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EFL Learners' Preferences and Perceptions of Written Corrective Feedback: A Case Study of Iranian EFL Learners

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ABSTRACT

This qualitative study investigated EFL learners' perceptions and preferences regarding written corrective feedback (WCF) in academic writing. Twenty intermediate-level university students were purposively selected based on their sustained exposure to teacher feedback over six months. Semi-structured interviews explored learners' experiences with different feedback types and perceptions. Thematic analysis revealed five key findings: (1) Learners distinguished between explicit and implicit feedback, preferring direct corrections for complex grammar but indirect cues for vocabulary; (2) Metalinguistic feedback was valued when accompanied by explanations, though excessive coding caused anxiety; (3) Focused feedback on specific error types was deemed more practical than comprehensive corrections; (4) Digital feedback was praised for clarity, while handwritten notes were perceived as more personal; (5) Reformulations helped learners acquire native-like expressions, but required explicit comparisons to original errors. Results demonstrated WCF's multifaceted role in enhancing grammatical accuracy, lexical sophistication, writing confidence, and self-editing skills. Participants particularly valued feedback that balanced correction with explanation, targeted persistent errors, and provided positive reinforcement. The study highlights the need for differentiated feedback strategies that consider learners' cognitive styles and affective responses. These findings offer practical implications for optimizing WCF practices in second language writing instruction.

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1. Introduction

Written corrective feedback (WCF) has become a central focus in second language (L2) writing research due to its potential role in facilitating language acquisition and improving writing accuracy

(Almanea, 2025, Ellis, 2010; Mao et al., 2024; Zhang & Hyland, 2018). Feedback serves as a pedagogical tool to foster students' critical engagement with academic evaluation, with its efficacy contingent upon delivery methods (Niu & You, 2020; Patra et al., 2022). Böttcher (2011) asserted that feedback is instrumental in enhancing writing proficiency, emphasizing its role in reinforcing strengths rather than merely rectifying deficiencies. Scholars such as Brown (2012) and Zou and Lambert (2017) demonstrate that feedback can take different forms, each making a unique contribution to the learning process.

While corrective feedback has historically been associated with a negative perception due to its emphasis on error identification (Ceman & Dubravac, 2019; Chandler, 2003; Truscott, 1996), empirical studies, including those by Ellis (2009), Esmaeeli and Sadeghi (2020), Hattie and Timperley (2007), Kim and Bowles (2020), and Lim and Renandya (2020), and Mao et al. (2024) affirmed the pedagogical advantages of corrective feedback, wherein instructors systematically address errors and supply correct linguistic forms to support learning outcomes. Existing research on teachers' written feedback predominantly examines instructional strategies and the comparative effectiveness of feedback types (e.g., Benson & DeKeyser, 2019; Esmaeeli & Sadeghi, 2020; Kim & Bowles, 2020; Lim & Renandya, 2020). Lee (2014) advocated for a more holistic conceptualization of feedback as a bidirectional interaction, wherein it functions not merely as an evaluative commentary but as an integral component of the learning environment, fostering constructive teacher-student dynamics.

Scholars increasingly advocate for a needs-based approach to WCF that is responsive to specific learner contexts (Chong, 2020; Storch, 2018). Ferris (2011) argued that to maximize the utility of WCF, students' expectations and preferences must be prioritized. A key step toward this goal is understanding learners' perceptions, as identifying learner preferences helps teachers tailor their feedback to be more understandable (Fitriyah et al., 2024; Leow, 2023). While not the sole determinant of effectiveness, aligning WCF practices with learner preferences is crucial, as it increases student engagement and motivation by acknowledging their needs (Fitriyah et al., 2024; Rasool et al., 2024). Accordingly, this study investigates Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of their instructors' written feedback practices. Learners' perceptions constitute a critical variable in determining the efficacy of WCF for two primary reasons. First, discrepancies between instructors' intentions and students' interpretations may undermine learning outcomes (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). Second, students' generally positive attitudes toward WCF, as documented in prior research, reinforce its pedagogical relevance and inform evidence-based teaching practices (Ferris, 2012; Schulz, 2001). Despite increasing scholarly interest in perception-oriented WCF studies, significant gaps persist in this domain, warranting further exploration. This study aimed to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: What are Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of written corrective feedback?

