (Khadawardi, 2020). This section will scrutinise studies delving into differential effects of WCF types according to the clarity and scope as followed.

Effects of different WCF types according to the clarity: Direct, indirect and ME

First, the effects of a particular type of feedback named direct WCF in the latest studies will be extensively reviewed in close relation to other choices of WCF types, namely ME and indirect WCF. A recent study by Arifin et al. (2019) explored whether direct WCF affected students' writing performance, especially on grammatical errors. Adopting quasi-experimental design, the research demonstrated no significant difference between students who received direct and no feedback (NF) on their writing performance. This is in stark contrast with López et al.'s (2018), Farrokhi and Sattarpour's (2012) research findings, which established remarkably higher effectiveness of direct WCF in developing students' writing quality compared to NF. Particularly, Farrokhi and Sattarpour (2012) investigated the effects of direct WCF on the accurate use of targeted grammatical forms (English articles) by 60 high-proficient L2 learners. The statistical analyses indicated that both groups receiving direct WCF either in unfocused or focused forms, did better than the NF group in the posttest. In line with this finding, López et al.'s (2018) study revealed that both direct WCF and codes enhanced learners' grammatical and non-grammatical accuracy when revising their writing pieces; however, only direct WCF was found to have a lasting effect four weeks after feedback provision. It was also demonstrated that direct WCF had beneficial effects on reducing learners' cognitive load and requiring less mental effort.

The effects of direct WCF were also under close scrutiny in correspondence with other types of WCF, including ME and indirect WCF. Shintani and Ellis (2013) have emphasised the role of ME as it facilitated students' engagement in a more profound level of cognitive processing by necessitating self-correction of mistakes. And ME also contributed to students' improved explicit knowledge of indefinite English articles compared to solely receiving direct WCF. Later, Valizadeh (2020) in a quasi-experimental study, has investigated the effects of direct WCF and ME on L2 learners' written syntactic accuracy with 90 Turkish EFL learners divided into three groups: direct WCF, ME, and NF. The posttests and delayed-posttests revealed that both direct WCF and ME groups significantly outperformed the NF group; however, there was no significant difference in performance between the direct WCF and ME groups. Likewise, Valizadeh (2022) investigated the immediate and delayed impact of direct WCF and ME on

the syntactic complexity of L2 students' writing. This research's findings revealed that the direct WCF group outperformed both ME and NF groups in the posttests and delayed post-tests alike whilst there was no discernible distinction between ME and NF groups. These results accord with Sherpa's (2021) and Van Beuningen et al.'s (2011) which proved that direct WCF did not lead to simplified compositions in posttests. In contrast, Hamano-Bunce (2022), in an attempt to delve into the longitudinal impact of direct WCF on the complexity of text revisions and new compositions, found no significant effect on the lexical and syntactic complexity of students' new writing although the research findings confirmed the efficacious impact of direct WCF on the subordination dimension of syntactic complexity in revisions. In another recent study, Kara and Abdulrahman (2022) examined the long-term effects of direct WCF on 40 IELTS Foundation learners categorised into two groups, one of which was exposed to ME, while the other received direct WCF. It was demonstrated that the ME group made some progress, but not as much as the direct WCF group.

Regarding the differential effects of direct and indirect WCF, previous research has also yielded contradictory results. Van Beuningen et al.'s (2011) study explored the impact of direct and indirect WCF on the written accuracy of L2 learners. The results demonstrated that both groups using these WCF types improved accuracy, surpassing self-editing and writing practice alone. Notably, direct WCF enhanced grammatical accuracy in new writing, whilst indirect WCF primarily improved non-grammatical accuracy. Similarly, Sherpa (2021) investigated the impact of direct and indirect WCF on the grammatical accuracy of 45 eighth graders' use of the past tense and articles and demonstrated that the indirect WCF group performed markedly better than both the direct WCF and NE groups. In contrast, Buckingham and Aktuğ-Ekinci's (2017) research has indicated that more indirect correction code symbols frequently triggered unsuccessful attempts at re-drafting for Turkish elementary and intermediate-level EFL students. Consistently, Berkant et al.'s (2020) study discovering the effects of various types of WCF on students' writing errors in English classes also indicated that underlined feedback was the most effective form of feedback, while coded feedback was the least effective; in other words, direct WCF was considered more effective than indirect WCF.

