

Language learner perspectives on
written corrective feedback provided by their teachers

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Abstract

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is one method by which a teacher provides a learner with feedback related to errors in their writing. Currently, English as a second language (ESL) learners' perceptions of *Written* Corrective Feedback are still relatively under-researched. On the other hand, learners' perceptions of *Oral* Corrective Feedback have been studied to a greater degree (e.g., Kim & Mostafa, 2021). The present study aims to further spotlight learners' voices and add to current research by focusing on how the participants perceive the benefits and drawbacks of WCF, as well as their emotional reactions.

The four participants in this study were recruited from an English language teaching school in Auckland, New Zealand, as well as from an invitation posted to the school's social media pages. A multiple-case study approach was adopted to gain richer and deeper insights into the four participants' viewpoints. To this end, several data gathering tools were created, including questionnaires with Likert-type scale items and open-ended questions, as well as a semi-structured interview.

Previous studies into this topic had not made it possible for their participants to experience a variety of WCF methods; therefore, several stages were added to these research procedures in order to increase the participants' awareness and experience of such teaching practices. An online information session about WCF was provided by the researcher and the writing tasks were marked using a variety of different WCF methods so that the participants were able to contribute deeper insights into the

comparative value of these processes. The data from these different tools were examined for patterns and relevance to the research questions, and were triangulated to enhance their validity.

Findings from the study in regard to their WCF preferences showed that the participants strongly preferred feedback on *all* writing errors, and that most of them indicated a preference for WCF methods which allowed them to correct their errors themselves with some assistance from the teacher. The participants' rationales for these two preferences matched, as they indicated that increased awareness of the errors they produced made it possible for them to avoid making these errors in their future writing. In the finding related to their emotional reactions to WCF, some participants stated that they had experienced negative emotions due to the feedback they had received from their teachers. However, these participants were able to quickly overcome these negative emotions and then meaningfully engage with the feedback. Their perception that WCF is necessary in order to improve the accuracy of their grammar and accomplish their goals helped them to manage this initial reaction. The significance of this study lies in its findings, which both support previous research as well as adding new insights related to the participants' emotional reactions and the reasons given for their WCF preferences.

Contents

Abstract.....	i
Contents.....	iii
List of Tables	vii
List of Acronyms	viii
Glossary	ix
Attestation of Authorship.....	x
Acknowledgements.....	xi
Chapter 1 – Introduction.....	1
1.1 – Background to the study.....	1
1.2 – Aims for the study	3
1.3 – Design of the study.....	4
1.4 – Structure of the thesis.....	5
Chapter 2 - Literature Review.....	7
2.1 – Introduction to errors and corrective feedback.....	7
2.1.1 – Historical perspectives on error in second language acquisition.....	8
2.1.2 – Learning grammar from correction.....	13
2.1.3 – The role of the teacher	16
2.2 – Written Corrective Feedback	17
2.2.1 – Indirect vs Direct Written Corrective Feedback.....	20
2.2.2 – Unfocused vs Focused Written Corrective Feedback	26
2.3 – Learners’ perceptions of corrective feedback.....	35
2.3.1 – Learners’ perceptions of Written Corrective Feedback.....	35
2.4 – Conclusion	44

Chapter 3 - Methodology	47
3.1 – Introduction.....	47
3.1.1 – Research paradigm	47
3.1.2 – Methodological approach.....	48
3.2 – Data Collection	52
3.2.1 – Participants.....	52
3.2.2 – Location.....	55
3.2.3 – Ethics.....	56
3.2.4 – Reflexivity.....	58
3.3 – Instruments	63
3.3.1 – Questionnaire (Appendix C)	63
3.3.2 – Semi-structured interviews (Appendix D).....	66
3.3.3 – Writing tasks	67
3.4 – Data collection – Procedural outline	74
3.5 – Data analysis.....	76
3.5.1 – Quantitative data.....	77
3.5.2 – Qualitative data	77
Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion.....	80
4.1 – Introduction.....	80
4.2 – RQ1: Benefits and drawbacks of WCF	81
4.2.1 – Renshu	81
4.2.2 – Marta.....	83
4.2.3 – Zayed.....	85
4.2.4 – Somchai	88
4.3 – RQ2: Learners’ receptions and reactions to Unfocused WCF.....	89
4.3.1 – Renshu	90

4.3.2 – Marta.....	91
4.3.3 – Zayed.....	92
4.3.4 – Somchai	94
4.4 – Discussion of findings	96
4.4.1 – What benefits and drawbacks do language learners perceive in written corrective feedback methods used by their teachers?	97
4.4.2 – How do language learners perceive or react emotionally to Unfocused WCF?.....	101
Chapter 5 – Conclusion.....	104
5.1 – Research aims and methodology	104
5.2 – Summary of findings	104
5.3 – Study significance and practical implications.....	105
5.4 – Study limitations and recommendations for further research.....	107
5.5 – Researcher reflections	108
References	111
Appendices.....	124
Appendix A – Teacher information sheet	124
Appendix B – Participant information sheet	127
Appendix C – Questionnaire.....	131
Appendix D – Semi-structured interview questions	137
Appendix E – Online invitation.....	138
Appendix F – Writing task 1	139
Appendix G – Writing task 2	140
Appendix H – Writing correction code	141
Appendix I – Consent form	142
Appendix J – Online information session slides	143

Appendix K – NVivo code example 1 (Marta transcript coded for ‘time’).....	145
Appendix L – NVivo grouping of ‘time’ codes	146

List of Tables

Table 1 Written Corrective Feedback Types	18
Table 2 Participant Information	55
Table 3 Cambridge English Error Codes	71
Table 4 British Council Error Codes	72
Table 5 Research Error Codes	73
Table 6 Simplified Breakdown of Schedule	76

List of Acronyms

AUT	Auckland University of Technology
AUT IH	Auckland University of Technology International House
CF	Corrective Feedback
CLT	Communicative Language Teaching
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
GIE	General English, IELTS, English for academic purposes
GT	Grammar-Translation
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
WCF	Written Corrective Feedback

Glossary

Corrective Feedback – *In language teaching, Corrective Feedback is the process of a teacher informing a learner that an error or mistake has been produced. Many types of Corrective Feedback exist and those relevant to this study are found below.*

Oral Corrective Feedback – *Corrective Feedback given in response to errors produced orally by a learner. One example is 'repetition', where the teacher will repeat what the learner said, hoping that the learner will notice and correct the error.*

Written Corrective Feedback – *Corrective Feedback given in response to errors produced in a piece of writing by a learner. Examples of different types are given below.*

Direct Written Corrective Feedback – *The teacher simply provides the learner with the 'grammatically correct' form of the error.*

Indirect Written Corrective Feedback – *In response to the error, the teacher provides indications that an error has been produced, but does not provide a direct correction. The learner then corrects the error themselves based on these indications. See Table 1 in Section 2.2 for examples of different types of Indirect Written Corrective Feedback.*

Unfocused Written Corrective Feedback – *The teacher provides Corrective Feedback on all errors produced in a piece of writing.*

Focused Written Corrective Feedback – *The teacher provides Corrective Feedback on a selected error type or types. For example, the teacher only provides Corrective Feedback on incorrectly used 'Articles' (i.e., a, an, the, no article), and ignores other error types.*

Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

Signature :

Date: 2/6/2022

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 – Background to the study

Teachers informing learners when they have produced an error, also known as Corrective Feedback (CF), is a common practice in ESL classrooms. Since the 1950s, research into feedback on errors and the best way to approach them has intensified (Han, 2002), with researchers attempting to find the most effective methods to help learners reduce grammatical errors. The methods developed during this time have varied widely, and often depend on the English skill (speaking, listening, reading, writing) which is being practiced. Examples of these shifts range from the Audiolingual method in the mid-20th century, which treated any error as a purely negative and to be avoided at all costs (Katayama, 2007), to the Communicative approach of the late 1960s, which allowed grammatically imperfect forms if the second-language speaker was able to successfully communicate their intended meaning.

Two important theories relating to CF emerged in the mid-1990s. R. Ellis (1993) posited that a learner's explicit knowledge may actually help them notice a gap between their current grammatical knowledge and grammatical items in input (magazines, newspapers, other peoples' essays, etc.) which may differ from their knowledge. As an example, he stated: "if learners know that plural nouns have an -s, they are better equipped to notice the difference between this feature in the input and its omission in their own output" (p. 98). While not directly related to his theory,

CF can be seen as an important part of this process as it allows learners to become aware that their hypotheses may not be correct. In another theory important for CF, Long and Crookes (1993) stated that increasing the salience of grammatical items may decrease the time which a learner takes to notice forms which differ from their grammatical hypotheses. These theories allow CF to be seen as an effective method of improving learners' grammatical accuracy, as highlighting learner errors increases their salience.

Looking specifically at the skill of writing, debates around best practices have continued. Researchers (e.g., R. Ellis et al., 2008; Bitchener et al., 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Frear & Chiu, 2015; Van Beuningen et al., 2008, 2012) have investigated different methods of WCF, in order to establish which method is most effective. They tested different methods, e.g., more and less salient feedback, differing levels of detail in the feedback, and providing feedback for only one error type. The results of these investigations have often been at variance and have not provided definitive conclusions as to the best practices. Nonetheless, all the research mentioned above indicated positive results for WCF in general, as the experimental groups who received WCF in these studies typically out-performed control groups by improving their grammatical accuracy over time. However, not all authors have made positive claims regarding WCF. One author, Truscott (1996), claimed that any WCF is potentially damaging for a learner's self-confidence, that research up to that point in time was untrustworthy, and that no feedback whatsoever should be given.

While the results from the research above established generally positive results for WCF, none of them included the voice of the learners themselves. This is especially

noteworthy as Li (2017) found through a meta-analysis of 26 studies that learners' perceptions of feedback may have an impact on its effectiveness. Regarding a definition of *perceptions* for this study, Pajares (1992) stated that perception, belief, attitude, value, and ideology, amongst other words, are often used interchangeably in academic literature, with a general meaning of a thought which is an evaluation or judgment. Thus, for this study, the participant's *perceptions* are their evaluations and judgments of various aspects of WCF which they are asked about in the questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Unfortunately, compared with Oral CF, learners' perceptions of WCF are an area which is still relatively under-researched (Kim & Mostafa, 2021). This is further complicated by the lack of qualitative research on this topic. However, studies which do investigate learners' perceptions of WCF have found that learners often want as much feedback as possible from their teachers (Lee, 2004; McMartin-Miller, 2014) as this allows them to become more aware of their errors. However, some participants did mention negative emotions when receiving WCF, which possibly supports the claims made by Truscott (1996), as mentioned above. Moreover, none of this past research contains detailed information of a qualitative nature from the participants in regard to their perceptions of WCF, thus leaving a gap for further research to be carried out in this area.

1.2 – Aims for the study

The primary aim of the study is to shed further light on ESL learners' perceptions of WCF methods, thus building on the limited contributions of previous research. The aim is separated into two foci: the first being how the learners perceive the benefits

and drawbacks of WCF; and the second being a more thorough investigation into learners' emotional reactions to Unfocused Written Corrective Feedback (WCF), which is a teacher's response to written errors which a learner has produced. The two research questions are:

1. *What benefits and drawbacks do language learners perceive in written corrective feedback methods used by their teachers?*
2. *How do language learners perceive or react emotionally to Unfocused WCF?*

1.3 – Design of the study

This online study involved four adult ESL learners of English. A case-study approach was undertaken in order to gather detailed data from the four participants.

Triangulation was achieved by the implementation of a variety of data gathering tools, which comprised questionnaires with open-ended questions and Likert-type scale responses, as well as a semi-structured interview. The participants who expressed an interest in the study were invited to an online information session with other participants conducted by the researcher in order to increase their awareness of the different types of WCF, followed by the completion of an initial questionnaire. After this, two writing tasks were sent by email to the participants, which were then returned to and marked by the researcher using two different types of WCF. The writing tasks and feedback were included in the study so as to allow the participants to gain experience in WCF methods which they may not have experienced before, thus providing richer sources of data for the study. Finally, the participants completed a second identical questionnaire, and participated in a one-to-one semi-

structured interview with the researcher. At the analysis stage, the qualitative data was explored in order to discover patterns which emerged from the participants' responses, and then triangulated with the quantitative data.

1.4 – Structure of the thesis

Following the present Introduction chapter, Chapter 2 presents a literature review in which the history of CF is introduced and then followed by theories related to grammar learning by way of CF. Following this, more specific research relating to WCF effectiveness, and then qualitative research into learner perceptions of WCF is explored. The chapter concludes with a description of the possible gaps found in previous research and the research questions of this study.

The methodological approach of the study is explored in Chapter 3. Decisions and justifications related to participant recruitment, data gathering tools, ethical concerns, and data analysis methods are introduced in this chapter. A case study method was chosen as it allows for the participants' perceptions to be investigated in greater depth. In addition, a variety of data sources was utilised in order to triangulate and validate the data gathered.

Chapter 4 contains the findings and discussion of the data gathered from the participants. The Findings are analysed through the lens of the research questions and are separated into sections according to the individual participant. Relevant quantitative data from the questionnaires are presented using descriptive statistics, while the qualitative data from the questionnaires and semi-structured interview are analysed for relevance to the research questions, as well as trends in the

participants' reactions to WCF. The findings are then interpreted and discussed in the context of the research questions with reference to previous research.

Finally, the conclusion (Chapter 5) includes a restatement of the research aims and presents a summary of the findings. It then moves on to the study's significance, practical implications, limitations, and recommendations for further research. It concludes with the researcher's reflections on his own involvement in the study, finding connections between his and his participants' experiences.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

2.1 – Introduction to errors and corrective feedback

In second language teaching, language learners' production of incorrect language (i.e., an error or mistake) is a natural part of the learning process. Corder (1967) differentiates between an *error* and a *mistake*. An error is a sign of an issue with the learner's *knowledge* of the language when they repeatedly produce non-target-like utterances, whereas a mistake is a *performance* issue – a slip of the tongue. In the classroom, it is not always obvious whether a student has produced an error or a mistake (Mackey et al., 2016). Over time, however, this ambiguity may be lessened as the teacher becomes more familiar with a learner's linguistic idiosyncrasies. In this study, both *errors* and *mistakes* are referred to as 'errors'.

When a teacher encounters an error produced by a learner, they may provide CF. CF can take multiple forms – from 'positive' feedback, where the teacher provides the correct form, to 'negative' feedback, where the teacher indicates to the student that their language is non-target-like (R. Ellis & Shintani, 2013). Modern Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theorists and practitioners have proposed a wide range of language acquisition theories and teaching methodologies in the last few decades and, naturally, these shifts in attitudes and approaches have impacted language teachers' perspectives on and reactions to error, as is explained in detail in section 2.1.1, below. In particular, the reason why these errors have been produced, and

how teachers should respond to such errors, has seen a shift in theories, attitudes, and practices.

This literature review explores definitions and practices in regard to error and CF in SLA theory, research, and practice. First, historical views of second language speakers' errors and CF in pedagogical settings are introduced, with a focus on theories and research. This begins with an example of a widely used, but controversial method from the mid-20th century, the Audiolingual method. This is introduced to highlight the dramatic difference between theory and methodology relating to learner error. Second, learner self-correction is examined. Third, WCF with its theories and related practices is introduced. Next, more detailed methods of providing WCF are focused on. These methods comprise Indirect WCF, Direct WCF, Unfocused WCF, Focused WCF, and combinations of these methods (see Glossary, p. ix, above). Finally, learners' perceptions of error and CF in general are discussed followed by a focus on *Written* CF.

2.1.1 – Historical perspectives on error in second language acquisition

Over the last 400 years, language teaching techniques have increased in variety and number, particularly since the 1950s (Han, 2002). These approaches were often created in response to what was seen as failures in other approaches. For example, the Grammar-Translation (GT) method, which had been in use since the early 17th century, required learners to learn grammatical rules and then translate sentences from their native language to the target language (Mart, 2013). In reaction to the inability of GT method learners to communicate orally, the Direct Approach, which

required the learners and teacher to use the target language exclusively in the classroom, emerged in the late 19th century. From this target language exposure through dialogues and conversation, the learners would theoretically acquire grammar and culture. Following this, the Reading Approach was developed as many people did not travel overseas at the time, and thus reading was considered to be the most useful skill for second language learners (Celce-Murcia, 1991).