RQ2: What are Iranian EFL learners' preferences for written corrective feedback?

2. Literature Review

Corrective feedback (CF), defined as any explicit attempt to draw learners' attention to linguistic errors (Ellis, 2008; Polio, 2012), has long been a fundamental component of second language pedagogy, particularly in writing instruction. This pedagogical tool encompasses various strategies that teachers

and peers employ to address errors in accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness (Ferris, 2006; Wang, 2009). The literature generally classifies written corrective feedback (WCF) into several distinct types, including direct versus indirect (providing corrections versus indicating errors), focused versus unfocused (targeting specific versus all errors), and local versus global (addressing sentence-level versus text-level issues) (Ellis, 2009). These feedback approaches share the common objective of enhancing learners' writing competence by reducing errors while improving clarity and self-expression (Hyland & Hyland, 2006).

Recent scholars have emphasized the significant role of WCF in developing L2 writing skills, with numerous studies demonstrating its positive impact on students' academic performance, self-expression, and communication abilities (Alsamadani, 2017; Graham, 2006; Liberty & Conderman, 2018). As L2 learners often require substantial support to improve their writing proficiency (Saragih et al., 2021; Zhang & Cheng, 2021), teachers must provide clear, concise, and accurate feedback (Vattøy & Smith, 2019). The effectiveness of WCF extends across various pedagogical approaches in foreign language teaching, encompassing both written and oral feedback modalities (Al Hilali & McKinley, 2021; Zhang & Cheng, 2021). This extensive body of research consistently highlights WCF's crucial role in L2 writing development (Xu, 2023).

CF has been systematically categorized in observational studies, with Lyster and Ranta's (1997) typology being the most widely recognized framework. Initially, they identified six distinct CF types, which were later consolidated into two broader categories: reformulations and prompts (Ranta & Lyster, 2007). Reformulations, which include recasts and explicit correction, supply learners with the correct form, whereas prompts, comprising clarification requests, metalinguistic feedback, elicitation, and repetition, encourage learners to self-repair without direct provision of the correct answer.

Building upon this classification, Sheen and Ellis (2011) proposed a refined taxonomy based on two key dimensions: explicit vs. implicit and input-providing vs. output-pushing feedback. The distinction between explicit and implicit CF is not absolute but rather exists on a continuum, as the degree of explicitness can vary depending on contextual factors (Lyster et al., 2013; Nassaji, 2009). Implicit CF subtly corrects errors without overtly signaling the mistake, whereas explicit CF makes the corrective intent clear, increasing the likelihood of the learners' noticing (Ellis, 2008). Additionally, input-providing CF (e.g., recasts) offers learners the correct form, while output-pushing CF (e.g., elicitation) prompts them to generate corrections independently.

Within the category recasts are the most frequently employed CF type across various instructional settings (Choi & Li, 2012; Ellis et al., 2001; Sheen, 2004). Sheen and Ellis (2011) further distinguished between conversational and didactic recasts. Conversational recasts, typically implicit, occur when teachers reformulate learner utterances to resolve communication breakdowns, often accompanied by confirmation checks (e.g., "Oh, so he was thin, was he?"). In contrast, didactic recasts, which tend to be more explicit, involve reformulations without any apparent communicative disruption, serving primarily as corrective models.

Research has also explored the relationship between CF types and linguistic error categories. For instance, Choi and Li (2012) observed that grammar and pronunciation errors frequently elicited recasts, whereas lexical errors more often triggered negotiation strategies such as prompts. Conversely, Mackey et al. (2000) found that grammar errors in dyadic interactions predominantly

invited recasts, while pronunciation errors led to more negotiation sequences. These findings suggest that both error type and interactional context influence CF selection.