In terms of the effects of different types of indirect WCF, ample research has also recorded varying results. In Muth'im and Latief's (2014) experimental research, the effects of three kinds of indirect WCF (sample end comment, coded correction feedback, and non-coded correction feedback) were compared to identify which gives more effective results in student writing quality. The result pinpointed no remarkable difference in efficacy among the three types of error correction feedback provided. However, Saukah et al.'s (2017) study investigating the impact of coded (CCF) and non-coded correction feedback (NCCF) on high school students' writing performance showed that the quality of students' writing after receiving CCF was better than that of NCCF. In a more recent study, Mujtaba et al.'s (2020) study on the impact of indirect coded correction feedback (ICCF) and brief teachers' comments on students' writing performance revealed that students receiving ICCF and teacher comments outperformed those exposed to ICCF alone.

Apart from being dependent on students' differences, the choice of strategies and the explicitness of WCF (whether codes should be used) should be based on error types, as mentioned earlier

(Van Beuningen, 2010). In this regard, different errors need different WCF strategies to remedy accordingly. In Chen's (2018) study, he suggested adopting a combination of feedback strategies: direct WCF for errors in word choice, sentence structure and coherence; coded WCF for the errors with collocation, wordiness, fragment and run-on sentence; and uncoded WCF for substance errors and errors in tense, agreement and voice. Recently, in his study on the effects of implicit WCF on the English writing of ESL learners in a UK educational context, Khadawardi (2020) found that teacher implicit WCF assisted in the correction of specific types of errors, such as verb tense, punctuation, capitalization, preposition, and article usage. However, to correct errors in language issues such as sentence structure and word choice, the teacher's oral feedback was required.

Effects of different WCF types according to the scope: Unfocused and focused WCF

Numerous studies have explored the efficacy of focused and unfocused WCF and these scrutinised studies demonstrated a positive impact of these approaches. One prevalent strand of research on the scope of feedback is directed at its effectiveness in gaining grammatical accuracy by examining specific linguistic features. Saeb (2014) utilised the pretest-treatment-posttest design to investigate the effects of focused and unfocused WCF on 79 beginner EFL learners' use of the third-person singular 's' morpheme for verbs with a control group with NF and two experimental groups in which one given focused WCF and another receiving unfocused WCF. The results revealed substantial accuracy gains for both experimental groups, whereas no considerable development was found in the control group. Likewise, Aliakbari et al. (2023) studied the bearing of focused and unfocused WCF on 86 low-intermediate EFL learners' use of irregular and regular past tense and suggested that focused and unfocused groups outperformed the NF group. On top of that, the focused WCF group yielded more significant accuracy development than the unfocused one and only focused WCF proved to have a longitudinal impact, which is in contrast with Reynolds and Kao's (2022) research synthesis of 34 previous studies that confirmed the durable impact of unfocused WCF. These studies, however, are limited to low-proficiency learners and a few grammatical structures. Kurzer (2022) addressed this gap by exploring the effects of unfocused WCF on intermediate and advanced ESL learners' accuracy across multiple error types in their produced compositions. These research findings indicated significant improvements at both levels in terms of multiple error types, namely verb form/tense, determiner, sentence structure, word order, word choice, noun form, and punctuation errors.

Ample research investigated the efficacy of focused and unfocused WCF on text revisions rather than on new writings, whilst the capacity to edit a text is not presumably a reliable measure of progress in accuracy (Aliakbari et al., 2023). Frear and Chiu (2015) addressed this problem by examining the effects of focused and unfocused WCF on the accuracy of past tense and all structures in new compositions of 42 Taiwanese college EFL students assigned into two groups receiving either focused or unfocused WCF and one NF group. The research found the superiority of focused and unfocused WCF groups to the NF group in terms of regular past tense verbs and total accuracy gains. Similarly, López et al. (2018) examined the impact of unfocused WCF on accuracy during text revisions and in new writing pieces with 139 low-intermediate EFL learners, showing that unfocused WCF led to substantial accuracy development.