With World War II providing the catalyst for an increased need for oral skills in other languages, the Audiolingual method was developed. It signalled a key shift in teaching practice, as the world from this point became more globalised, thus establishing a pressing demand for such oral language skills. The theoretical base was psychologist Burrhus Frederic Skinner's theories related to behaviourism, which were related to his study of behaviour in animals. These behaviourist theories focused on the notion of reinforcement being a key to establishing desirable habits, i.e., positive reinforcement for correct behaviours and negative reinforcement for what are deemed incorrect behaviours. This provided a 'scientific' foundation for the Audiolingual method (Margolis, 1982). Language learning was considered to be a "mechanical process leading the learners to habit formation whose underlying scheme is conditioned by reflex" (Demirezen, 1988, p. 137). Thus, the positive reinforcement provided by the teacher should establish positive linguistic habits. In the classroom, this was demonstrated by language learners observing a particular language model being produced, then repeating this item themselves. The fundamental idea was that once learners had observed and practised a particular language item a sufficient number of times, they would then be able to respond to

stimulus with the practised language, automatically and without error. However, in a case in which that error did occur, it was to be corrected immediately. Additionally, it was believed that learners should not be permitted to correct their own mistakes (Modern Language Materials Development Center, 1961, as cited in Hendrickson, 1978). This attitude towards error is underscored by early proponents, like N. H. Brooks, who propounded purely negative views of errors (as cited in Katayama, 2007).

As previously outlined, the Audiolingual method was based on behaviourist theories relating to animals and was not developed or supported using empirical research involving humans. In fact, early research pointed to other methodologies having stronger efficacy in language learning, with the exception being that Audiolingual learners seemed to have stronger mimicry skills (Chastain & Woerdehoff, 1968). Other authors, moreover, challenged the Audiolingual method in highly critical reviews of Skinner's theories regarding language (e.g., Chomsky, 1959), and in accounts of their own experiences with the weaknesses of Audiolingual students' communicative abilities (e.g., Hendrickson, 1978). Highlighting the importance of communicative practice, Hendrickson (1978) wrote "most students who could not or did not take the effort to transfer audiolingual training to communicative use soon forgot the dialog lines, the pattern drills, and the grammatical generalizations" (p. 387).

New theories emerged in the late 1960s which led to new perspectives on language teaching and language learning, and as a consequence, treatment of error. Corder (1967) described one shift as moving "the emphasis away from a preoccupation with

teaching towards a study of learning” (p. 163). These new approaches suggested that learners needed to know language rules if they were to form their own unique sentences which had not been taught by a teacher, something which was not satisfied by the Audiolingual method’s habit formation procedures (Rowlinson, 2002).

In addition, the standards for linguistic success had changed. Whereas previous language teaching methods often had a focus on perfectly formed utterances and grammatical accuracy as a measure of success, the new theories related to communicative competence. The functions of language came into focus (e.g., requesting, describing, declining), and the skills required for these communicative events necessitated grammatical, sociolinguistic, and strategic competencies (Canale & Swain, 1980). One of the competencies, strategic competence, was described by Canale and Swain (1980) as “the compensatory communication strategy to be used when there is a breakdown in one of the other competencies” (p. 27). Strategic competence strongly highlights the general change in perspective on errors for many of SLA’s theorists and researchers. While earlier theories and methodologies also accepted that learners would make errors, the communicative approach included the teaching of strategies for dealing with communication breakdown, rather than expressing purely negative views of errors (Katayama, 2007). However, as the communicative approach, or Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), is a mixture of theory and ideas around best practices which come from a variety of sources (Mitchell, 2002), it led to diverse application in the classroom as “individual applied linguists and teacher trainers vary widely in their acceptance and interpretation of the different ideas” (Swan, 1985, p. 3).

In a small-scale study of (self-proclaimed) 'communicative' teachers in the classroom, Nunan (1987) investigated five cases of the communicative activities set up by these teachers for their students. After reviewing the interactions, he stated: "there is growing evidence that, in communicative classes, interactions may, in fact, not be very communicative after all" (p. 144). In an effort to compare pure instruction and drilling with the post-Audiolingual focus on English for communication, Savignon (1972, as cited in Savignon, 2017) found that learners who engaged in unscripted communication activities had stronger communicative abilities than the control group who had learned drilled patterns alone. Nevertheless, the grammatical accuracy of the two groups was equal. On the other hand, critics of CLT point to language immersion programmes which produce language learners who often lack linguistic accuracy (Williams, 1995) as evidence of the drawbacks of this approach.

Therefore, the need to re-introduce a focus on grammatical accuracy was suggested by some researchers (e.g., R. Ellis, 1993; Long & Crookes, 1992). They posited that drawing learners' attention to grammatical forms may facilitate the learning of new grammar. R. Ellis (1993) advised that teachers should draw learners' attention to grammatical features in input (readings, etc.), so as to help them notice discrepancies between the grammatical features they use, and the ones in the input provided. Long and Crookes (1993) expanded on this idea by explaining that increasing the salience of unknown items may decrease the time it takes the learner to notice and potentially adopt the new grammatical feature. The next section introduces theories and research which suggest that learners can also learn from having their attention drawn to their errors.

2.1.2 – Learning grammar from correction

Some researchers and theorists have suggested that learners are able to improve their grammatical accuracy by learning from their own errors. Krashen's (1982) Monitor Hypothesis establishes a distinction between acquisition and learning – acquisition is subconscious, while learning is conscious. The conscious mind which pays attention to language accuracy is the 'Monitor' and could be used in pre-production or post-production processes. In reality, he was doubtful of the effectiveness of second language learners' self-corrections, as he stated: "Second language performers can typically self-correct only a small percentage of their errors, even when deliberately focused on form ... and even when we only consider the easiest aspects of the grammar" (p. 98).

However, Krashen's hypotheses were mostly theoretical at this time and have been criticised as containing contradictory ideas. In a criticism of Krashen's (1982) view that the Monitor can only really be used in a discrete-point grammar test, Gregg (1984) pointed out "that under normal conditions, the monitor cannot be used" (p. 84). Gregg then provided examples from his own experience in language learning to show that the Monitor, or his own pre-existing conscious knowledge of grammar rules, can be used with input to acquire new linguistic knowledge. Another opposing idea is that learners can provide their own input for language acquisition through Monitor use (Tricomi, 1986). Krashen and Terrell (1988) theorised that learners acquire new language by the comprehension of input which is slightly beyond their current level, i.e., "they need to understand input language that includes a structure

that is part of the next stage” (p. 32). It is unclear how learners are going to be able to consciously examine their own utterances (pre- or post-production) and decide on a more grammatically accurate form, if this is beyond their current level of understanding. It appears unlikely, as the Monitor Hypothesis states that the Monitor can only be available when applied to grammar rules which the learner already knows.

In the decades after Krashen’s theories were developed, researchers retained the concept that learners possess two types of language knowledge – explicit and implicit – without necessarily agreeing with Krashen’s dicta (e.g., R. Ellis, 2006; Hulstijn, 2005; Rebuschat, 2015). As with Krashen’s theories, implicit knowledge refers to the unconscious, natural acquisition of knowledge; thus, learners may not be able to verbalise grammatical rules, but they can produce grammatically accurate language. Explicit knowledge is conscious and requires learners to manually generate and test hypotheses about language (N. Ellis, 1996). Thus, it is possible that CF is a process which can help learners to improve their grammatical accuracy, as it draws learners’ attention to linguistic hypotheses which they have not yet correctly developed.

To explore the way learners apply their implicit and explicit knowledge to correct errors, Green and Hecht (1992) performed a study testing the explicit knowledge of 300 EFL learners in Germany by presenting the learners with commonly produced errors and asking them to explain the correct grammatical rule. They found that:

When learners are able to state a correct rule, they perform considerably better (their corrections are 97 per cent correct), for whatever reason, than when they can give only an incorrect rule (their corrections are 70 per cent correct) or no rule at all (their corrections are 55 per cent correct). (p. 179)

This suggests that while it is likely that implicit knowledge helped the learners in the latter two groups, learners with accurate explicit knowledge were more effective at self-correction. It is possible that, over time with repeated CF, learners' hypotheses become more robust as they attempt to apply their knowledge to new situations and contexts.

However, it has been found that CF may vary in its effectiveness depending on a learner's level. In a review of 18 studies researching the effectiveness of CF on learners with varying levels of prior knowledge of grammatical structures, Basturkmen and Fu (2021) found that learners with a low or moderate prior knowledge of target structures achieved positive gains in overall language development. However, learners with a higher prior knowledge of target structures made less progress. This could possibly be due to the learners' ideas and hypotheses about linguistic structures becoming fossilised as a result of their previous experiences when using these features. A learner who has good explicit knowledge of the grammatical item is likely to be able to correct an error. On the other hand, the learners' ability to *notice* the error is another factor which may potentially impact the effectiveness of their teacher's attempt at CF.

2.1.3 – The role of the teacher

Another factor which may impact on a learner's noticing of an error is the implicit or explicit nature of the feedback provided by their teacher. Zhao and Ellis (2020) stated:

When CF is implicit, the corrective force is covert and learners may or may not realize they have been corrected; when CF is explicit, the corrective force is overt, and learners are more likely to be aware an error has been corrected (p. 362).

One example of implicit *Oral* CF used by teachers is *the recast*, where in a spoken interaction when the learner has produced an error, the interlocutor will respond using a sentence which contains the correct grammatical form. For example, if a learner says, "I like go shopping", the interlocutor may respond "where do you like to go shopping?". There is no explicit correction made and it is purely the responsibility of the learner to notice and reflect on the error. On the other hand, explicit CF by the teacher can involve a number of strategies and depends on whether it is a spoken or written error. For example, there are three types of such *Written* CF methods: (1) Explicit correction, where the learner is informed that their grammar was incorrect and is provided the correct form; (2) Metalinguistic CF, where the learner is informed of the correct grammar structure that is needed; and (3) Location highlighting, where the learner is shown where an error is located. These are three examples of WCF and they can be modified to include other strategies used by the teacher. In general, it is suggested in the research that while implicit CF can lead to positive outcomes for

learners (Ellis & Sheen, 2006), drawing learners' attention to error using explicit CF is more effective in facilitating learning or acquisition (e.g., Li, 2010; Norris & Ortega, 2000; Zhao, 2015). As mentioned earlier, the strategies used by teachers to employ spoken and written CF can differ dramatically. The following sections of the literature review specifically target WCF, and learner perceptions of these strategies.

2.2 – Written Corrective Feedback

As WCF does not require learners to immediately process and respond to the CF, it is considered *off-line*, unlike the case with Oral CF, which could require immediate consideration from the learner in real time (*online*). This delay allows the learner more time to process CF, potentially increasing the likelihood that the learner will progress to noticing the gap and re-hypothesising about the intended grammatical form. However, the variance between learners and their classroom contexts does not allow a uniform WCF style which will result in consistently positive outcomes (Bitchener, 2021). Therefore, teachers may adopt the particular type of WCF that they consider most effective, based on their own or their learners' needs.

The different types of WCF which are covered in this literature review are as follows in Table 1 (see also Glossary, p. ix, above):

Table 1

Written Corrective Feedback Types

Type of WCF	Description
1. Direct WCF	The teacher provides the student with the correct form.
2. Indirect WCF	The teacher indicates that an error exists but does not provide the correction.
a) Indicating + locating the error	This takes the form of underlining and use of cursors to show omissions in the student's text.
b) Indication only	This takes the form of an indication in the margin that an error or errors have taken place in a line of text.
3. Metalinguistic WCF	The teacher provides some kind of metalinguistic clue as to the nature of the error.
a) Use of error code	The teacher writes codes in the margin (e.g., ww = wrong word; art = article).
b) Brief grammatical descriptions	The teacher numbers errors in text and writes a grammatical description for each numbered error at the bottom of the text.
4. The focus of the feedback	This concerns whether the teacher attempts to correct all (or most) of the student's errors or selects one or two specific types of errors to correction. This distinction can be applied to each of the above options.
a) Unfocused CF	Unfocused CF is extensive. All errors are highlighted.
b) Focused CF	Focused CF is intensive. Errors of only a certain type are highlighted.

Note. Adapted from "A typology of written corrective feedback types" by R. Ellis, 2009, *ELT Journal*, 63(2), p. 98. Copyright 2008 by Rod Ellis.

As the research carried out in this study focused solely on grammatical errors, errors of meaning are excluded from this literature review.

As previously stated, the choice of WCF type is likely to be dependent on the classroom context. For example, the choice to provide WCF which highlights all errors in a learner's text (Unfocused WCF) may be made so that learners are more aware of errors that they have produced and have more opportunities to learn from them. However, a teacher may be wary of overloading the learners with information (Bitchener, 2021), or may want to avoid any chance of potentially demotivating the learner (Truscott, 1996). The next choice is which type of WCF to provide. The teacher may choose Direct WCF as it will take them less time to simply provide the correct form, or perhaps they are aware that the student does not know the grammatical rules needed for what they are trying to say (R. Ellis, 2009). However, Direct WCF may lack sufficient engagement to stimulate learning as it does not facilitate guided learning and problem solving (Lalande, 1982), so Indirect WCF may be preferred. As illustrated by the examples above, the choice of WCF type is complex and can differ depending on the context of the classroom and the preferences of the teacher.

However, not all researchers are in favour of WCF. Truscott (1996) put forward a highly critical argument against the use of WCF in the classroom. This controversial article, "The Case Against Grammar Correction in L2 Writing Classes", was based on three main points. Firstly, that a significant body of research shows that WCF is

ineffective. Secondly, in theory, it is likely to be ineffective. Finally, he stated that WCF is harmful for learners, as it may draw the learners' time and attention away from more productive aspects of their study. He concluded that "grammar correction has no place in writing courses and should be abandoned" (p. 328). While controversial in its content, and strongly written in its expression, it may have led to a new impetus among Truscott's fellow SLA researchers to further investigate WCF. In response to Truscott, scholars have either drawn attention to the lack of support for his argument in the data found in studies cited by Truscott (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999; Polio, 1997), or have indicated that classroom studies do suggest positive outcomes for learners when WCF is used (e.g., Bitchener et al., 2005; Ferris & Roberts, 2001).

So far in this literature review, the focus has mainly been on historical viewpoints and theories. Empirical research on the various WCF types is now introduced and explored in the following sections. Only 'leading' research, i.e., research which is well cited by others or referenced in leading journals, is discussed in the following sections, so as to increase the reliability and validity of the sources used.

2.2.1 – Indirect vs Direct Written Corrective Feedback

As introduced in the previous section, WCF can be classified as Direct Written Corrective Feedback or Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (see Glossary, p. ix, above). As researchers began to collect and analyse data which suggested the benefits of WCF, their attention then focused on which were the most effective methods of WCF. In particular, some researchers became interested in learner self-

editing, and what level of explicitness WCF should have in order to most effectively facilitate learning (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). In this section, research comparing Direct WCF and Indirect WCF is introduced and explored. It is important to note that the specific reason for choosing the research in this section is because of its WCF type. All this research focuses purely on Direct WCF and Indirect WCF *methods* and is not concerned with the *type* of error that the feedback is provided for. Research which considers error type in addition to Direct WCF and Indirect WCF comparisons is discussed in Section 2.2.2, “Unfocused vs Focused Written Corrective Feedback”, below (see also Glossary, p. ix, above).

In an early study into WCF and accuracy, Lalande (1982) investigated intermediate learners of German (n = 60) at an American university. They were divided into four groups: two experimental and two control. The control group’s texts were marked in what he called “the traditional manner” (p. 142), whereby “the teacher entered all corrections onto students’ essays and then required them to incorporate the same into a re-written version” (p. 142). The experimental groups had their texts marked with a metalinguistic code, informing them of the type of grammatical error that had been produced. The learners were then required to self-correct and re-write their essay within 50 minutes. If they could not correct an error after this time, they were encouraged to seek help from a teacher or peer. They were also given access to an Error Awareness Sheet (EASE), which was designed to increase learner awareness of repeated errors. Both groups performed their re-write and correction tasks three times. An analysis of the pre-tests and post-tests of the participants was performed to establish the effectiveness of the WCF types. The results suggested that the

experimental group showed a decrease in grammatical and orthographical errors from pre-test to post-test. On the other hand, one puzzling outcome from these tests was the control group's increase in number of produced errors by approximately five errors per learner. When breaking error down by category, the experimental group outperformed in eleven out of twelve categories relating to non-lexical error.

However, the increase was not statistically significant. Furthermore, it is possible that the use of the EASE also facilitated awareness, noticing, and avoidance of error in the experimental group, making the post-test seem stronger for the experimental group. Thus, it is difficult to rely solely on the data from Lalande's study to draw implications for classroom best practice.