Research on teachers' written feedback (TWF) in EFL settings has yielded mixed findings regarding students' preferences and the effectiveness of different feedback types. These studies can be grouped into several key themes: (1) preferences for feedback focus and directness, (2) affective responses to feedback, (3) the impact of feedback on writing accuracy, and (4) the role of learner proficiency and error type in feedback preferences. Studies examining students' preferences for comprehensive versus focused feedback and direct versus indirect correction have produced varied results. Some studies have indicated a preference for direct, comprehensive feedback that provides explicit corrections (Diab, 2005; Jodaie et al., 2011; Nguyen & Ramnath, 2016; Saeli, 2019). However, Trabelsi's (2019) study with EFL learners from Oman, Sudan, and Egypt found that students favored unfocused, indirect feedback, as it encouraged self-correction and reduced repeated errors.

Similarly, discrepancies emerge regarding whether students prioritize linguistic accuracy or content and organization. While Chen et al. (2016) found that Chinese EFL learners valued content-focused feedback over grammar corrections, Elwood and Bode (2014) reported that Japanese university students preferred feedback on both aspects. These differences suggest that cultural and instructional contexts may shape feedback preferences. Several studies highlight the emotional impact of TWF on learners. Mahfoodh and Pandian (2011) and Mahfoodh (2017) found that excessive corrections and harsh comments led to frustration and demotivation among Yemeni university students, whereas praise enhanced confidence. Similarly, Zumbrunn et al. (2016) noted that some students perceived feedback as negative criticism, particularly when it was illegible, ambiguous, or impersonal. Conversely, Ashrafi and Foozunfar (2018) and Rasool et al. (2023) reported generally positive attitudes toward WCF, especially when it was clear and constructive.

Research on the efficacy of direct vs. indirect feedback suggests that both can improve writing accuracy, but learner perceptions vary. Kim et al. (2020) found that collaborative writing tasks enhanced students' ability to utilize WCF effectively, leading to better final drafts. However, some learners prefer explicit corrections (Lee et al., 2013), while others—particularly more proficient students—favor implicit methods such as error highlighting (Brown, 2009; Kaivanpanah et al., 2015). Studies indicate that proficiency level and error type influence feedback preferences. For instance, Yang (2016) found that recasts were perceived as more effective for phonological errors than for lexical or grammatical mistakes. Additionally, advanced learners tend to prefer less intrusive feedback (e.g., indirect cues), whereas beginners benefit more from explicit corrections (Brown, 2009; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005). Rasool et al. (2023) and Rasool and Aslam (2024) further demonstrated that metalinguistic explanations and direct WCF were the most preferred strategies across different nationalities, though perceptions varied slightly by cultural background.

3. Methodology

This study followed a qualitative design to investigate EFL learners' preferences and perceptions of WCF in academic writing.

3.1 Participants and Setting

This qualitative study employed a purposive sampling strategy to select 20 EFL learners (10 male and 10 female) at the intermediate level in a private language institute in Bushehr, Iran. The participants were in the age range of 19-24 and they were homogeneous in language proficiency (B1-B2 CEFR levels verified by institutional placement tests). The selection criteria ensured participants had at least six months of consistent exposure to teacher-written feedback on their academic writing assignments. This prerequisite guaranteed that all interviewees could draw from substantial personal experience when discussing feedback reception and utilization. Recruitment was carried out through the integration of random sampling and voluntary registration, and the final sample was adjusted to accommodate the demographic parameters of the research. In order to ensure ethical research practice, all the participants provided informed consent after being adequately informed about the study's purpose, data collection practices, and rights as research participants.

3.2 Instrumentation

This study implemented semi-structured interviews to investigate learners' perceptions regarding WCF and their preferences for different feedback types. The interviews sought to explore the ways in which students preferred to get feedback from teachers, the types of feedback they found most beneficial to their learning, and what they understood about using feedback effectively to develop their writing capacity. This qualitative approach was particularly valuable in tapping into participants' subjective perceptions and experiences- information that cannot be directly observed but is essential for understanding the learning process (Mackey & Gass, 2005; Merriam, 1998). The semi-structured interview approach was particularly chosen to facilitate open-ended responses, allowing participants the freedom to elaborate on their views and experiences unencumbered by the constraints of rigidly structured questions (Cohen et al., 2007; Patton, 2002).

The interview process was carefully designed to encourage detailed responses while remaining flexible to the follow up emerging themes. Participants were given ample opportunity to share their personal experiences with different feedback types, describe how they processed and implemented teacher feedback, and express their preferences regarding feedback delivery methods. This approach not only provided significant insight into students' perceptions of WCF but also revealed valuable information regarding how learners engage with feedback in practice, offering implications for more effective feedback practices in second language writing instruction.