Whilst burgeoning research on the efficacy of focused and unfocused WCF on accuracy gains has been conducted, that on complex language use was rather limited. Fazilatfar et al. (2014) addressed this gap by exploring the impact of unfocused CF on syntactic and lexical complexity. This study involved 30 advanced Iranian students categorised into two groups with one of which receiving unfocused WCF and another being given NF. Results indicated that unfocused CF spawned a marked enhancement in both syntactic and lexical complexity. Hence, due to the scarcity of research pertaining to the impact of WCF on students' grammatical and lexical intricacy in L2 writing, further research on this area is warranted to confirm Fazilatfar et al.'s (2014) findings.

Coupled with empirical evidence on the effectiveness of focused and unfocused WCF, extensive literature has investigated the relative efficacy of each type. In a recent study, Rahimi (2019) compared the impact of these WCF types on 78 intermediate French ESL learners and discovered that focused WCF surpassed unfocused WCF in assisting learners to reduce targeted erroneous features, especially those of greater complexity and cognitive burdens. Likewise, Maniati et al. (2023), in their study on differential effects of focused and unfocused WCF on low-proficient Iranian university students, found that the focused WCF group outperformed the unfocused WCF in precisely rectifying errors and in long-term practices. A similar result was reported in Deng et al.'s (2022) research on 47 low to intermediate ESL students in Hong Kong, which revealed that learners exposed to focused WCF made significantly fewer errors than those given unfocused WCF. Despite supporting Aliakbari et al.'s (2023) arguments, this finding is contrary to Farrokhi and Sattarpour's (2012), Saeb's (2014), Frear and Chiu's (2015), and Kang and Han (2015) which all indicated no considerable differences between focused and unfocused WCF groups in developing grammatical accuracy.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

This paper provided a brief review of the studies on the use of WCF in teaching L2 writing. The provision of WCF in L2 writing instruction was highly regarded by students (Chen, 2018), and preferred to other feedback forms such as oral or peer feedback (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Among different WCF types, direct WCF tended to be more favoured than others, such as indirect WCF or ME (Kara & Abdulrahman, 2022; Rashtchi & Bakar, 2019), and students' preference for feedback types varied contingently on educational settings and individual differences (Khadawardi, 2020). Meanwhile, teachers had a predilection for focused, indirect WCF and ME, which may be attributed to their increasing workloads and assumptions about the optimal method of providing WCF (Hopper & Bowen, 2023). Furthermore, WCF on grammatical errors was perceived to be most valuable by students and teachers (Sayyar & Zamanian, 2015), whilst that on organisation was deemed to be most useful by teachers (Nanni & Black, 2017). The results of the reviewed literature (Aliakbari et al., 2023; Kurzer, 2022; López et al., 2018; Valizadeh, 2020) has established that WCF is an effective means of fostering L2 learners' grammatical accuracy. Additionally, whilst in line with this view, a smaller number of studies investigating the impacts of WCF on students' syntactic complexity affirmed that this implementation did not hinder this area of students' writing (Sherpa, 2021; Van Beuningen et al., 2011). Despite extensive research on different kinds of WCF, the results are relatively