Semke (1984) followed with another research study comparing the effectiveness of Direct WCF and Indirect WCF methods with German learners ($n = 141$) at an American university. This study comprised four groups, each one using a different style of WCF:

- 1) writing comments and questions rather than corrections;
- 2) marking all errors and supplying the correct forms;
- 3) combining positive comments and corrections;
- and 4) indicating errors by means of a code and requiring students to find corrections and then rewrite the assignment. (p. 195)

Thus, groups one and four received Indirect WCF, and groups two and three received Direct WCF. The participants were given free-writing journal tasks to perform, and the teachers would mark/respond to their journal entries by the methods above. In addition, the participants were given pre-tests and post-tests

comprising timed free-writing and a timed multiple-choice cloze test to attempt to ascertain the changes in their grammatical accuracy and written fluency (which was measured purely by the number of words written within the time). The results of the study showed no significant differences between groups in the writing accuracy test. However, group one, which received comments and questions only, scored higher in the writing fluency and cloze post-tests than the other three groups. Therefore, Semke stated: “The results of this study support the theory that correction does not improve students’ writing skills in German as a second language, nor does it increase total competency in the language” (p. 200). However, the only highly significant differential was in the writing fluency test. As fluency is highly impacted by individual differences in learners it may not be an accurate measurement of L2 competence and, importantly, accuracy and fluency are considered separate components of language competency (Michel, 2017). Thus, the outcomes of Semke’s (1984) research discussed above showed no significant difference between Indirect WCF and Direct WCF.

While the previous two pieces of research focused on learners of German, a more recent example involves learners of English. Van Beuningen et al. (2008, 2012) performed two comparative studies of Indirect WCF and Direct WCF at Dutch secondary schools. The studies differed in their number of participants, as the 2008 study had 62 participants and the 2012 study had 134 participants. However, both studies included the same four treatments for their participants: 1) Direct WCF; 2) Indirect WCF, where participants were provided with a code to indicate the type of error produced; 3) Practising writing, where they received an equal amount of writing

time to the experimental groups but did not receive any feedback; 4) Revision without feedback, where the participants were asked to review and self-correct their own writing without CF. Groups one and two were the experimental groups, while groups three and four were the control groups. The two studies underwent similar procedures, with the 2012 study including an extra writing task to gather additional longitudinal data. Both studies contained an initial vocabulary pre-test and initial writing task to establish a baseline for the participants' linguistic proficiency. The researchers then included a treatment session, where the participants received feedback on their writing. The feedback method depended on the treatment group. This was followed by a final writing task which was set as a post-test to determine potential changes in the participants' proficiency. However, the 2012 study included an additional post-test, which was performed three weeks after the first post-test.

The results from Van Beuningen et al.'s (2008) study showed that participants from the Direct WCF and Indirect WCF groups made accuracy gains. Additionally, while the Self-Correction group also made fewer errors in their revisions, the post-hoc comparisons showed that the results were statistically significant for the two experiment groups, which suggests that it was not purely the self-revision of their own writing which led to a decrease in their errors. While both groups showed significant short-term improvements, it was the Direct WCF group which was able to carry its improvements over to new writing pieces in the post-test sessions.

Conversely, the Indirect WCF group actually performed worse in the post-tests. The authors hypothesised that the potential reason for the decrease in accuracy was that:

while students who received direct corrective feedback could instantly internalize the correct form, students who revised their texts based on indirect error correction were unable to do so, since they did not know whether their own hypothesized correction was indeed accurate. (p. 292)

It is possible that the Indirect WCF did not result in improved accuracy over a greater period of time, as the participants were only given one treatment session. As mentioned above, it is likely that learners would need more than one opportunity to test their linguistic hypotheses. The study may have provided different results for Indirect WCF if there had been multiple treatment sessions.

The results from Van Beuningen et al.'s (2012) study initially resemble those of their 2008 study, with the grammatical accuracy of the Indirect WCF, Direct WCF, and Self-Correction groups improving in the post-test sessions. With the first post-test results, the experimental groups significantly outperformed the control groups in terms of error rate, without significant differences between the Indirect WCF and Direct WCF groups. This improvement carried over to the delayed post-test, which showed continued benefits for the Direct WCF, and even slightly stronger benefits for the Indirect WCF group. However, the only large magnitude effect size was between Indirect WCF and the practice-only group. The study was also contrasted with Truscott's (1996) anti-WCF claims, with the authors claiming that WCF does not divert time and energy away from more productive aspects of writing instruction, nor does it impact on learners' attempts to create structurally or lexically complex writing due to an avoidance of previously corrected structures. While the study indicates

positive outcomes for WCF, once again the study included only a single treatment session.

As indicated by the research introduced in this section, the results for studies comparing the effectiveness of Indirect WCF and Direct WCF have been varied. Indirect WCF was found to facilitate a non-significant improvement over Direct WCF in one case. In another, there was no significant difference found between the two methods. Finally, there were mixed results for both Direct WCF and Indirect WCF in post-test results. Regardless of the WCF method, these findings suggest that WCF *in general* is effective in improving learners' written accuracy.

However, the method of providing WCF for all errors produced has been posited as contributing to an information overload for learners that may prove detrimental to their cognitive ability to learn from WCF (Bitchener, 2021). Therefore, WCF which focuses on *one or a few* specific error types may facilitate accuracy improvement more than WCF which provides feedback on *all* errors. The next section introduces research which compares these Unfocused and Focused WCF methods.

2.2.2 – Unfocused vs Focused Written Corrective Feedback

Focused Written Corrective Feedback is the method whereby the teacher chooses to correct a specific error type or types, and ignores the rest. It may also contain a degree of focus, with highly focused WCF correcting only one type of error (e.g., present simple tense), and less focused WCF correcting multiple pre-selected error types (e.g., present simple tense, articles, and prepositions) (R. Ellis et al., 2008). Support for the claim made by Bitchener (2021), noted above, can be found in R.

Ellis et al. (2008), who stated that a positive effect of Focused WCF is that: “Learners are more likely to attend to corrections directed at a single (or a limited number of) error type(s) and more likely to develop a clearer understanding of the nature of the error and the correction needed” (p. 356). Thus, as observed in the previous section, while several researchers claimed benefits for WCF, other notable scholars have proposed that Focused WCF is likely to have stronger benefits than Unfocused WCF. This section focuses on research on Focused WCF in order to examine the potential impacts of this method. It is important to note that there have been relatively few studies undertaken which directly compare Unfocused WCF and Focused WCF (Bitchener, 2021); therefore, this section just introduces five pieces of research.

R. Ellis et al. (2008) carried out a study comparing Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF at a university in Japan. In particular, they examined the effects of the two WCF types on the accuracy of the learners’ use of articles in writing. The participants (n = 49) were divided into three groups: 1) the Focused WCF group, which received feedback on articles only; 2) the Unfocused WCF group, which received feedback on a variety of error types including articles; and 3) the control group, which received no feedback on errors. The three groups all completed a pre-test, an immediate post-test, and a four-week delayed post-test, which comprised narrative writing based on picture stories. The three groups also had error correction tests before and after the three treatment sessions. In the treatment sessions, the participants in groups one and two were provided with Direct WCF from the teacher, and the participants were then given time at the next treatment sessions to examine the feedback. Group one’s feedback was on articles (e.g., a, the, etc.) only, and they also received more

frequent corrections of articles than the Unfocused WCF group. The control group did not receive corrections on linguistic errors. Instead, they received a comment or question, for example: "Good! Are they happy then? What happened then?" (p. 359). The results from the study focused on two main data sets. The first was the accuracy of article use in writing tests, which establishes validity in natural settings by measuring accuracy in composition. The second was the results from the error correction tests, which tests error monitoring, a skill regarded as vital for writing. For both measures, there was no real difference between the two experimental groups, but their writing significantly improved as compared with the control group. This was the case in writing pieces produced immediately after treatment, as well as in the delayed post-test. However, while the Unfocused WCF group plateaued between the immediate post-test and the delayed post-test, the Focused WCF group continued to improve. The authors speculated that it may have been due to the Focused WCF group receiving more feedback on articles than the Unfocused WCF group. However, another potential factor was the pre-test scores, as the Focused WCF group scored more highly for article accuracy than the other two groups. Thus, the greatest improvement from pre-test to immediate post-test was in fact achieved by the Unfocused WCF group. The results therefore do not provide strong evidence for the advantages of Focused WCF over Unfocused WCF in this case.

Frear and Chiu (2015) also performed a study of Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF effectiveness in a EFL university context (where students are studying in a non-English speaking country). However, while R. Ellis et al. (2008) compared Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF when used with Direct WCF, Frear and Chiu (2015)

compared Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF when used with Indirect WCF. The research was undertaken at a university in Taiwan with participants ($n = 42$) split into three groups: 1) the Focused WCF group, which received Indirect WCF on errors of past tense only; 2) the Unfocused WCF group, which received Indirect WCF on various linguistic error types, including articles, prepositions, tense, and pronouns; and 3) the control group. The participants undertook a pre-test, an immediate post-test, and a delayed post-test. These tests involved the participants receiving pictures and a writing prompt, from which they would then create their own written composition. The treatment from the two experimental groups was based on the compositions created for the pre-test, for which the researchers provided WCF. The participants were asked to study the WCF for five minutes, after which they were given the immediate post-test. The results from the study found that while both experimental groups showed significant improvements over the control group in both the immediate and delayed post-tests, there was no significant difference in the improvements of the Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF groups in either post-test. Moreover, when looking exclusively at 'weak' verbs (a verb that ends in *-d* or *-t*, i.e., simple past tense), which was the linguistic error chosen for the Focused WCF group, there was no significant difference between the Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF groups. This result, in fact, is the opposite of what would be expected from learners who had an information overload because they had received feedback on too many error types in WCF.

In contrast to the above studies, Sheen et al. (2009) investigated an ESL context (where the learners are studying in an English-speaking country) in their comparative

study into written accuracy improvements due to Unfocused WCF and Focused WCF. Their participants were attending a pre-academic ESL programme at a university in the USA. Thus, it provided a context which is closer in nature to that of the research performed in my study. The participants (n = 80) in Sheen et al.'s study were put into four groups: 1) the Focused WCF group, which received feedback only on article errors using Direct WCF; 2) the Unfocused WCF group, which received feedback on five linguistic error types, including articles; 3) the Writing Practice Group (WPG), which participated in writing practice without WCF; and 4) the Control Group. Treatment was performed on two written tasks, and the data used for measuring improvement were gathered using a pre-test, immediate post-test, and a four-week delayed post-test. All tests were narrative writing tasks and required students to read a story and then re-write it from memory. It was established from the pre-tests that the four groups were equally accurate in their use of the five grammatical items. Results from analysis of the immediate post-test showed that while all those in the Focused WCF group significantly outperformed all other groups in their accurate use of the article, the other three groups, surprisingly, improved equally in this feature of their writing. One potential explanation for this is that the Unfocused WCF group were given feedback on one or two errors per type. Therefore, it is difficult to evaluate this lack of improvement when the Unfocused WCF group was possibly hampered by their lack of opportunity to notice their errors. However, in terms of their accuracy over a range of grammatical items, all experimental groups outperformed the control group. One surprising result was that the Focused WCF group showed increased improvement in accuracy over a range of

grammatical items as compared with the Unfocused WCF group. The researchers suggested one potential explanation was that: “When the correction addresses a range of grammatical errors, learners are unable to process the feedback effectively, and even if they attend to the corrections, they are unable to work out why they have been corrected” (Sheen et al., 2009, p. 566). This may support the claim that Unfocused WCF leads to information overload. This could also be inferred from the WPG group which, despite receiving no feedback, also showed a slight improvement in their written accuracy over the Unfocused WCF group. However, this finding contradicts the studies discussed above (R. Ellis et al., 2008; Frear & Chiu, 2015), which showed no significant advantage when Focused WCF was used.

In another piece of research undertaken at a university, Rahimi (2019) performed a study investigating the relative efficacies of Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF on writing accuracy and quality. The participants (n = 78) were French Canadian learners of English at a university in Canada (so could also be regarded as ESL students), who were separated into four groups: 1) the Unfocused WCF + revision group, in which the students were required to revise their writing after receiving CF; 2) the Unfocused WCF group, in which the students were not required to revise their writing after receiving CF; 3) the Focused WCF + revision group, in which the students received CF on word and sentence errors only and were required to do revision; and 4) the Focused WCF group, in which the students received CF on word and sentence errors only but were not required to do revision. However, there was no control group with which to establish a baseline in this study. Argument essays were elicited from the participants by the way of prompts. The essays from which

data were extracted were more spread out in their timing than in some other pieces of research (e.g., R. Ellis et al., 2008), with the first essay written in Week one (T1), the second in Week eight (T2), and the third in Week 14 (T3). In addition, the learners received many more treatment sessions than in other studies, as they wrote essays and received CF in every class from Week 4 through to Week 14. The results, once again, show mixed results for Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF. All groups showed decreases in word error at the T2 and T3 stages, with the Focused WCF group showing a significant improvement. Interestingly, they outperformed the Focused WCF + revision group. The latter group, despite being allowed more time to notice and work on self-correction, did not show a significant effect size over the other two Unfocused WCF groups. In terms of overall writing quality, all groups once again showed improvement. However, the Unfocused WCF + revision group significantly reduced sentence and word errors in four out of five error categories. The author suggested that:

Although a decision to correct all errors rather than just a certain (important) subset of them entails sacrifices in its effectiveness for that subset, ... correcting all the students' errors and requiring them to revise their writing can help them improve their overall written accuracy. (p. 705)

This implies that if a teacher would like to improve student accuracy in one particular grammar feature, it would be more effective to focus on that one grammar type than use Unfocused WCF. These mixed results again suggest that any WCF can be effective when utilised, which is a finding which matches with the results of many of the other studies introduced in this chapter.

In an example of a study which used a different style of Focused WCF, Zhang (2021) compared Focused WCF with mid-focused WCF. In this study, 'mid-focused' referred to the provision of WCF for five linguistic error types: Simple past tense, plural nouns, prepositions of place/ time, indefinite and definite articles, and capitalisation. Thus, while it was described as 'mid-focused', it had the same number of error types as the Sheen et al. (2009) study discussed above. Zhang's study was undertaken at a Thai university and all the participants (n = 58) were studying English. They were divided into three groups: 1) the Focused WCF Group, which received feedback on errors relating to simple past tense only; 2) the Unfocused WCF Group, which received feedback on the five error types introduced above; and 3) the Control Group, which received no feedback on the writing. The treatment given to the experimental groups was metalinguistic WCF, whereby the teacher would provide a numbered code for errors. The treatment occurred three times over four writing sessions, in which the participants were given writing prompts based on Aesop's fables. The participants in the experimental groups were given feedback on their writing and could see where an error had occurred based on a number code written by the teacher next to a word. They would then refer to a separate sheet where the number code informed them of the error type and gave examples of correct usage. The Control Group received no feedback on their compositions. Three separate outcome measures investigating explicit and implicit knowledge were taken as a pre-test, immediate post-test, and a delayed post-test. For the purposes of this literature review, only the results relating to effectiveness in improving writing accuracy are explored. The results relating to writing accuracy focused exclusively on simple past tense usage

for both groups. Both experimental groups significantly improved in their accuracy between pre-tests and immediate post-tests in contrast to the control group, which did not make any progress. While the Focused WCF Group's improvement continued until the delayed post-test, the Unfocused WCF Group's accuracy in the use of irregular simple past forms did not show continued improvement in the delayed post-test. This outcome parallels the long-term improvements shown by Focused WCF groups as illustrated by R. Ellis et al. (2008).

As indicated from the five pieces of research discussed above, there are mixed results arising from studies which compare WCF methods. However, the findings of these studies continue to highlight the positive effect of WCF in general. On the other hand, these mixed results not only relate to improvement in accuracy, but also to the claims that Unfocused WCF may lead to information overload for learners. It is clear that there is a lack of research which investigates the issues of Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF, leaving many of the questions and claims made by researchers and theorists unanswered. As a result, it is not possible to make solid assertions as to the superiority of either Unfocused WCF or Focused WCF at the present time. However, there is an apparent trend towards regarding WCF in general as having positive outcomes for learners (Van Beuningen, 2021).

Moreover, the research which has been explored so far in this literature review lacks insights into learners' relationships with and responses to WCF, a factor which "is a critical link that connects the provision of WCF with learning outcomes" (Han & Hyland, 2015, p. 31). Without the inclusion of learner input, researchers may be missing information which adds vital context, and potentially missing key insights into

learner perspectives. Therefore, the following sections of this literature review explore learner perspectives related to CF and WCF.