3.3. Research Procedure

The participants were invited through visits to the classrooms, at the end of the semester. The qualitative data from interviews were first sound-recorded and then transcribed verbatim. The transcribed notes were read to the students to ensure that their views were correctly recorded. The researchers were engaged in repeated listening and reading to familiarize herself with the content. An inductive thematic analysis approach was employed, allowing themes to emerge organically without predefined categories. Qualitative content analysis (Miles & Huberman, 2002) was utilized, specifically conventional analysis (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005), which is beneficial for under-researched phenomena. This method enabled direct extraction of insights from participants while maintaining

depth and nuance. The analysis followed structured steps: data preparation (transcription, translation from Persian, and organization), data reduction (condensing information, member checking, and manual coding), and thematic categorization (inductive coding, grouping, and inter-rater reliability checks). The coding process involved identifying meaningful segments, merging related codes, and refining categories through iterative review. Subthemes were examined both vertically and horizontally, enabling cross-comparisons and condensation. The vertical analysis identified subthemes within each interview question, while the horizontal analysis involved comparing subthemes across different interviewees for the same questions. To ensure credibility, the researchers collaborated with a co-rater, achieving a 90% inter-rater agreement, which validated the consistency of the coding scheme. Discrepancies were resolved through discussion, and redundant or irrelevant data were systematically excluded. This rigorous approach facilitated a structured yet flexible analysis, aligning with the study's objectives while preserving the richness of participants' responses.

4. Data Analysis

Through rigorous thematic analysis, five major themes emerged, each revealing nuanced insights into how learners process, value, and utilize WCF in their language learning journey. The findings demonstrate that WCF serves multiple pedagogical functions beyond simple error correction, influencing cognitive, affective, and metacognitive dimensions of learning (See Table 1).

Table 1

Extracted Themes

Extracted Themes	Percentage
WCF enhances grammatical accuracy and linguistic awareness	70 %
WCF enhances vocabulary and lexical sophistication	60 %
WCF enhances writing confidence and motivation	55 %
WCF encourages independent learning and self-editing	55 %

4.1 WCF Enhances Grammatical Accuracy and Linguistic Awareness

Learners consistently emphasized WCF's crucial role in enhancing their grammatical competence. They reported that targeted corrections helped them identify persistent error patterns, particularly in complex grammatical structures such as article usage, verb tenses, and prepositional phrases. Many participants noted that while they could often recognize errors when highlighted, they frequently struggled to self-correct without explicit teacher guidance. The learners particularly valued metalinguistic feedback that included brief explanations, as it helped them understand the linguistic rules underlying their mistakes. Several participants mentioned developing what they called "grammar radar" - an increased sensitivity to potential errors during the writing process. However, some learners expressed frustration when feedback focused too narrowly on surface-level errors without addressing deeper grammatical concepts.

"The red circles on my articles (a, an, the) were annoying at first, but now I automatically check them before submitting. I can feel my grammar improving." (Participant 4, Female)

"When the teacher writes why it's wrong, like 'past perfect needed here because...', it sticks in my mind better than just seeing the correction." (Participant 11, Male)

"I keep making the same preposition mistakes. The corrections help, but I wish we could do more exercises on these tricky ones." (Participant 19, Female)

4.2 WCF Enhances Vocabulary and Lexical Sophistication

Beyond grammar, participants highlighted WCF's significant impact on their lexical development. They appreciated when teachers provided alternative vocabulary choices, particularly for overused words or inappropriate lexical selections. Many reported maintaining personal "upgrade lists" where they recorded teacher-suggested synonyms and more academic expressions. Learners distinguished between two valuable types of lexical feedback: direct substitutions for incorrect words and enhancement suggestions for grammatically correct but basic vocabulary. The latter was particularly valued by learners seeking to develop a more sophisticated writing style.