mixed and a consensus has yet to be reached regarding the most effective type of WCF for boosting students' L2 writing performance (Khadawardi, 2020). Hopper and Bowen (2023) attributed this lack of consensus to the fact that the majority of WCF research has been conducted under a positivist epistemology, which conceptualises language knowledge as learner-based activities, making the complex and multifaceted nature of WCF worth considering. Particularly, the efficacy of WCF is moderated by a number of factors, such as learners' proficiency and needs, the setting, and the genre of the writing task (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Kang & Han, 2015). By comparing the effects of WCF types according to the scope of WCF (focused and unfocused WCF), and its clarity (direct WCF, ME and indirect WCF), this review suggests that different types of WCF contribute differently to L2 learners' enhancement (Berkant et al., 2020; Kara & Abdulrahman, 2022). Importantly, the accuracy development spawned by direct, focused and unfocused WCF proved longitudinal (López et al., 2018; Maniati et al., 2023; Reynolds & Kao, 2022). Furthermore, the choices of WCF strategies should rest on particular categories of errors because different error types require distinct strategies to rectify (Chen, 2018; Van Beuningen, 2010). Hence, it can be deduced that there is no one-size-fits-all approach of giving WCF that is the best remedy for all errors in L2 learners' writing and teachers needs to depend on error types, students' abilities and needs, educational contexts and writing task to shape their teaching practices in giving WCF.

However, this review concerning the efficacy of WCF on L2 learners' writing performance exposes certain shortcomings. The first limitation with the reviewed literature is that the primary focus has been predominantly on the impact of WCF on L2 students' grammatical accuracy instead of either on their grammatical complexity levels or other dimensions of their writing performance, such as organisation, content, and vocabulary. Our search of literature revealed few studies examining the efficacy of WCF on lexical and syntactic complexity of students' writing, yet producing mixed results (Fazilatfar et al., 2014; Hamano-Bunce, 2022; Sherpa, 2021; Valizadeh, 2022; Van Beuningen et al., 2011). In addition, the findings presented in this review are relatively mixed, giving rise to a conflict about which type of WCF is the most effective. For instance, whilst a considerable amount of proof endorsed the efficacy of direct WCF, Arifin et al. (2019) found no significant difference between learners receiving direct WCF and those with no feedback on their writing performance. This calls for more research on the correlation between types of WCF on L2 writing and the relative effectiveness of different WCF strategies. However, it is suggested that many additional independent and dependent variables coming from learners' individual differences are worth considering when investigating the effects of WCF, such as language aptitude and working memory, anxiety, willingness to communicate, and motivation (Nakamura, 2016). While these elements have moderating effects on L2 writing instructions, little research has been done on the relationship between individual differences and the effectiveness of WCF types given, highlighting the need for further studies on that area. Coupled with this, Reynolds and Kao (2022), in their meta-analysis of prior studies on this issue, asserted that most literature adopting a quasi-experimental design was problematic since what took place in settings where the data was collected did not resemble giving WCF in actual learning practices. Thus, the need for action research on the application of WCF is highlighted so that WCF can be designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated to address certain specific issues in the classroom, increasing the validity of WCF types and ensuring the usefulness of findings in particular contexts (Nakamura, 2016).

Since WCF is pedagogically valuable, its application in L2 writing classes must be taken heed of. As its positive effects are well researched and clearly presented in ample research reviewed above, L2 teachers are strongly encouraged to incorporate WCF into their teaching writing practices to facilitate students' progress. However, the efficacy of WCF can vary according to learners' needs and abilities, learning contexts and the design and use of WCF (Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Kang & Han, 2015). Students' needs are emphasised when giving WCF, especially in assessment; hence teachers should tailor their WCF toward students' assessment rubrics or design rubrics to reflect what is important for students' development in a specific context (Hopper & Bowen, 2023). Different learning contexts are equally worth consideration in providing WCF as ESL and EFL learners present different behaviours and levels of motivation (Sato & Storch, 2022). Specifically, certain WCF strategies that are effective in EFL may not be applicable in ESL due to the more formal education earned by EFL learners (Ferris, 2011). Therefore, there is no feedback type that best works for all learning environments and types of learners. It is recommended that teachers make informed decisions to have their own best practice in the use of WCF instead of seeking the most effective WCF types based on existing research findings. Another recommendation would be for teachers to combine different WCF types, such as direct WCF and ME (Nakamura, 2016), or WCF with other forms like oral or peer feedback with the aim of maximising the potential benefits for all. Lastly, WCF should be provided in manifold dimensions of writing including grammatical/lexical complexity, lexical accuracy, organisation, cohesion and coherence, and content in place of focusing solely on grammatical accuracy to improve learners' overall L2 writing performance.

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