2.3 – Learners’ perceptions of corrective feedback

Discovering learners’ feelings towards CF could be very important, as it may be one of the factors which contribute to the overall effectiveness of CF. In a meta-analysis of research which investigated the potential links between learner attitude towards feedback and the effects of feedback, Li (2017) stated: “It would seem that learners who were more enthusiastic about feedback did benefit more from feedback when the corrective intention was salient” (p. 155). However, his meta-analysis was based on Oral CF and thus may not be applicable to WCF. Further highlighting the need for more research on learner perceptions of WCF, Kim and Mostafa (2021) pointed out that, “compared to oral CF research, relatively little is known about teachers’ and students’ beliefs about written CF and the extent to which their beliefs translate into practice and revision behaviour” (p. 571). Moreover, studies which provide detailed qualitative data including learners’ perspectives on WCF are scarce. As qualitative data allows for the learners themselves to provide richer detail about the feedback situations which they experience (Yin, 2015), only studies which provide qualitative data are included in the following section.

2.3.1 – Learners’ perceptions of Written Corrective Feedback

Despite the understanding that learner’s perceptions of CF are likely to have an impact on the effectiveness of CF, there are far fewer studies which investigate

learner *perceptions* of WCF than there are studies which look at the effectiveness of WCF itself. These studies, as discussed in the previous section, treat CF as a tool and ignore the person to whom the tool is being applied. To add more context, research which utilises qualitative measures to investigate aspects of WCF, such as Focused WCF, Unfocused WCF, Direct WCF and Indirect WCF, are included in this section.

In one example, Lee (2004) performed a widely cited study which investigated both teachers' and learners' perceptions of various aspects of WCF in a Hong Kong secondary school. The participants (n = 320 respondents to questionnaires; n = 27 interviewees) were only asked questions based on their teachers' usual marking style, and were not given practice in specific WCF types on which to base their answers. The results were reported in quantitative measures with qualitative data providing the learners' interpretations. In terms of Focused and Unfocused WCF, 83% of participants indicated that they preferred Unfocused WCF. The results showed that the main reason for their Unfocused WCF preference was the participants' desire to know all of the errors they had made, and this was established by summarising the interview answers and the inclusion of example quotes. In terms of Direct and Indirect WCF, a preference for error coding (Indirect WCF) was shown by 76% of the participants. However, as the study did not inform the participants about the different types of WCF, and because 91% of the participants' teachers typically used error codes, it is difficult to ascertain whether this was because of habit, loyalty to their teachers, or lack of awareness of the various types of WCF. This result is further complicated by the finding that 41% of participants were unable to

follow the codes used by their teacher. The reasons for this high percentage were varied. However, while 76% of participants wanted all errors corrected, “some students commented that there were far too many error codes for them to handle” (p. 297). This is perhaps due to the ‘information overload’ caused by Unfocused WCF, which has been an area of concern for some researchers (e.g., Bitchener, 2021). However, the questionnaire used in this study was not designed to include the topic of learners’ possible information overload. On the other hand, there was a small amount of data which linked the provision of a large amount of CF to information overload in the opinion of the participants. In addition, while 55% of participants stated they were making progress in writing, 67% of participants indicated that they believed they would continue to make the same errors repeatedly. As the results of the study were highly contextualised, in regard to the participants’ age and location, it is difficult to draw definitive conclusions for other contexts which, in my study, is a private English school for adults. These findings may also indicate that, by ensuring that learners are well informed regarding WCF practices, teachers can assist learners to better cope with the process.

In a study which more closely aligns with the context of the present work, as it was also performed at a tertiary institution with an ESL setting, McMartin-Miller (2014) performed a purely qualitative study at an American university. However, the study focused almost exclusively on Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF. The participants (n = 19) ranged in nationality and major. As in the Lee (2004) study, the interviews were performed without a preparatory first stage when the participants engaged in various WCF tasks specifically designed for the study; therefore, it relied on them

remembering the techniques that their teachers typically use. The results from this study match with the results from the Lee (2004) study. The participants seemed to prefer comprehensive feedback, with one participant stating: “we know our errors if we keep making the same errors throughout the paper” (p. 31). Thus, once again it appears that awareness of errors is of importance to the learners. On the other hand, in regard to learners’ perspectives on the drawbacks of WCF, four participants described Unfocused WCF as being potentially overwhelming or depressing. One participant stated: “Of course, I feel bad. I feel bad at myself” (p. 32). Although this is a response indicating a feeling of failure, rather than information overload, it does provide support for Truscott’s (1996) claims that WCF can cause demotivation in learners. Another parallel between Lee’s (2004) and McMartin-Miller’s (2014) research is the indication of the importance of learners being made aware of the WCF techniques being employed. McMartin-Miller’s (2014) findings suggested that many learners “(1) do not know why their instructors mark errors as they do; (2) do not – as instructors feared – closely examine feedback, and (3) misunderstand what their own role is in the error treatment process” (p. 33). The results from these two studies are perhaps complicated by the use of research procedures which do not include information sessions or practice involving the targeted WCF techniques. Thus, the learners’ perceptions may potentially be negatively influenced by their previous experiences in the classroom. Moreover, the teachers who performed the WCF used in this research varied in their techniques, e.g., one teacher provided comprehensive feedback only on the top third of the composition and then had students self-correct the remainder of the composition. Such issues in regard to

research methods make it difficult to compare the results of the studies in respect to Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF, which may render them unreliable and unable to be applied to other classroom settings.

Adding to the findings of previous research conducted in a university setting, Chen et al. (2016) investigated learner perceptions of Focused WCF, Unfocused WCF, Direct WCF and Indirect WCF in a study with Chinese participants (n = 64) who were English learners at a university in Mainland China. The data were gathered exclusively from questionnaires, with quantitative data collected from multiple choice or Likert-type scale items, and qualitative data obtained from open-ended questions. In order to compare Direct WCF and Indirect WCF methods, responses in the questionnaire explicitly compared multiple WCF types, e.g., when seeking learner preferences – “(a) Underlining the error without correcting it” (p. 10). However, regarding Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF, the options were limited and only mentioned “all errors” (p. 10) for comprehensive feedback, and did not provide an option which explored Focused WCF. The other options included: major errors only; communication-interfering errors; and content errors only. Thus, the findings may not provide a clear insight into learner perceptions of Focused WCF. However, the results show some differences from the two previous pieces of research discussed above (i.e., Lee, 2004; McMartin-Miller, 2014). In terms of the amount of error correction the learners preferred, their closed question responses indicated a range of preferences, with correction of communication-interfering errors being slightly more preferred to Unfocused WCF. Only one example of learner voice was given as a rationale for their Unfocused WCF preference. The learner stated: “it is instructors’

responsibility to provide detailed and thorough feedback” (p. 9), which does not mirror the findings of previous research (e.g., Lee, 2004; McMartin-Miller, 2014) in terms of a rationale for Unfocused WCF. In terms of Direct WCF and Indirect WCF preferences, the authors (Chen et al.) claimed that, in general, the higher the level of the learner, the more implicit the WCF that they preferred. This is indicated by the finding that the third-year learners showed a lower average rating for the WCF method which indicates location and type of error. On the other hand, this type of technique was the most highly rated by the lower-level students. Moreover, the results showed that the highest-level students showed a low preference for the most indirect method. Thus, it is not possible to make a clear claim that lower-level learners prefer direct and explicit methods, and higher-level learners prefer indirect and implicit methods. Once more, this study (Chen et al.) did not offer the participants an opportunity to try a variety of WCF types, nor did it provide information sessions for the participants. As in the previous research introduced above (i.e., Lee, 2004; McMartin-Miller, 2014), this raises questions as to the validity of the results of the questionnaires, as the participants may not have been fully aware of the different methods. In addition, the questionnaire used by Chen et al. (2016) did not contain questions which allowed Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF to be clearly distinguished by their participants in terms of preference.

In another investigation into learner preferences for WCF, Zhang et al. (2021) examined the impacts of error type, language proficiency, and language enjoyment. Their study was conducted at a Thai university, and the participants (n = 117) ranged from low to upper intermediate. The research provided both quantitative and

qualitative data, by means of a questionnaire and semi-structured interviews, respectively. These interviews were conducted with eight participants in order to learn the rationales for their answers given in the questionnaires. However, in common with the other research studies introduced in this section, participants were not given the opportunity to participate in an information session or provided with any practice with different WCF types, so as to gain practical experience of these methods before engaging with the questionnaire and interviews. The results indicated that, in regard to the level of directness of grammatical WCF, the majority of learners preferred metalinguistic WCF, where they were provided with an explanation of the grammatical rules related to the error they had produced. This may have been due to the participants' own confusion over grammar rules. One participant said: "There are no articles in my mother tongue, so I usually neglect them... It would be helpful if my teacher would explain the rules to me" (p. 7). In addition, another participant expressed their opinion that metalinguistic feedback allows learners to self-correct, as they can apply these rules to past and future writing. In terms of Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF, two out of three higher-level learners in Zhang et al.'s study showed a preference for Focused WCF. However, this could have been the result of the participants' desire to attempt to correct their own writing. This means that the Unfocused WCF given was in fact Direct WCF, and did not provide the participants with opportunities for self-correction, which the learners were "frustrated" (p. 8) about. However, this could have been because the participants were at a higher level of proficiency and therefore able to understand the grammar rules better than the lower-level participants. This suggestion is supported

by the data in this study (Zhang et al., 2021), which indicated that higher-level participants perceive less explicit WCF types (i.e., underlining and error code) as more useful. Both these types of feedback (error locating and indicating Indirect WCF, and metalinguistic error code Indirect WCF, respectively) require the learner to self-correct without the addition of a grammar rule explanation. While this research compares the use of explicit and implicit WCF types, there is no comparison made in the study between Focused and Unfocused WCF types which require self-correction. Consequently, it is not possible to make inferences based on Unfocused WCF and the potential for information overload. In addition, as previously mentioned, the procedures did not include an information session or practice in receiving various WCF types.

In summary, the research introduced in this section has explored learner preferences related to WCF practices employed by their teachers. In terms of the multiple varieties of Direct and Indirect WCF preferences, three out of the four studies indicated learner preferences for Unfocused WCF. There were a number of rationales provided, including more opportunities for self-correction, and the views of multiple participants that increased feedback allowed them to be more aware of the errors they had produced.

However, there were examples of students who did not prefer Unfocused WCF due to information overload and feelings of failure caused by excessive error feedback, although the numbers of such participants were low. The four pieces of research introduced above incorporated a wide range of methods, which does not allow for clear parallels to be drawn between them in terms of outcomes and implications for

teachers. As for Direct and Indirect WCF, and their varieties used in the studies, the participants showed a general preference for more implicit WCF. In addition, there were suggestions that the higher the level of the learner, the more useful they found the implicit WCF methods.

On the other hand, the studies introduced also highlight a potential weakness with the WCF techniques adopted by teachers – learners' lack of understanding of WCF techniques and their value. Lee (2004) explicitly stated that many learners were unaware of the reasons for their teachers' practices in regard to WCF. Strangely, the learners seemed to prefer the WCF methods which they did not fully understand. This points to potential weaknesses in the research, as the participants may be sharing their perceptions of WCF without having an understanding of the full range of different WCF types. Essentially, the participants are basing their perceptions on their teacher's usual methods. While this may allow the researchers to gain some understanding of how the participants feel about their own teachers' methods, it does not adequately answer the research questions which compare Focused WCF, Unfocused WCF, Direct WCF and Indirect WCF. Therefore, it is difficult to make claims and ascertain implications for teachers based on the outcomes of these four pieces of research. It is possible that, had the researchers included an information session for the learners to understand the different types of WCF, followed by multiple sessions which allowed the different WCF types to be experienced, they would have arrived at alternative conclusions.

2.4 – Conclusion

This literature review has introduced literature relating to learner error, and more specifically, feedback on written error. First, an historical overview of theories surrounding learner error and their effects on teachers' classroom practices was provided. Second, theories related to how errors can lead to learning opportunities was then introduced, as well as studies which sought to establish evidence for these theories. Next, the focus was placed on the methods by which teachers correct their learners' writing. Theories proposed and claims made by researchers in the field were discussed and evaluated, followed by a comparison of these theories and claims with the findings of empirical research into a variety of different WCF styles. Finally, learner perceptions of WCF techniques were reviewed, through the findings of studies discussed earlier in the literature review (Section 2.3).

Overall, language theory and classroom practices have been in a state of flux throughout modern history. This is shown by the change in focus in the classroom, from an emphasis on extensive reading and grammatical rules, to little-to-no focus on grammar with classroom practice being primarily oral, as well as the introduction of various other styles and philosophies. In recent years, teachers have placed greater emphasis on creating a more balanced approach, and one which will fulfil the needs of the students. This philosophy has also been applied to learner error, with many researchers now claiming once again that errors can be a useful tool for learners to improve their grammatical accuracy.

In particular, WCF rather than other methods of error correction (e.g., Oral CF) can provide the time and context for learners to notice their errors more easily and revise their errors in more detail. This has led researchers to consider and carry out research as to which are the most effective methods of WCF. While claims have been made that Unfocused WCF may lead to information overload for learners (Bitchener, 2021), and may not provide learners with enough focus on particular grammar points (R. Ellis et al., 2008), the research introduced in this chapter does not suggest there is a significant advantage for Focused WCF over Unfocused WCF. Conversely, while their results have been mixed, there is an apparent consensus among most researchers that any type of WCF will result in improved accuracy in writing (R. Ellis et al., 2008; Frear & Chiu, 2015; Lalande, 1982; Sheen et al., 2009; Van Beuningen et al., 2008, 2012; Zhang, 2021).

However, most of these studies have focused purely on the effectiveness of WCF methods and do not include the opinions of the learners. In addition, there has been little *qualitative* research performed which investigates learner perceptions of WCF techniques. The research reviewed in this chapter suggests that learners show a preference for Unfocused WCF, as they feel it allows them to become more aware of all the errors that they make. Results were mixed in terms of Direct WCF and Indirect WCF, with findings suggesting that higher level learners preferred more indirect methods of WCF, as their explicit grammatical knowledge allows them to more effectively self-correct (Zhang et al., 2021). However, none of the studies discussed in this section included methods whereby the participants were given the opportunity to become more familiar with different WCF techniques. This issue brings into

question the validity of the data analysed, as participants were asked for opinions on techniques which they may not have experienced, or even received information about. In addition, none of the research included specific questions about information overload, and whether the participants felt that Unfocused WCF might lead to this. While there was the one example of a participant explaining that they did feel overwhelmed by Unfocused WCF, it is possible that more participants felt this way, but did not have the opportunity or desire to express their views.

The current study is an attempt to fill these gaps by allowing participants to receive more detailed information about WCF types, and experience both Focused WCF and Unfocused WCF through writing tasks. In addition, while the questionnaire and semi-structured interview questions focus on the participants' general perceptions of WCF, items are also included which are designed to give them the opportunity to describe whether or not they feel overwhelmed by Unfocused WCF. The research questions as set out below are formulated so as to shed more light on these gaps so far left unfilled by other researchers:

- 1. What benefits and drawbacks do language learners perceive in written corrective feedback methods used by their teachers?*
- 2. How do language learners perceive or react emotionally to Unfocused WCF?*

Chapter 3 - Methodology

3.1 – Introduction

This chapter sets out the methods and procedures used in order to best answer the research questions. It begins with an introduction to the research paradigm adopted for the present study. Secondly, the chosen research methodology is contextualised with reference to research design theory. Thirdly, the data collection section explores information regarding participants, location, sample size, ethical matters, and reflexivity. Next, the data collection instruments section details the instruments used – questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and the participants' own writing. In addition, the justification for each of the instruments is examined. Next, a procedural outline shows the steps in the data collection process. Finally, the data analysis processes are introduced. In addition to these sections, the ethical issues related to these procedures are discussed. It is expected that within these sections, the validity and trustworthiness of this research project can be clearly demonstrated.

3.1.1 – Research paradigm

Research paradigms are frameworks used to guide research design. Researchers choose a paradigm based on their world view and perspective on research in general (Creswell, 2014). For example, a researcher who believes that research should be generalisable to a population, and that results are facts which are not subjective is likely to adhere to a *positivist* paradigm (Clark, 1998). They are then

likely to adopt research methods which follow their paradigm, i.e., using purely quantitative tools such as surveys with closed questions.

The *constructivist* paradigm accepts the subjective nature of interpreted meaning (Crotty, 1998), and thus was adopted for this research as it focuses on learner perceptions. Perceptions are highly variable, ungeneralisable and subjective by nature. Another feature of the constructivist paradigm is the use of qualitative methods which give participants the opportunity to share their perceptions in a detailed way (Creswell, 2014).