"My teacher always writes 'simple word' when I use 'good' or 'bad'. Now I have a mental list of better alternatives like 'beneficial' or 'problematic'." (Participant 6, Male)

"The best feedback is when the teacher shows me how native speakers would phrase something. It's not wrong what I wrote, but there's a better way." (Participant 13, Female)

"I've started using the 'comments' feature in Word to build my own academic phrasebook from teacher corrections." (Participant 20, Male)

4.3 WCF Enhances Writing Confidence and Motivation

The affective impact of WCF emerged as a significant theme, with learners describing complex emotional responses to feedback. While initial encounters with heavily corrected papers could be demoralizing, most participants reported developing resilience and viewing corrections as evidence of teacher investment in their progress. The ratio of positive comments to corrections significantly influenced their motivation levels. Learners particularly valued "feedback sandwiches" where corrections were framed between positive remarks about content or effort. Several mentioned that seeing fewer errors in subsequent assignments provided tangible evidence of improvement, which served as powerful motivation. However, some participants from traditional educational backgrounds initially interpreted extensive corrections as personal criticism rather than pedagogical support.

"When the teacher writes 'good argument here' next to corrections, it makes me want to try harder instead of feeling bad." (Participant 1, Female)

"At first, I hated seeing all the red ink, but now I compare my first and latest essays and see how much I've improved. That feels amazing." (Participant 8, Male)

"In my school, perfect papers got gold stars. Here, the best papers have the most feedback. It took time to understand this different approach." (Participant 16, Female)

4.4 WCF Encourages Independent Learning and Self-Editing

A recurring theme was that learners gradually developed the ability to self-correct their writing as a result of the repeated feedback they received. They reported that over time, they began noticing patterns in their mistakes and could apply previous corrections to new writing tasks. Some emphasized the value of maintaining feedback logs or reviewing previous corrections before submitting new assignments.

"Now, before submitting, I check my work for mistakes I used to make. Feedback taught me what to look for." (Participant 2, Female)

"I have a notebook where I write down common errors from feedback. When I write, I check this list to avoid repeating them." (Participant 10, Male)

"In the beginning, I depended on my teacher to correct everything. Now, I try to find my own mistakes first." (Participant 18, Female)

Regarding learners' knowledge of feedback types, analysis revealed five key types of feedback that provide insights into learners' knowledge of feedback types (See Table 2).

Table 2

Feedback Types

Extracted Themes	Percentage
Explicit vs. Implicit Feedback	65%
Metalinguistic Feedback	55%
Focused vs. Comprehensive Feedback	50%
Electronic vs. Traditional Feedback	50%
Reformulation vs. Reformulative Feedback	45%

4.5 Explicit vs. Implicit Feedback

Learners demonstrated a clear conceptual understanding of explicit and implicit feedback types, though their preferences varied based on language proficiency and task type.

"When the teacher writes the correct form above my error, I can immediately see the right way, but when she just underlines the errors, I must think harder to find the solution." (Participant 4, Female)

"For grammar mistakes, I need direct corrections because sometimes I don't know the rule, but for vocabulary, just marking is enough as I can find alternatives." (Participant 11, Male)

"Indirect feedback is frustrating when I can't figure out the answer, but when I do, I remember it better than when it's just given to me." (Participant 17, Female)

4.6 Metalinguistic Feedback

Participants showed varying familiarity with metalinguistic feedback, with learners appreciating its long-term benefits for language acquisition.

"The 'T' symbol for tense errors was confusing at first, but now it helps me quickly identify the mistakes I make most often." (Participant 3, Male)

"Short explanations like 'use present perfect for unfinished time' help me understand why my answer was wrong." (Participant 9, Female)

"Too many error codes make me anxious. I prefer when teachers write full sentences explaining mistakes." (Participant 14, Male)

4.7 Focused vs. Comprehensive Feedback

Learners expressed nuanced views about the scope of feedback, recognizing trade-offs between comprehensive error correction and targeted feedback approaches.

"When the teacher focuses only on article errors in one assignment, I really improve in that area for the next paper." (Participant 5, Female)

"Seeing every single mistake marked makes me feel discouraged, but I also worry about unmarked errors." (Participant 12, Male)

"Maybe teachers should correct major errors completely, but just highlight minor ones for us to notice." (Participant 19, Female)

4.8 Electronic vs. Traditional Feedback

Participants compared digital and handwritten feedback formats, identifying advantages and disadvantages of each modality.