Therefore, through the application of a constructivist framework to this research project, the aim was to highlight the participants' own perceptions and experiences primarily by the use of qualitative methods. Through the initial use of questionnaires and a final semi-structured interview, the project also involved a cycle of formulating and reformulating interpretations as the data was collected (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). Acknowledgements of the researcher's own positionality and potential influence on the study can be found in the section on reflexivity (Section 3.2.4)

3.1.2 – Methodological approach

Case studies

Case study is a research approach which focuses on a current context, includes multiple sources of evidence, and also allows for the researcher to interact with the participants (Hood, 2009; Yin, 2018). Moreover, research scholars (e.g., Dörnyei, 2007; Nunan, 1992) have included other possible criteria for case study such as the

collection of both quantitative and qualitative data, the recruitment of a small number of participants, and multiple interactions over time. It also allows for the researcher to become “enmeshed in the study, meeting and talking with the person or people who comprise the case... The researcher is an intervening factor, but not one to be controlled for, as in quantitative studies” (Hood, 2009, p. 71). Such an approach was appropriate for this study, as it had a small number of participants, a variety of data sources, and multiple interactions between the researcher and the participants.

The case study approach can also be divided into *single-case* and *multiple-case* designs. According to Yin (2018), a *multiple-case* study design involves the replication of the study procedure as applied to multiple cases, whereas a *single-case* study looks at a single case or context. A multiple-case study approach was adopted for the current study, as it investigated the perceptions of four participants as individuals, rather than as a single unit. In terms of multiple-case study procedures, Yin (2018) stated that the researcher initially analyses the data for each case individually, and then draws cross-case conclusions. In support of a multiple-case study, he noted that utilising multiple cases inevitably leads to the exploration of several data sources, which allows for more credible analytic conclusions. In the present study, the same procedure was repeated with each of the four participants. The outcomes are also presented individually in this thesis followed by a discussion of the cross-case findings (see Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion, below).

The case in the present study can be defined as an ‘adult ESL learner’. This definition reflects the most common identity intersection between the participants,

while still respecting their wide range of contexts and backgrounds (see Section 3.2.1, below, for more information).

Multiple evidence sources

In addition to the relationship between the researcher and the participants, the use of multiple evidence sources within a mixed-method approach provides an opportunity to obtain a depth of information which purely quantitative research may not be able to provide. While quantitative data has a focus on objectivity and generalisability through large sample sizes and statistical analyses, it does not allow space for individual opinions or other factors which may be viewed as skewing its objectivity (Paltridge & Phakiti, 2015). Thus, the inclusion of qualitative methods was regarded as essential for this research, as it also provided an opportunity for the learners to share their perspectives with the researcher, so that the findings which emerge from the research can better represent “the meanings given to real-world events by the people who live them, not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers” (Yin, 2015, p. 9). This gives power to the participants, as it provides them with the platform to share their perspectives.

The use of mixed methods to provide a variety of data sources also has the potential to strengthen the research data. The following aspects are explained by Greene et al. (1989, p. 259) as the *five purposes* of mixed methods. Their relevance to this study is also discussed in this list.

- 1) **Triangulation** – increases the validity of data by corroboration with other data sets. This is found in this research study because the questionnaire includes

both closed and open questions. The participants are given the opportunity to write their opinions freely after providing a score on a Likert-type scale.

- 2) **Complementary** – allows for elaboration. This approach is applied to this study in a similar way to triangulation. The participants are given the opportunity to express their perceptions in their own words in the questionnaire. This possibility is extended to the semi-structured interview.
- 3) **Development** – using the results from one method to develop another. This occurs in this study through the use of a follow-up semi-structured interview. The initial questionnaires provide an indication of the learners' perceptions. These results impact on the choice of interview questions and allow for the collection of richer qualitative data.
- 4) **Initiation** – increases the depth of inquiry. This allows the data to be expanded on through the variety of methods employed and allows for more opportunities to discover unexpected results. Here, this is achieved through the use of questionnaires and an interview. The questionnaires allow differences in opinion to be observed, with specific questioning on these potential changes taking place in the interview.
- 5) **Expansion** – allows for a widening of scope in inquiry. Greene et al. (1989) described it as being “commonly illustrated by the use of qualitative methods to assess program processes and by quantitative methods to assess program outcomes” (p. 260). However, this purpose is not relevant to the small scope of this research study.

To fulfil most of the purposes described above, this research project employed two main instruments to investigate the participants' perceptions of WCF: 1) A questionnaire (see Appendix C) which includes both a) Likert-type scale items to establish quantitative data, and b) open-ended questions to allow participants to elaborate if they wish to do so; 2) a semi-structured interview (see Appendix D), which consisted of general questions in the planning stage, but evolved due to the influence of the questionnaire data. These factors, in conjunction with the case study approach detailed previously, provided this research project with a sound methodological base.

The following section introduces the data collection procedures, broken down into sections outlining the nature of the participants, their location, sample size, characteristics and context, and appropriate ethical considerations.

3.2 – Data Collection

3.2.1 – Participants

There were two main avenues used to invite participants to join this study. The first was for learners currently studying at Auckland University of Technology International House (AUT IH). However, as only two participants were recruited from students present at AUT IH at that time, a second invitation avenue was sought by inviting ESL learners using AUT IH social media sites. An online invitation was created (Appendix E) and posted to AUT IH's Instagram and Facebook sites and this led to two more participants joining the study. The participants recruited online took

part in the same information session and followed the same consent procedures as the initial participants, whereby interested learners were provided with an information sheet and a consent form. They were then given two weeks to read through the Information Sheet and Consent Forms, as well as ask any questions of the researcher by email.

In-class invitation to participate

All students studying at AUT IH were invited to participate in the research. Two of the participants came from two different courses: 1) The General English, IELTS, English for Academic Purposes (GIE) programme, in which students follow an academic English course and then can directly enter their chosen mainstream AUT programme, if they pass with the necessary grades; or 2) The intensive International English Language Testing System (IELTS) course, in which the students prepare for this internationally recognised English proficiency test. The teachers of these students initially informed the students of the nature of this research project. Thus, as an ethical consideration, the students may have felt less pressure to participate than if the researcher was the initial contact person. The teachers were also provided with a copy of an Information Sheet (Appendix A) so they could answer any questions the students might have about the details of the research.

In regard to the participants' level of English competency, a modest level of communicative English was needed for participants to be able to share their views about WCF with the teacher/researcher and to comprehend his written feedback on their writing. According to the Association of Language Teachers in Europe (2002), a

B1 level ESL speaker on the Common European Framework for Reference for Languages (CEFR), “can express opinions on abstract/cultural matters in a limited way or offer advice within a known area, and understand instructions or public announcements” (p. 9). This is the equivalent to an IELTS score of approximately 4.0 to 5.0. Both classes of students who were invited to participate met this criterion, and therefore were considered to be at an appropriate level to participate in this research.

Online invitation to participate

Permission was sought from the head of AUT IH to post a research invitation on their social media platforms (Appendix E). The invitation contained a brief introduction to the researcher and the research. Additionally, it included ethical information and an explicit requirement regarding the prospective participants’ English proficiency level.

Interested ESL learners who emailed the researcher were provided with the Information Sheet and a Consent Form. Those who signed the form were then invited to participate in the information session.

Profile of participants

The participants were between 24 to 32 years old and from a range of national, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds. The average length of their English language learning experience was approximately two years.

A table of information about the participants (using pseudonyms) can be found below. Pseudonyms used in the research were generated using an online randomiser.

Table 2

Participant Information

Pseudonym	Age	Sex	Nationality	Time studying English	Study abroad experience
Renshu	24	Male	Chinese	1 year in earnest. Some childhood experience.	None
Marta	29	Female	Chilean	1 year in Chile. 2.5 years in New Zealand.	Majority of learning has been done in New Zealand, both from English teachers and from immersion.
Zayed	26	Male	Saudi Arabian	2 years.	20 months studying in Auckland.
Somchai	32	Male	Thai	2 years.	2 years studying in Auckland.

In contrast to most of the qualitative research studies into learner perceptions of WCF which were introduced in the literature review chapter above, the participants in this research project came from a range of nationality backgrounds.

3.2.2 – Location

AUT IH is a private English school which is part of AUT. While one other school within AUT at this time was offering English language teaching for New Zealand residents,

AUT IH both then and now continues to offer courses for international students. Before COVID19 restrictions were placed on international travellers to New Zealand, AUT IH drew from a wide range of student sources, which included private students from various countries, short-term university groups from Korea and Japan, government groups from Vietnam, scholarship groups from Saudi Arabia, etc.

3.2.3 – Ethics

Ethics approval was sought through AUT's Ethics Committee (AUTEC) by way of an EA1 application, and was granted on August 27, 2021. Initially, the research was planned to be undertaken with all interactions between the researcher and participants happening in person and face-to-face. However, due to the COVID19 lockdown which commenced on 17 August 2021, all AUT courses were moved online for the remainder of 2021. This decision made it necessary to change this study to an exclusively online procedure, Therefore, an EA2 amendment form was completed and submitted. AUTEC approved the changes on September 22, 2021 (Reference Number 21/289).

Procedures

Several steps were taken during the planning stages of the project to ensure ethical rigour in the research procedures:

1. The students were initially informed of the research project by their class teachers. This responds to AUTEC's advice that researchers should not approach prospective participants directly to avoid any feeling of coercion on

their part. Additionally, the students' own teachers were likely to have a pre-established level of trust, which may have helped the students to feel more comfortable about considering the opportunity to take part or asking questions about the study.

2. After that stage, the teachers and other employees at AUT IH were no longer involved in the subsequent data gathering processes. They had no knowledge of who was participating in the research. Maintaining the confidentiality of the participants' identities was considered paramount. Therefore, pseudonyms were randomly chosen to protect the participants' identities. Although there was little likelihood that their participation in this research would negatively impact the participants' studies, either now or in the future, any possibly harmful effects were considered and students were offered support from AUT Student Services.
3. The participants were asked to keep confidential the identities of their fellow participants, as some of them who took part in the group information session may have recognised each other from their AUT IH classes.

Instruments

As introduced earlier in this chapter, the instruments used with participants in this research were a questionnaire, writing prompts, and indicative questions prepared for the semi-structured interviews. All instruments used were attached as appendices to the ethics application and were subsequently approved by AUTEK. As with the

written forms described below, all the instruments were designed to maintain participant confidentiality (see Appendices C, D, F, and G).

Written forms

Learners who showed interest in participating by joining the initial research information session were provided with a Participant Information Sheet (Appendix B), which gave them detailed information relating to the research. It covered general topics, such as the purpose and stages of the research, and what they would need to do during their participation. In terms of ethical concerns, it assured the learners of the voluntary nature of the participation, and that there would be no impact on their studies.

- Participation would be voluntary, and they could withdraw at any time.
- Participation would have no effect on their studies or grades at AUT IH.
- Participation would not advantage or disadvantage them in any way.
- Their identities would be protected in the thesis which reported on the research by the use of pseudonyms and the omission of possibly revealing personal details.

3.2.4 – Reflexivity

Reflexivity is an important component of the practice of a researcher. Haynes (2012) suggests three questions which researchers should ask themselves:

1. What is the motivation for undertaking this research?

2. What underlying assumptions I am bringing to it?
3. How am I connected to the research, theoretically, experientially, emotionally? And what effect will this have on my approach? (p. 78)

These three questions provide the framework for this section on reflexivity.

First, I (the researcher) would like to outline my motivation for undertaking this research. As a language learner, who has lived overseas, and as an English teacher, my motivation comes from an interest in increasing learner self-sufficiency. It is my belief through my own experiences that learners can become more self-sufficient in learning new features through the skill of 'noticing'. Noticing was introduced in the literature review chapter and refers to the ability of a language learner to recognise a new linguistic item as a result of input (R. Ellis, 1993), and perceive a gap between their own linguistic usage and this new feature. This can apply to many different linguistic features, such as vocabulary, grammar, or pragmatics. However, this is not a skill that comes instinctively to all language learners. Therefore, I believe it is important to practise this skill in the classroom and WCF is one of many tools which can be used by teachers to enhance this ability. In addition, my own preferences for reading and writing have perhaps influenced my interest in the noticing skills related to writing, as that is where the learners are producing the errors, and the noticing skills related to reading, as that is where the learners are *hopefully* noticing the discrepancies between their grammatical knowledge and the forms used in what they are reading.

It is also important to me how the learners *feel* about WCF. Although the research into WCF efficiency generally suggests that a range of different types of WCF can lead to increased grammatical accuracy, it is not immediately obvious how the learners themselves feel. Li's (2017) results suggested that learner beliefs have an impact on *Oral* CF effectiveness, which shows the importance of investigating learner perceptions of other aspects of language learning. From my own experience, it has also been difficult to find out how learners feel about the style of WCF which I use in the classroom. This is often due to a lack of time on the part of a typical teacher such as me to thoroughly investigate this issue. Furthermore, research which thoroughly examines learner perceptions of WCF has been rare up to this point in time. The examples of qualitative research which have been undertaken in regard to this topic have not provided any opportunity for learners to increase their knowledge of the various different aspects of WCF. Thus, I was motivated to perform this research study, which would provide the participants with information sessions about WCF, and the experience of different WCF styles.

Next, I examine my underlying assumptions as a teacher/researcher. Such assumptions are based on the experiences I have had when using WCF in my own classes, and on the research I have read. Additionally, I have had the expectation that the types of learners who would participate in such a research project are perhaps more likely to be highly motivated and therefore more open to WCF methods which require more effort. Naturally, my views have been influenced by my students' reactions to the Indirect WCF techniques which I have practised in the past. However, until now I have not been able to carry out my own investigations into

learner perceptions of Indirect WCF due to classroom time constraints. Moreover, it seems that some students who I have taught have negative feelings towards Indirect WCF, which is the type of WCF which requires the learner to engage in self-correction or correction of a fellow learner's work. Learner comments when being provided with Indirect WCF are often that it is 'too hard'. I am aware, however, that their feelings are perhaps impacted by their own language learning motivation levels, their previous experiences with WCF, or perhaps that they just did not feel like engaging in such an activity on that particular day. This ambiguity was another motivating factor for my research.

Previous research into learner perspectives on WCF is quite specific as to its context, which means that it is difficult to generalise about the findings in regard to other learners. However, the revelation that learners often prefer Unfocused WCF is a common finding (e.g., Lee, 2004; McMartin-Miller, 2014). This often seemed to result from the learners' desire to be made aware of their errors, so they could make efforts to avoid them in the future. However, there were still examples, although relatively few, of learners in these pieces of research who found Unfocused WCF overwhelming or demoralising. Thus, it may be prudent to avoid assumptions based purely on the findings of such research.

Finally, I would like to describe my connection to the research and its potential impacts. This connection can be found in my roles as primary designer of the project, and as a teacher/tutor working with the participants. Therefore, it was essential that I met several times with the students, not only to increase the participants' awareness

of WCF, but also to foster their trust and increase our rapport. The importance of rapport and trust is:

to both generate rich data while at the same time ensuring respect is maintained between researcher and participant. In other words, rapport is necessary for methodological rigour, but in addition to this, rapport is a necessary facet of ethical rigour. (Guillemin & Heggen, 2009, p. 292)

In the initial online meeting and information session with participants, I attempted to be as warm and welcoming as possible in order to build this rapport. This was also intended to show the participants that I am a trustworthy person. Furthermore, I mentioned my own experience as a language learner in the hope that they would connect to me as a fellow student, and therefore as someone who would be more likely to understand their problems and concerns.

Looking back now on experiences I gained during the data gathering phase, another area of connection was the interviews. They required me to consider my own positionality and language choices. While I do not believe that my own conscious or subconscious thoughts or opinions related to the topic or participants had an impact during the interviews, I found myself trying to word questions more carefully. I was aware that providing 'leading' questions, e.g., "Is that because students that haven't studied long don't have knowledge to correct by themselves?", could potentially be viewed as negating the validity of the data. However, as the participants were second language speakers, there were many instances where I needed to clarify what I understood them to be saying, in order to elicit richer opinions and data from the

participants. Finlay (2002) stated that research of this nature is “a joint product of the participants, researcher and their relationship” and that meaning is “negotiated within particular social contexts so that another researcher will unfold a different story” (p. 212). Thus, it could be concluded that negotiations of understanding between the participant and the researcher are a natural event in qualitative interviews.

3.3 – Instruments

This section of the methodology chapter concerns the individual questionnaire and semi-structured interview instruments which were used for data gathering. A description and justification of each instrument is followed by an explanation of how it was applied. Additionally, information about and justification for the writing prompts which were given to the participants are also included.

3.3.1 – Questionnaire (Appendix C)

A questionnaire was designed and administered twice, before and after the writing tasks, to gather the first layer of data to be obtained from the research.

Questionnaires are defined as “any text-based instrument that gives survey participants a series of questions to answer or statements to respond to, either by indicating a response – by marking a page, writing a number, or checking a box on paper or online” (Young, 2016, p. 167). There are some strong points to support the use of questionnaires as data gathering tools, such as reducing the possibility of bias created by direct interaction with an interviewer, who may consciously or sub-

consciously lead participants to make particular responses; or lessening the pressure on participants as there is a greater sense of anonymity (Phellas et al., 2011).

The procedure of repeating identical questionnaires allows for potential changes in the participants' perceptions to be identified. For example, a participant may indicate in the first questionnaire that they have negative feelings towards Indirect WCF before having experience of such WCF methods. They then may show in the second questionnaire that they have developed more positive perceptions of Indirect WCF through the experience gained.

The content of the questionnaire was primarily focused on eliciting data to respond to the research questions. Therefore, it focused on various aspects of WCF, such as the participants' preferences relating to different WCF types, their opinions about the time it takes to perform WCF, and their beliefs related to responsibilities for marking writing, etc. Additionally, there were statements which did not directly relate to the research questions but could provide extra insights into the participants' perceptions of WCF. For example, the Likert-type scale item, "*It is important to me to have NO mistakes in my writing*", does not directly relate to the research questions but could provide some background as to the participants' feelings about errors in general. Furthermore, the yes/no item, "*A teacher has asked me to correct my own writing mistakes in classes before*", allowed further insights into the participants' previous experience related to this topic.

The questionnaire was designed to contain both Likert-type scale items, as well as a space below each item to allow the participants to provide a written statement about

the question. These qualitative aspects were added to give participants the opportunity to provide more depth to their responses. The inclusion of open-ended questions is common in qualitative research as a primarily exploratory feature, as these responses can be further investigated on a later occasion by using more structured data gathering methods (Brown, 2009). In this research project, the semi-structured interviews which followed the questionnaires provided an opportunity for more in-depth examination. Closed items, like the Likert-type scale, allow for uniformity in measurement, whereas open-ended items may result in richer data (Mackey & Gass, 2015). As this study was designed and implemented with a small group of participants, generalisability was not considered to be a realistic goal, whereas the open-ended items were seen as essential to inform the preparation of future interview questions.

One potential issue that was anticipated when designing the questionnaire items was the level and type of language used within the questionnaire, and its potential to confuse the participants. Mackey and Gass (2015) have described possible difficulties in relation to ESL participants and their ability to describe their perceptions, because, "if the questionnaire is completed in the L2, ... lower proficiency in the L2 may constrain the answers" (p. 105). As it was judged likely that the participants would have a range of levels of English proficiency, written examples of the methods being referred to in the questionnaire items were added. Additionally, by way of peer debriefing, the supervisor of this study provided feedback on the draft wording of the questionnaire.

3.3.2 – Semi-structured interviews (Appendix D)

The inclusion of interviews was considered essential at the planning stages of the research, as they could provide a greater depth of data than the questionnaires alone. In this case, the interviewer or interviewee can negotiate meanings. For example, the interviewer can ask an interviewee for more information if they do not understand what has been said. A semi-structured interview format, whereby the interviewer prepares indicative questions, but can diverge from these as appropriate, provides three advantages. These advantages are described by Nunan (1992) as:

In the first instance, ... it gives the interviewee a degree of power and control over the course of the interview. Secondly, it gives the interviewer a great deal of flexibility. Finally, and most profoundly, this form of interview gives one privileged access to other people's lives. (p. 150)

This flexibility was shown in the evolution of the interview questions during the process of data gathering. The semi-structured interview questions were initially developed in the pre-research stages with six items to cover the research questions, but also to be broad enough to allow for follow-up questions. However, as the questionnaire also included open-ended questions to provide more space for participant voices, cyclical data analysis was implemented. Cyclical data analysis allows the researcher to form hypotheses from early data, and then refine the hypotheses as the data collection and analysis continue (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Early analysis can also include open coding to allow a wide enough scope to notice any trends which may occur (Merriam & Tisdell, 2015). This can be seen in a

practical sense in this study because the participants' answers to the questionnaire's open-ended questions then informed the questions asked during the interviews. Thus, the data itself helped to guide the analysis as the research study and data gathering continued.

Additionally, the use of semi-structured interviews allowed greater control of 'representation' for the participants, as it led to more accurate descriptions of "the meanings given to real-world events by the people who live them, not the values, preconceptions, or meanings held by researchers" (Yin, 2015, p. 9).

3.3.3 – Writing tasks

As an important focus of this study was to discover learners' perceptions of WCF, the writing tasks themselves were considered a key element because they gave participants an opportunity to experience different methods of WCF. As discussed above in Chapter 2 – Literature Review, qualitative studies of learner perceptions of WCF have tended to rely on the participants' previous classroom experiences. Therefore, they may have been asked for their opinions when they had not experienced or even heard about alternative types of WCF. In this section, the design of the writing tasks, the type of WCF given, and the WCF codes are introduced.

Writing tasks and prompts

The prompts for the writing tasks (Appendices F & G) were designed to be of a similar style to the IELTS writing test Task 2, which asks candidates to write an essay responding to an argument or issue. It was likely that the participants would have

been familiar with this style of writing prompt, due to the widespread use of IELTS tests in many countries. However, the tasks were also designed to relate to topics which were relatively broad in nature, thus allowing the participants to have some sense of familiarity with the topic even if they had not had experience with an IELTS test.

The participants had one hour to write as much as they could, and no limit was set on the word count. Furthermore, the participants were asked to refrain from using an online or smartphone translation service. However, the use of a dictionary was allowed, as spelling accuracy was not a focus of the WCF.

Written Corrective Feedback

Although there were two writing tasks assigned to the participants, Indirect metalinguistic WCF, which indicates the location and type of error but does not directly provide the correct grammatical form, was utilised for both. The difference between the two tasks was the type of error highlighted for the participants.

Unfocused WCF was provided for the first task, and Focused WCF was provided for the second task, as is explained below.

On the first task, participants were provided with Unfocused WCF, whereby all grammatical errors were indicated. The writing correction code (Appendix H) provided to the participants had the meaning of the codes, the related grammatical error types, and then an example of the type of the errors in sentences. In-depth information about the design and justification for the code can be found in the following 'WCF Code' section, below.

On the second task, where Focused WCF was used, the single error type highlighted for each participant was different. The researcher carefully examined their complete writing task and made notes of the errors produced, and then only provided WCF (Underlining + Code) for the most common error type. For example, the participant, Renshu, produced errors of varying types on the second writing task, with errors of singular and plural forms being the most frequent, therefore only these were underlined and provided with the relevant “S/P” code (see “WCF Code” section, below).

The justification for this was to ensure that true ‘errors’ were being corrected. As discussed in the literature review chapter above (see Section 2.1), errors are actual gaps in the learner’s knowledge relating to a particular grammar point. It is not always immediately obvious whether a learner has produced an error or just a mistake (i.e., a momentary lapse in judgement) (Mackey et al., 2016). It was judged that the *frequency* of ‘ungrammatical’ forms was a possible method of establishing a true ‘error’. If a participant were to produce many errors of the same type in a text, then it was perhaps more likely that the participant lacked knowledge of this grammatical form. Additionally, as the researcher was not familiar with the idiosyncrasies of the participants’ writing, choosing the most common grammatical error type was deemed a more efficient method to identify the form which was most likely to be an ‘error’. Furthermore, as the writing tasks were designed purely to give the participants experience in different WCF types, no data related to error type or frequency were being collected.

Following this initial round of corrections, the participants were asked to send their corrected tasks back to the researcher by email. Direct WCF and comments were then provided. However, this was not part of the data gathering process and was offered purely to provide the participants with more information for any future writing tasks they may undertake.

WCF Code

The WCF code (Appendix H) given to the participants and used by the researcher was adapted from WCF code examples provided by Cambridge English (n.d.) and The British Council (n.d.). These two original sets of codes did not contain all the potential error codes needed for the WCF in this research project, therefore the two sets of WCF code examples were combined to create a more comprehensive error code table.

The Cambridge English (n.d.) WCF codes can be found in Table 3, below. In the opinion of the researcher, this set of codes was not as clear in its meaning or use as the British Council codes, as it did not contain any instances of the error code in a sentence.

Table 3*Cambridge English Error Codes*

Symbol	Meaning
Sp	Incorrect spelling
W.O.	Wrong Word Order
W.F.	Word Form
W.W.	Wrong Word
T	Wrong Tense
S/P	Singular or Plural Form Wrong
^	Something is Missing
[]	Something is not Necessary
?M	Meaning is not Clear
P	Punctuation Wrong
//	New Paragraph Needed
++	Good Word/Sentence

Note. Adapted from <https://www.cambridgeenglish.org/images/168898-tkt-module-3-correcting-learners.pdf>. Copyright 2009 by UCLES.

The British Council (n.d.) WCF codes can be found in Table 4, below. This table was more comprehensive and easier to understand than the Cambridge English table, due to its use of examples but it lacked a code for singular and plural errors. Additionally, the use of “Silly mistake” was considered inappropriate due to its use of overly critical language, which may have negatively affected the participants’ responses to the study process.

Table 4*British Council Error Codes*

Code	Use	Example
WW	Wrong Word	As our plane flew <u>on</u> the mountains, we saw snow
WT	Wrong Time	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <u>see</u> snow.
WF	Wrong Form	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <u>was seeing</u> snow
WO	Word Order	As our plane <u>over the mountain flew</u> , we saw snow
SP	Spelling	As our plane <u>flue</u> over the mountains, we saw snow
P	Punctuation	As our plane flew over the mountains; we saw snow.
X	Extra Word	As our plane flew over <u>to</u> the mountains, we saw snow
M	Missing Word	As our plane flew over the mountains _ saw snow
R	Register	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <u>observed</u> snow.
?	Not clear	As our plane flew over the mountains we saw snow.
!	Silly Mistake!	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <u>seed</u> snow.
RW	Try Rewriting	Our vehicle flies, we snow find, over the mountains you saw it.

Note. Adapted from

<https://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/sites/teacheng/files/Writing%20correction%20code.pdf>. Copyright 2013 by The British Council.

After reviewing the two WCF codes above (Tables 3 & 4) for strengths and weaknesses, they were adapted and combined into the final WCF codes (Appendix H and Table 5 below) used in this research.

Table 5

Research Error Codes

Code	Meaning	Example
WW	Wrong Word	As our plane flew <u>on</u> the mountains, we saw snow.
WT	Wrong Tense	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <u>see</u> snow.
WF	Wrong Form	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <u>was seeing</u> snow.
WO	Word Order	As our plane over the mountains <u>flew</u> , we saw snow.
S/P	Singular/Plural	As our plane flew over <u>a</u> mountains, we saw <u>snows</u> .
SP	Spelling	As our plane <u>flue</u> over the mountains, we saw snow.
P	Punctuation	As our plane flew over the mounts; we saw snow.
X	Extra word	As our plane flew over to the mountains
ART	Article	As our plane flew over the mountains, we saw <u>a</u> snow.
M	Missing word	As our plane flew over the mountains, ___ saw snow.
?	Not clear	
RW	Rewriting	Our vehicle flies, we snow find, over the mounts you saw it.

The participants were provided with the WCF codes (Appendix H and Table 5 above) at the same time as their marked writing tasks. The codes were not explained to the participants in the online information sessions, but they were invited to ask questions of the researcher via email after receiving the codes. The table did not change depending on the participant or writing task.

3.4 – Data collection – Procedural outline

The procedural outline for this study is illustrated through the example of one participant, Renshu, since flexibility as to the timing of the procedures was required as it depended on the participants' individual schedules. Please note that all dates refer to 2021.

Renshu initially met with the researcher on Zoom on October 1st, after a date, time and Zoom link had been provided by the researcher to the class teacher, who shared it with their students. Any interested students were able to join the Zoom link, hear about the research, and consider whether to participate. In this meeting, Renshu was informed about the research topic, research structure, and his tasks for the project. He was also provided with the Information Sheet for participants (Appendix B) and the Consent Form (Appendix I), and was allowed two weeks to consider whether he wished to participate.

Upon completion and submission of his application form by email, an online information session was held on October 15th with the researcher. In this session, Renshu, and 1 other participant, were given more in-depth information about WCF methods (see Appendix J for the PowerPoint slides used in the session). The information was separated into three sections – Direct vs Indirect WCF, Frequency of WCF (both Focused vs Unfocused WCF), and the person (researcher or participant) responsible for correction. The information contained within the PowerPoint presentation shown to the participants was designed to increase their awareness of WCF, so that they could better understand the questionnaire and potentially provide

more considered opinions on the topic. At the end of this information session, Renshu (and the other participants in their turn) was provided with the first questionnaire by email (Appendix C).

Once Renshu had returned his completed questionnaire to the researcher by email on October 22nd, he was sent the first writing task. He completed this task and returned it to the researcher on the same day. This was his own choice – the participants were given a suggested goal of seven days. The researcher completed the initial Unfocused WCF and sent the marked writing and the Writing Code key chart back to Renshu by email. Then Renshu sent back a new corrected version of the task to the researcher.

The second written task was then sent to Renshu on November 5th. He completed and returned the second writing task on November 13th. This time, the researcher analysed the writing task for the most frequently occurring error, which was the incorrect use of singular and plural. As with the first writing task, Renshu was sent back the marked writing and attempted to correct his writing. Again, the corrections were checked by the researcher.

Following the Unfocused WCF correction of this final writing task, the second questionnaire (Appendix C) was sent to Renshu on November 18th and he returned it to the researcher on the same day.

Finally, a semi-structured interview was held online with Renshu on November 22nd. The semi-structured interview included the indicative questions as shown in Appendix D, but also included some personalised follow-up questions created after

Renshu's questionnaire answers were reviewed by the researcher. The interview with Renshu, as with the other participants, took around 15-20 minutes to complete.

Table 6, below, presents a simplified breakdown of the schedule introduced above.

Table 6

Simplified Breakdown of Schedule

<i>Procedure</i>	<i>Date</i>
Initial Meeting	1 October 2021
Information Session	15 October 2021
First Questionnaire	22 October 2021
First Writing Task	22 October 2021
Second Writing Task	13 November 2021
Second Questionnaire	18 November 2021
Interview	22 November 2021

3.5 – Data analysis

In the following sections, the data analysis processes for the research project are presented. First, the methods used to analyse the quantitative data gathered from the questionnaire are described. This is followed by a section on the methods used to analyse the qualitative data found in the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the participants' responses to the semi-structured interview.

3.5.1 – Quantitative data

As described in earlier sections of this thesis (e.g., Section 3.3.1), the questionnaire contained Likert-type scale items which provided the quantitative data and was administered before and after the writing tasks. It is important to note that, as this research study involves only a small number of participants (see Norman, 2010), its primary focus remains on the qualitative data obtained from other sources. In addition, statistical analysis using methods such as t-tests is not possible with a sample group of four participants. Therefore, the methods used for analysing these items of the questionnaire were based on purely descriptive statistics (Dörnyei, 2007).

The descriptive statistics provided in Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion are used extensively in this study. For example, when reporting the participant Zayed's perceptions of the effectiveness of Indirect WCF, a quote from his actual words is included, followed by a relevant item from the questionnaire and his chosen answer, thus supporting his verbal statement. In this way, the quantitative data is being used to validate the qualitative data by way of triangulation.

3.5.2 – Qualitative data

This section introduces the methods used to analyse the qualitative data gathered from the research. The different data-gathering methods for the open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the semi-structured interviews are introduced first. Then, as these two data sets were analysed in a similar way using the software NVivo, they are described together.

The responses to each participant's questionnaire were combined into a single Microsoft Word file, with each question used as a heading and the participants' responses to these questions placed underneath with a code to identify each participant. Brown (2009) described analysing data as "basically... to find the useful and interesting patterns" (p. 211), and this pre-coding method allowed the thematically linked answers to be clustered together for easier identification of potential patterns. Next, these Word files were imported to NVivo for coding and analysis.

Codes are described as "tags or labels for assigning units of meaning to the descriptive or inferential information compiled during a study" (Brown, 2009, p. 56). Put simply, they are chunks of language which are deemed to be related to or of interest in the research. In the past, researchers would have coded manually, using paper cards and highlighters. However, the use of software such as NVivo allows for easier coding by reducing researchers' workload and providing more efficient data management (Wong, 2008).