"Online comments are clearer than handwritten ones and I can easily refer back to them later." (Participant 2, Female)

"Handwritten notes feel more personal, showing that the teacher carefully engaged with my work." (Participant 8, Male)

"Track Changes lets me compare my original and corrected versions side-by-side, which is really helpful." (Participant 15, Female)

4.9 Reformulation vs. Direct Correction

Some learners demonstrated awareness of reformulation techniques where teachers rewrite problematic sentences while preserving the original meaning.

"When the teacher rewrites my awkward sentence in a natural way, I learn how native speakers would express the idea." (Participant 7, Female)

"Seeing multiple ways to say the same thing expands my language flexibility." (Participant 13, Male)

"Complete reformulations are helpful, but I also need to understand what was wrong with my original version." (Participant 20, Female)

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The current study yielded significant empirical insights into Iranian EFL learners' conceptualizations of both the advantages and typological variations of written corrective feedback (WCF). The results illuminate a multifaceted interaction of cognitive, affective, and instructional dimensions that collectively influence learners' processing and utilization of diverse feedback methodologies. A substantial majority of participants acknowledged WCF's instrumental role in linguistic development, with particular emphasis on its efficacy in improving grammatical precision and lexical acquisition. The emergence of self-reported phenomena such as "grammar radar" development and systematic vocabulary enhancement protocols resonates with Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, positing that feedback facilitates deliberate attentional focus on linguistic structures. These observations find corroboration in Bitchener and Knoch's (2010) seminal work, which established that metalinguistic feedback incorporating concise explanations significantly bolsters grammatical accuracy through enhanced cognitive processing depth.

The learners' progression from error repetition to self-correction aligns with Vygotsky's scaffolding theory (1978), where teacher feedback initially supports performance before learners internalize corrections. This observation is reinforced by Kim et al. (2020), who found that collaborative writing tasks helped students utilize WCF more effectively, suggesting that social interaction enhances feedback uptake. However, while some studies (e.g., Trabelsi, 2019) argue that indirect feedback fosters greater self-correction, our participants preferred direct feedback for complex grammar points—a finding that echoes Almohawes' (2025), Rasool et al's (2024), Zorah and Fatiha's (2022), Reynolds and Zhang's (2023), and Lee's (2013) results that reported learners preferred their writing to be corrected using unfocused, direct feedback but contrasts with Brown's (2009) conclusion that advanced learners favor indirect cues.

The affective benefits reported in this study, particularly the development of writing confidence despite initial discouragement, resonate with Hyland and Hyland's (2006) work on the emotional

dimensions of feedback. The learners' appreciation for "feedback sandwiches" (positive comments framing corrections) supports Ferris's (2014) argument that balanced feedback sustains motivation. This finding aligns with Almohawes (2024), whose participants also reported that metalinguistic feedback was an engaging and memorable learning instrument that enhanced their motivation. It challenges Zumbrunn et al.'s (2016) more pessimistic view that feedback is inherently demotivating, instead suggesting that strategic framing mitigates negative emotions—a perspective shared by Ashrafi and Foozunfar (2018), who found that constructive feedback fosters positive attitudes.

However, the initial discouragement from heavily corrected papers aligns with Mahfoodh and Pandian's (2011) and Mahfoodh's (2017) findings, emphasizing that excessive corrections can induce frustration. Yet, over time, learners in our study developed resilience, particularly when teachers employed encouraging techniques— a result that diverges from Zumbrunn et al.'s (2016) conclusion but supports Bandura's (1997) self-efficacy theory, as learners' motivation increased when they perceived their own progress.

The learners in this study demonstrated nuanced preferences for different feedback types, reinforcing the idea that error type and learner proficiency influence WCF effectiveness (Brown, 2009; Lasagabaster & Sierra, 2005). Their preference for direct feedback on complex grammar but indirect feedback on vocabulary corroborates Lalande's (1982) argument that feedback should be tailored to error categories. Additionally, their positive response to metalinguistic explanations aligns with Bitchener and Knoch's (2010) findings but contrasts with Trabelsi's (2019) observation that some learners prefer unfocused, indirect feedback to encourage autonomy.