Initially, the streamlined data were coded according to their relevance to the research questions. After a rereading of the transcripts, more codes could be added as further trends and patterns surfaced. For example, after all the participants' data had been gathered, it became clear that the theme of "time" as a drawback for Indirect WCF should be included in the analysis. Thus, any participant utterances about time being a difficulty were marked with the code "time", which the NVivo software then grouped together (For examples, please see Appendix K, Marta transcript coded for 'time', and Appendix L, NVivo grouping of 'time' codes). This

allowed for faster access when writing up the findings, as the software allowed the theme to be found easily and quickly.

After the final codes were added, the data were interpreted using the method Dörnyei (2007) described as “taking stock of what we have got, appraising the generated patterns and insights, and finally selecting a limited number of main themes or storylines to elaborate on” (p. 257). The choice of themes for this study was based on their relevance to the research questions. One example of such themes is “level-appropriate feedback”, which emerged as a pattern from analysing the data gathered from interviews with Zayed and Renshu.

Next, Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion introduces the themes and outcomes identified by the methods described above.

Chapter 4 – Findings and Discussion

4.1 – Introduction

This chapter contains an analysis of the data gathered from participant questionnaires and interviews, and then concludes with a section discussing the major findings in the additional context of previous research. The findings are introduced in two main sections: Benefits and drawbacks of WCF; and Learners' reception and reactions to Unfocused WCF. Following this introduction, the first section is an overview of the participants' perceptions of WCF in general. The second provides a comparison of the participants' perceptions of, and reactions to receiving Unfocused WCF. These two sections are based on the two research questions, and the data, both qualitative and quantitative, most relevant to each are outlined. The findings are introduced in sections related to each participant. Qualitative data from the participants' questionnaires and semi-structured interviews are presented as quotes, with quantitative data from questionnaires being presented descriptively. Additionally, parts of the quotes which are particularly relevant to answering the research questions are found in bold. Finally, major emerging themes which were detected in participants' perceptions of WCF are discussed through the lens of the research questions as well as the relevant research, which was previously introduced in Chapter 2 – Literature Review.

4.2 – RQ1: Benefits and drawbacks of WCF

As introduced in the literature review chapter, the first research question is:

What benefits and drawbacks do language learners perceive in written corrective feedback methods used by their teachers?

This research question was posed to uncover the benefits and drawbacks of WCF methods as perceived by the participants. They were asked about their experience of Direct, Indirect, Unfocused, Focused, and other WCF methods. The questions in the questionnaires and interviews covered both their previous English study experiences as well as their experiences during their participation in this study.

4.2.1 – Renshu

Renshu showed an interest in being able to mark his own writing with no help from the teacher, despite holding some reservations about his ability to do so. This was initially shown in his response to questionnaire item 5: *“I like to correct my own written mistakes with no help from the teacher”*, where he chose ‘Agree’. In the open-ended response section of this question, he showed an understanding of the positive impacts of self-correction, but also shared his views of the negatives:

R: Correct your grammar mistakes can improve your writing ability.

However, there will be inaccurate times.

He shared further perceived disadvantages of ‘self-correction with no teacher assistance’ in the interview:

*R: Sometimes, I can try to correction of writing. But, because my English grammar is poor, **I don't find a lot of grammar errors** or something.*

Shedding more light on his ideas relating WCF style and learner level, Renshu explained that Indirect WCF may be excessively confusing for lower-level learners, as they may lack the grammatical knowledge to be able to correct their errors with only minimal feedback from their teacher:

*R: I think that if student study more than half years. But, if students study more 1 month or 2 month, I prefer direct is okay... because I think **if students' study is short and you will give indirect marking in writing, there will be some confusing and can't pay attention in it because they need to spend a lot of time to check errors** and maybe they think "**oh, I don't have enough time to do other times**". I give up. I give up it. I can just get by okay."*

This viewpoint was reinforced by Renshu's answers to questionnaire item 3: "*I prefer for my teacher (not myself or my classmate) to provide the correct English for any written mistakes I have made*", where he selected the 'Strongly Agree' item in both the pre-writing task and post-writing task questionnaires. This indicated that Renshu's perceptions were not impacted by the experience of receiving Indirect WCF in the writing tasks, despite his previously demonstrating and understanding the advantages of such methods in both questionnaires and in the interview. As justification for these answers, Renshu wrote in the open-ended answer section of questionnaire items 3 and 4, respectively:

R: Teachers own more professional knowledge than students.

R: Because students don't know themselves writing situation.

Renshu identified another negative aspect of WCF methods which require self-correction. This was the amount of time it takes to complete the self-correction. In response to the post-writing task questionnaire item, “*Correcting my own written mistakes takes too much time*”, he chose ‘Agree’, and in the pre-writing task questionnaire he gave the response:

R: It can take you for a while if you do not have enough knowledge about grammar.

Throughout his answers to both questionnaires and the interview, Renshu provided a consistent opinion in regard to WCF. Although he believed that implementing WCF which requires some self-correction could result in improved grammatical accuracy, he felt that students may be inadequately prepared for the level of grammatical knowledge required to successfully undertake self-correction, even with help from their teacher.

4.2.2 – Marta

This was Marta’s first experience with self-correction by way of Indirect WCF as, in the past, her teachers exclusively used Direct WCF. Through the experience of undertaking the writing tasks in this research project, she was able to make some comparisons between Direct and Indirect WCF:

M: ... was so difference to me. Something new but I feel like it is useful, like, really in a difference way. But it is useful. It's not like I couldn't get nothing from it.

As an example of a positive aspect of Indirect WCF, she indicated that it may help to give a learner more metalinguistic awareness. This kind of awareness could be an asset, according to Marta, as it may provide more information as to what type of error it is, helping to 'reverse engineer' the grammatical item and learn it. She stated:

M: I think I learnt more in your way, like correct which kind of wrong (mistake) it is, more than what I said (Direct WCF). Because, if you know what is the.. from where is coming the wrong (error), like plural, you know, you can just know that you have to do the reverse, or study more in that part of the English ways.

However, Marta also shared her primary reservation about Indirect WCF, which was the length of time which it takes to self-correct. She shared this opinion in the post-writing task questionnaire, as well as in the interview multiple times, showing that was a large area of concern for her. An example can be taken from the post-writing task questionnaire, when she responded to the item, "*I prefer for my teacher (not myself or my classmate) to provide the correct English for any written mistakes I have made*", with 'Strongly Agree', and wrote:

M: Yes, because making it for myself take me long time.

According to Marta, the main reason for this negative reaction was the number of grammatical options which needed to be mentally organised and considered when self-correcting using a code supplied by the teacher. She stated:

M: Because some, like, wrong word, you have to think about which kind of word can I use, for example. Or, wrong words, like ... oh, which kind of words I have to use in that context or things like that. So it's so much, it's not the same to when your teacher write correct word. Like, the options, yeah.

However, despite her reservations relating to the time needed to self-correct using Indirect WCF, the pre- and post-writing task questionnaire item, *"It is the teacher's responsibility to mark my work. It is not my responsibility"*, may show a change in her perception. In the pre-writing task questionnaire, she simply chose 'Agree'. However, in the post-writing task questionnaire, she chose 'Neutral', and wrote:

M: I think is a responsibility from both sides.

Marta showed that she had a positive perception of Indirect WCF, through the description of its potential for grammatical improvements. However, she also voiced a strong concern for the amount of time which it took for her to carry out the process.

4.2.3 – Zayed

Following the writing tasks, where Zayed gained experience in Indirect WCF, he was able to express some differences that he had noticed between Direct and Indirect

WCF. In the interview, he voiced his perception of Indirect WCF's effectiveness, with his rationale being that *seeing* the teacher's feedback and trying to correct it himself allows him to consider gaps in his grammatical knowledge:

Z: *I had a teacher in New Zealand, and they used to mark it... uh, 'incorrect' or 'correct' directly. But, with you, the two tasks and you marked it by this way (Indirect WCF) so I think this way is more effective because I see the mistake and I try to correct it myself, rather than the teacher. So, I think that this way lets me think more about it and search sometimes. This way is better than the teacher correction.*

This was supported by Zayed's response to the questionnaire item, "*I like to correct my own written mistakes with the teacher marking only the location of mistakes*", where he chose 'Agree' and wrote the following:

Z: *It is more effective because it helps to remember my mistakes.*

When asked to expand on his rationale for the effectiveness of Indirect WCF, he explained that the repeated feedback and practice may help learners remember the correct usage. However, he also pointed out that it is not a perfect method as learners cannot always remember these corrections:

Z: *Repetition. So, you don't again and again make the same mistake. So, you just can remember while you're writing. It's not 100% you will remember.*

However, when asked his opinion of the disadvantages of Indirect WCF, Zayed replied that it was the time required to complete such tasks. He also stated that this

could also be a positive aspect, as Indirect WCF gives learners more opportunity to think about their errors and reformulate their grammatical hypotheses:

Z: It might be **the time**, you know? **It takes time**. But I think, it's an advantage. You have take time, in my opinion ... **Because you think about what mistakes you have made. So, you think about it and correct it...**

Furthermore, Zayed suggested that WCF was more difficult for him to engage with when he first began studying English. He stated that due to his lack of grammatical knowledge, he could not understand why some errors had been corrected. Therefore, Indirect WCF with metalinguistic explanations may be more suitable for newer learners. He stated:

Z: *Exactly, in the beginning, like let me say 6 months, from my learning. This was harder than the rest of my journey learning. But, when I know my mistakes I think this makes me to try to make it, so I know it. So, correct all the sentence I can't get the point, like why has this been corrected?*

Zayed showed a preference for Indirect WCF over Direct WCF, which he experienced in English classes in New Zealand. He indicated he believed that the indirect writing feedback method encouraged learners to consider their own grammatical rules when faced with errors indicated by a teacher, allowing these learners to repeat their practice of 'correct' grammatical items.

4.2.4 – Somchai

Somchai showed an open mind and a positive attitude towards Indirect WCF/self-correction from the initial questionnaire through to the semi-structured interview, which is likely to be due to his experience with these types of tasks in the past. In response to questionnaire item, “*I like to correct my own written mistakes with no help from the teacher*”, he chose ‘Neutral’ and wrote the following:

S: It is very useful if you can find a mistake because when you write your own written next times you will be able to correct what you have made mistakes beforehand.

This positive attitude continued to the interview, where he shared insights which supported his stated opinions in the questionnaire, as well as giving a rationale for these views. Somchai explained that the codes given by the teacher in Indirect WCF help learners to become more aware of the error types, potentially increasing their metalinguistic knowledge and helping them with grammatical accuracy in the future:

S: I personally think that it will help them a lot. For example, like, if you mark ... uh, plural or singular, or any grammar point, when they notice one time and then in the future they might have the same thing that they have done before. They would probably recognise that “oh, we have done before”. And what should we write correctly.

However, while his perceptions of Indirect WCF were generally positive, Somchai also stated that a disadvantage was the amount of time required to undertake such

tasks. In comparison with Direct WCF, where the teacher simply provides the correct grammatical form, Indirect WCF puts the onus on the learner to look at their errors and attempt the correction themselves with only a limited amount of assistance from the teacher. Somchai said that it is the process of considering potential grammatical alternatives which takes time for learners:

S: If you are not sure about grammar ... For example, like modal verbs, like “should, would” and after that, infinitive verbs, and if you don’t know, like, you might be struggling with write down “to go”, or “should go”.

However, in the second questionnaire, when responding to the item, “*Correcting my own written mistakes takes too much time*”, Somchai chose ‘Neutral’ and stated that despite Indirect WCF’s potential for taking time, the positives outweigh the negatives:

S: Sometimes it takes you for a while. However, it is worth correcting my own written mistakes as I believe the more you do the less mistakes you get.

Somchai clearly expressed his positive perceptions of Indirect WCF throughout the questionnaires and interview. The main reason was its perceived effectiveness in comparison with other WCF styles.

4.3 – RQ2: Learners’ receptions and reactions to Unfocused WCF

As introduced in the literature review chapter, the second research question is:

How do language learners perceive or react emotionally to Unfocused WCF?

This research question relates to the perceptions or emotional reactions of learners when receiving Unfocused WCF, which is the method of providing corrective feedback on all or most of the errors produced in a piece of writing.

4.3.1 – Renshu

Renshu showed no negative perceptions of Unfocused WCF. From his perspective, there seemed to be one major justification for this – Unfocused WCF affords learners more opportunities to be aware of their errors, thus allowing them to focus on avoiding these errors in the future. He shared this opinion in both questionnaires and also in the interview.

In both questionnaires, he marked ‘Strongly agree/Agree’ on the item, “*The teacher should mark ALL the mistakes I made*”, and added these comments:

R: Students can know how many mistakes they have made in an article.

R: Making me know errors of writing clearly.

In the interview, Renshu further indicated the connection between the teacher marking all his errors and his increased awareness of these errors:

R: Marking all mistakes making students review grammar. For example, I found your grammar continuous verb I suggest you relevant knowledge.

Through these answers, Renshu showed a consistent viewpoint in favour of receiving feedback on all errors, since it provided him with the opportunity to reflect on

whatever errors he had made. This positive attitude towards feedback was also shown in the interview, where he stated:

R: Feedback is very important because I want to get more grades. For example, I got a C+ but next test I want to get a B or B+. I need to care for to teacher feedback. Maybe some errors about vocabulary or grammar...

As for any possible feelings of stress or anxiety stemming from Unfocused WCF, Renshu provided an ambiguous answer during the interview:

R: Only by knowing your mistakes can you make progress.

Thus, it is possible that Renshu may have felt stressed or anxious when receiving extensive WCF, but his response indicated that the positives of WCF overcame any negative emotional reactions which might arise.

4.3.2 – Marta

In both her responses to the questionnaires and the interview, Marta stated a preference for Unfocused WCF. This was despite her experience of some level of shock or a similarly negative emotional reaction when initially receiving Unfocused WCF. In two answers during the interview, Marta revealed that, from her perspective, receiving an abundance of feedback allows her more opportunities to learn from her own errors:

M: When I saw your answers I thought: “Oh fuck. I get everything like red. Everything is bad”. So yeah. Even when it takes more time, or when I saw

more wrongs in my writing, I can learn more. In my personal learning, if I get more wrongs, I can learn more and I don't forget it.

M: I don't want to say it's a negative feeling. Because, in my personal thinking or feelings, I saw that I have more mistakes. For example, I can just fix it and try to do the next one trying not to make them again.

Despite implying that she might feel shocked initially, her positive perceptions of Unfocused WCF were further reinforced by her answers in the questionnaire, where she chose 'Strongly disagree' on the item, "*I feel anxious/stressed if all of my written mistakes are highlighted*". In addition, she wrote in the open-ended answer section of this item:

M: Never. I'm so relaxed and trying to learn from it.

Thus, Marta did not describe any concerns relating to negative emotional states caused by Unfocused WCF. Her understanding of the positives of WCF overcame any of the negative emotions which she might feel.

4.3.3 – Zayed

When asked about his feelings when receiving WCF, Zayed acknowledged that he often initially felt negative emotions. He described the feelings in the interview and questionnaire, when responding to the item, "*I feel anxious/stressed if all of my written mistakes are highlighted*" as:

*Z: ... sometimes **shock, sadness**. Especially if you worked hard.*

Z: I got that feeling *many times*.

He also made the point that the feeling can be that of ‘exasperation’ when receiving feedback on writing which he has already spent an extensive amount of time working on.

When expanding on his initial reactions, he stated that these feelings lasted for only a short time – approximately five minutes. After this initial period, he started to feel better, showing that although he did experience negative emotions initially, these emotions soon faded:

Z: Yes, *in the beginning maybe five minutes. After five minutes, like, I get, let me say ‘recover’.*

Zayed then gave further details on how he reduced these feelings by reminding himself that learning English was necessary to achieve his goal of studying a master’s degree abroad. However, he also mentioned occasionally requiring a break from reading the feedback, and then coming back to it. Interestingly, he also stated that Direct WCF sometimes led to his not focusing on the feedback. This was perhaps connected to the opinion which he shared in the section above, i.e., he found that Indirect WCF encouraged him to interact and consider the feedback more than Direct WCF:

Z: ... *telling myself that I have to do that, and I have to learn. Sometimes I let it one day, sometimes the same day. If it is corrected by the teacher*

directly, sometimes in the beginning exactly I didn't read my essay, my writing. So, I just leave it, you know.