The debate over focused vs. comprehensive feedback (Ellis, 2009; Van Beuningen, 2010) was reflected in participants' divided opinions, with some advocating for alternating approaches based on assignment purpose—a pragmatic compromise not extensively discussed in prior literature. Similarly, their mixed reactions to electronic vs. handwritten feedback support Hyland and Hyland's (2006) argument that while digital feedback is efficient, handwritten comments may foster a stronger sense of teacher care, a factor that Zumbrunn et al. (2016) identified as crucial for learner motivation.

Our findings regarding learners' prioritization of linguistic accuracy over content and organization align with Nguyen and Ramnath's (2016) study on Vietnamese learners but contrast with Chen et al.'s (2016) results from China, where content-focused feedback was preferred. This prioritization of form over higher-order concerns contradicts a body of previous research that advocates for comprehensive feedback addressing all aspects of writing, including content, organization, and overall quality (Almanea, 2025; Rasool et al., 2023, 2024). This divergence underscores Rasool et al.'s (2023) and Rasool and Aslam's (2024) conclusion that cultural and instructional contexts shape feedback perceptions. The Iranian learners' emphasis on grammatical precision likely stems from their exam-oriented educational background, reinforcing the need for culturally adaptive feedback strategies rather than a one-size-fits-all approach.

This study's examination of Iranian EFL learners' perceptions of written corrective feedback yields several important conclusions with significant implications for language teaching practice. The findings collectively demonstrate that effective WCF implementation requires a nuanced, multidimensional approach that carefully balances cognitive, affective, and contextual factors in

second language writing instruction. The research conclusively establishes that Iranian EFL learners derive substantial benefits from WCF when it is properly implemented. Participants indicated that WCF is significant in developing their grammatical accuracy, lexical knowledge, and writing fluency, confirming WCF's cognitive value in language development. These benefits were particularly evident when feedback incorporated explicit corrections with clear explanations, supporting the importance of direct feedback for complex linguistic structures. However, the study also revealed that feedback effectiveness is mediated by crucial affective factors- while initial encounters with extensive corrections could be discouraging, learners developed resilience and motivation when teachers employed balanced feedback techniques that combined corrections with encouragement and progress tracking.

A key contribution of this study is its demonstration of how cultural and educational contexts shape feedback perceptions. The strong preference for linguistic accuracy over content development among Iranian learners highlights the need for localized rather than universal feedback approaches. This finding suggests that feedback practices must be adapted to align with local educational priorities and assessment systems rather than uncritically adopting Western pedagogical models. The findings of this study offer significant practical implications for EFL writing instruction while pointing to valuable directions for future research. For classroom implementation, teachers should adopt a differentiated approach to feedback that strategically varies methods based on learning objectives, error types, and proficiency levels. This includes employing direct feedback for complex grammatical structures while using indirect methods for vocabulary and stylistic improvements. Equally crucial is the affective dimension of feedback: educators should frame corrections positively through techniques like the feedback sandwich approach, consistently highlighting students' progress to maintain motivation.

A developmental perspective suggests implementing scaffolded feedback practices that gradually transition learners from teacher-dependent correction to autonomous self-editing through sequenced activities, building error detection and correction skills. This process should be supported by explicit feedback literacy instruction, where teachers dedicate time to helping students understand error codes, maintain error logs, and effectively apply corrections to new writing tasks. Given the contextual nature of feedback effectiveness, educators must also develop culturally responsive practices that align with local educational priorities and assessment systems. The study identifies several promising avenues for future investigation. Longitudinal studies could track the retention and transfer of feedback benefits over time, while cross-cultural comparisons might reveal how different educational systems shape feedback effectiveness.

Ultimately, this research reaffirms that thoughtfully implemented written corrective feedback remains an essential component of effective language teaching. By carefully considering the complex interplay of cognitive, affective, and contextual factors revealed in this study, educators can design feedback practices that simultaneously enhance linguistic development and foster positive learning dispositions among EFL students. The findings suggest that when feedback is strategically differentiated, affectively supportive, developmentally sequenced, and culturally attuned, it can maximize both short-term writing improvement and long-term language learning success.

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