Researcher: *So, the indirect method, like, makes you think about it?*

Z: *Yes. Yes. Definitely. Definitely. Personally, I like*

Zayed shared his emotions when initially receiving feedback – that they are often negative emotions such as shock or sadness, especially when receiving feedback on writing which he has put a concerted effort into. However, he acknowledged that these emotions passed when he reminded himself of his goals relating to English study. Additionally, he expressed his opinion that Indirect WCF encouraged him to return more quickly to studying the teacher's feedback than other methods.

4.3.4 – Somchai

Somchai showed a strong preference for Unfocused WCF over Focused WCF from the initial pre-writing task questionnaire through to the final interview. In both the pre-writing task and post-writing task questionnaires, Somchai chose 'Disagree' on the item, "*I feel anxious/stressed if all of my written mistakes are highlighted*". In the open-ended answer field for this item in the later questionnaire, he responded:

S: *I do not feel stressed out as I will try to look at the mistakes I have made and then thinking about how I can correct them.*

This is further confirmed by his responses to other items in the questionnaires. When responding to the item, "*Teachers should only mark ONE TYPE of mistake*", Somchai

maintained his open-minded attitude and chose 'Neutral'. In his response, however, he further expressed his view on the effectiveness of WCF in increasing learners' awareness of the errors which they have made, specifically with topics which they may not have had experience with before:

*S: I think some topics teachers can do that. However, **some topics which some students might not have done before the teachers should mark all the mistakes.***

Somchai's opinion on the importance of WCF in encouraging learner awareness was reinforced in the interview. When asked about his feelings when receiving feedback on *all* errors made, he shared that he felt no negative emotions triggered by such WCF methods, thus supporting his questionnaire responses. He explained that the positives of receiving Unfocused WCF increased his awareness of the errors which he had produced:

*S: In my opinion, **this is not stressful or anxious for me**, because if you mark that, that would be very helpful, and **you can easily notice what you have done wrong**. And I think that it much easier to edit.*

As shown above, Somchai provided a consistent view of his feelings when receiving Unfocused WCF. It did not trigger negative emotions when he received Unfocused WCF, as he believed it provided him with more chances to become aware of his errors. This is summarised well by his philosophy concerning English language study in general:

S: ...I believe the more you do the less mistakes you get.

4.4 – Discussion of findings

While this research project is a case study with a small number of participants, there were common themes among the participants' attitudes to WCF which emerged from the analysis of the data. This section focuses on exploring how these themes could provide answers to the research questions, and the discussion of these findings are also compared and contrasted with existing research.

The findings of this study indicate that opinions were often shared by the participants, despite their varied national and linguistic backgrounds, experiences, future goals, and language levels (see Section 3.2.1, above). In general, they had positive perceptions of the effectiveness of Indirect WCF over Direct WCF in helping them with their grammatical accuracy in future writing tasks. Several participants shared common rationales for this, by indicating they felt that Indirect WCF encouraged learners' awareness of the errors which they needed to pay attention to.

In relation to the second research question, the participants generally showed a preference for Unfocused WCF. Additionally, while two participants acknowledged their initially negative feelings when receiving feedback, they also stated that these feelings were fleeting and that their view of the importance of WCF helped them to come to see the feedback in a positive way.

Each of these findings are discussed in detail below with reference to the relevant literature (see Chapter 2), in order to provide a deeper understanding of the overall outcomes of this study.

4.4.1 – What benefits and drawbacks do language learners perceive in written corrective feedback methods used by their teachers?

The first research question explored the participants' positive and negative opinions of WCF, as well as attempting to investigate their rationales for these perceptions. Engaging in thematic linking of participants' data allowed three main themes relating to this research question to emerge. The first was the participants' preferences and perceived benefits in relation to WCF. The second was the perceived drawbacks of teachers' WCF methods. The third related to how teachers could ensure that all learners understand the WCF they receive.

Preferences and benefits relating to WCF

Analysis of participant data indicated that the participants showed a generally positive attitude towards WCF, since they preferred to receive as much as possible from their teachers. All the participants had had experience with Direct WCF, but only Zayed and Somchai had received Indirect WCF and had practised self-correction before their involvement in the study. Therefore, this was a new experience for Renshu and Marta. However, regardless of their experience with Indirect WCF, all the participants demonstrated positive attitudes towards this method. Their perceptions varied, however, since Renshu showed a cautious belief in a possible increase in his accuracy while expressing a lack of confidence in his

ability to self-correct accurately, whereas the other three participants displayed a clear preference for Indirect WCF.

The rationales for these choices made by Marta, Zayed, and Somchai were the same – Indirect WCF seems to allow learners to become more aware of their errors, giving them the opportunity to consider the correct forms and to avoid making these errors again in the future. These findings in respect to WCF and learner error awareness align with research performed by Lee (2004) and McMartin-Miller (2014). Both these researchers indicated that their learner-participants were strongly in favour of receiving extensive WCF as they believed that awareness of errors was very important.

In addition, these findings are supported by Lee's (2014) finding that 76% of her participants showed a preference for error coding (Indirect WCF). In her study, the majority of participants were already receiving Indirect WCF in the form of error coding from their teachers, thus possibly skewing the findings in favour of this more familiar WCF method. However, Marta, Zayed and Somchai, despite showing preferences for Indirect WCF in this study, all had previous experience of Direct WCF. Thus, some learners may in fact prefer error coding through Indirect WCF, regardless of their previous experience.

Perceived drawbacks of teachers' WCF methods

Participant data indicated that the participants feel negatively about the amount of time required to respond to Indirect WCF. In the questionnaire, Renshu stated:

R: it takes a long time if you are unsure about the grammar.

This opinion was expanded on by Marta and Somchai during their interviews, when they suggested that the process of thinking about the incorrect grammar and the possible correct options was the reason for the length of time needed. However, this was not stated in a negative way, and they implied that it was simply a feature of the Indirect WCF method. Zayed also initially mentioned 'time' in response to being asked about drawbacks, before saying that the time needed to engage was in fact a positive aspect.

Despite the fact that the participants varied slightly in their feedback on this perceived drawback, it was the main theme which emerged from the data. In the research introduced in the literature review (see Chapter 2, above), none of the authors explicitly stated 'time' as an area of concern for participants. However, Lee (2004) did find that "some students commented that there were far too many error codes for them to handle" (p. 297), and one of her participants said: "It's troublesome and time wasting. If the teacher corrects it for me, I think it's easier for me to handle" (p. 297). Thus, while it seems that there may be implications to be drawn on the relationship between Indirect WCF error codes and time needed to correct them, there were no such explicit conclusions made by Lee (2004). It is possible that the participant in Lee's (2004) study mentioned above had a different set of motivations to the participants in the current study. Individual differences in learner perceptions also are likely to impact this viewpoint, as indicated by Somchai's positive outlook on Indirect WCF, seen when he suggested that the length of time required was worthwhile as it allowed him to practise his English.

Level-appropriate WCF

Two participants, Renshu and Zayed, expressed opinions that lower-level English learners may struggle with WCF. Both stated that within the initial period of English study, a learner may struggle to understand the grammatical reason why their teacher is providing them with feedback. Renshu elaborated that this may be due to the learner not having the appropriate level of grammatical knowledge to understand the feedback provided by a teacher. He mentioned this several times during the interview, which indicated that it was an important point to him. Zayed drew from his own experience, stating that he often did not understand the reason for the feedback given in his first six months of study.

Although it is not possible to make a concrete generalisable conclusion from the opinion of only two participants, there have been studies which support the notion that the level of the learner has an effect on their view of WCF. In a study which also looked into such learner perceptions, Zhang et al. (2021) indicated that *higher* level learners preferred more Indirect WCF methods. They found that these learners preferred Focused Indirect WCF over Unfocused Direct WCF, meaning that they would rather have a limited number of errors to self-correct using an error code than an extensive number of errors directly corrected by a teacher.

While the data from the Zhang et al. (2021) study does not match completely with the opinions shared by Renshu and Zayed, it may show some overlap between lower-level learners' WCF confusion, and higher-level learners' preference for Indirect WCF, as there seems to be a connection between the salience of the feedback and

the learners' level. According to the opinions of Zayed and Renshu, it would likely be due to the higher-level learners having the grammatical knowledge needed to engage more effectively with Indirect WCF.

4.4.2 – How do language learners perceive or react emotionally to Unfocused WCF?

As explained in the literature review (see Chapter 2), previous researchers (Bitchener, 2021; R. Ellis et al., 2008) have claimed that receiving feedback on a wide range of errors (Unfocused WCF) may lead to 'information overload' and have a negative effect on a learner's ability to effectively engage with the feedback. However, relevant research which compares the effectiveness of Unfocused and Focused WCF has produced a variety of differing results. Moreover, studies which have focused solely on the effectiveness of WCF have often neglected learners' perspectives on such WCF methods. A possible exception is McMartin-Miller (2014), who found that some learners had negative emotional reactions when receiving feedback, which may support Truscott's (1996) declaration that WCF demotivates learners. Studies which have included results on negative learner reactions lacked in-depth coverage (e.g., McMartin-Miller, 2014), therefore leaving a gap for more detailed investigations into learners' emotional reactions. Research Question Two was posed to further clarify how learners feel about Unfocused WCF in general, as well as their emotional reactions.

The findings from the questionnaire and interview data which relate to this research question show that some of the participants do feel negative emotions when

receiving feedback. Nevertheless, all four participants claimed to prefer to receive feedback on *all* their errors. Marta and Zayed suggested that they had experienced feelings of shock or sadness after receiving feedback, but that this feeling only lasted for a short time. They stated that by reminding themselves of their reasons for studying English, or that the process of studying English required some failures, they were able to quickly overcome these negative emotions and move on to engaging with the feedback. Although Renshu's response to the interview question was ambiguous, it may imply that he feels negative emotions when receiving feedback. In reply to the interview question, he stated:

R: Only by knowing your mistakes can you make progress.

This statement seems to serve as a reminder to himself, as with Marta and Zayed, to overcome any initially negative feelings. In fact, Marta shares her own similar thought processes when asked to expand on her reaction to these negative emotions:

M: I don't want to say it's a negative feeling. Because, in my personal thinking or feelings, I saw that I have more mistakes.

The only participant who did not state or imply negative emotional reactions was Somchai, who shared a perspective which was similar to that of Renshu and Marta when he stated:

S: I believe the more you do the less mistakes you get.

In summary, all the participants conveyed a similar way of thinking about error – that by being aware of their errors, they can improve their grammatical accuracy, regardless of their emotional state when receiving WCF.

The thought processes and perspectives shared by the participants seem to be strongly linked to their preferences for receiving Unfocused WCF, which mirrors the results of previous research (e.g., Lee, 2004; McMartin-Miller, 2014) by showing that many learners hold a strong preference for Unfocused WCF. In addition, the rationale for this preference shared by learners in the McMartin-Miller (2014) study agrees with that given by the participants in my study. Both sets of participants expressed their view that an awareness of errors may help them to reduce such errors in their future writing.

The answers given by participants in regard to their preferences for Indirect and Unfocused WCF, both in the present study and in previous research (Lee, 2004; McMartin-Miller, 2014; Zhang et al., 2021), suggest that learners may place very high importance on awareness of their own errors. In the present study, awareness of errors was a strong theme which ran through the data from the participants' questionnaires and interviews, and was given as a rationale for WCF preferences, as well as a self-reminder for participants in the process of overcoming the initial 'shock' of WCF.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

5.1 – Research aims and methodology

The main aim of this study was to shed further light on English language learners' perceptions of WCF. To be specific, it investigated the benefits and drawbacks of WCF as perceived by the participants, as well as investigating their opinions and emotional reactions to those WCF methods which highlight *all* grammatical error types.

In using both qualitative and quantitative methods, questionnaires and semi-structured interviews were employed to gather data, which were then triangulated to discover common themes which emerged in order to increase the validity of the findings. As there were only four ESL learners participating in the study, generalising the findings to wider ESL learner communities was not possible. However, comparisons and contrasts between the participating learners' perceptions and the findings of previous research studies are outlined in Section 4.4, "Discussion of Findings", above.

5.2 – Summary of findings

Findings from the study indicated that awareness of errors was an important aspect of WCF for these learners. In fact, most of the participants showed a preference for Indirect WCF, because in this way they could become more aware of the type of error they had produced and gain further practice in the target grammar by self-

correcting. This desire for awareness of errors was also established when all four participants stated a preference for Unfocused WCF in which they received feedback on all their errors. These findings are supported by existing research which has identified the relationship between learners' preferences for Unfocused WCF and their desire to be aware of *all* their errors. However, the length of time which it takes to perform the self-correction aspect of Indirect WCF is a drawback in the view of most of the participants in this study. This is due to the number of different grammatical options which a learner must consider in order to correct every error they have produced. Finally, some of the participants acknowledged that they also experienced negative emotions when receiving feedback, a finding which was mirrored in previous research. However, on further questioning, it became clear that these initial negative emotions quickly abated and were overtaken by a motivation to re-engage with the feedback. This indicates that it is possible for these learners to overcome their feelings and find value in responding to WCF.

5.3 – Study significance and practical implications

This study has contributed to current knowledge on this topic by enhancing existing research which relates to learner perceptions of WCF. It supports the findings presented by previous authors (e.g., Lee, 2004; McMartin-Miller, 2014; Zhang et al., 2021) which related to learner preferences in regard to the comprehensiveness and type of WCF. Additionally, the reasons for these preferences also aligned, since the learners who took part in this study indicated that being *aware* of the errors they produced was an important aspect of WCF for them.

Furthermore, this study's findings expanded on the results of McMartin-Miller's (2014) investigation of the negative emotions experienced by some learners when receiving WCF. The present study's findings contradict the claims made by Truscott (1996), who stated that WCF should not be used at all by teachers as it will likely demotivate learners. In line with McMartin-Miller's (2014) findings noted above, some participants in the present study acknowledged that they had experienced negative feelings of sadness or frustration from the WCF they had received. However, these same participants then stated that they were able to move past these feelings and engage effectively with the feedback. Furthermore, the same participants who stated that they felt negative emotions also prefer Unfocused WCF. This shows that the desire for awareness of errors is stronger than feelings of demotivation caused by the feedback. This preference contradicts claims that any WCF is harmful for learners' confidence, as in this case participants would likely show a preference for a WCF method which minimises the amount of feedback given (Focused WCF). While the findings from the current study are based on the views of a small group of participants and cannot be generalised to all learners, they underscore the importance of learners' perceptions and preferences being included in future studies of WCF.

Additionally, these findings emphasise the need for teachers to become more sensitive to the perceptions and preferences of their learners. For example, the time which it takes to perform Indirect WCF was regarded as a drawback by some participants in this study, so it may be advantageous for teachers to have learners perform the self-correction phase of Indirect WCF during class time when the

teacher can provide explanations and assistance. Learners may not fully engage with the process during their personal time if they believe it will take too long, thus missing out on the benefits of Indirect WCF.

Another recommendation is the use of more explicit Indirect Metalinguistic WCF for learners who may not have the grammatical knowledge to meaningfully engage with WCF which utilises self-correction. As discussed in Section 4.4.1, some learners may struggle with WCF during the early stages of their language studies. As one participant in the current study mentioned, low-level learners may not have the grammatical knowledge to be able to meaningfully engage with WCF. Therefore, regardless of the WCF method employed, if the teacher includes more explicit explanations of the grammar rules which relate to the error, it may help learners to engage with the WCF more effectively.

5.4 – Study limitations and recommendations for further research

The present study included two writing tasks so the participants would be able to experience Unfocused Indirect WCF and Focused Indirect WCF. The rationale was that the participants could increase their awareness of WCF methods through these experiences, thus enabling them to answer the questionnaires and interviews in more detail as to their preferences. Despite including two different WCF methods, the variety of WCF methods used by teachers is greater than the two experienced by the participants. Therefore, future studies could provide greater awareness for participants if they included writing tasks which utilised additional WCF methods.

However, it is possible that an increase in the number of WCF methods used could also confuse participants.

Additionally, only about 20 minutes was spent with each participant per interview. Longer interviews would allow the participants to explain in greater detail their perceptions and feelings towards WCF. For example, if Renshu had been asked to expand on his emotional reactions to Unfocused WCF, it would have allowed him to provide more detail, thus providing richer data for analysis.

Further research is also needed to expand current knowledge of learners' perceptions and emotional reactions to *Written* CF, as this is an area which is under-researched in comparison with *Oral* CF (see Kim & Mostafa, 2021). Building on the current study, investigations involving a much larger group of participants would allow further trends and patterns to emerge. As mentioned above, additional writing tasks which allow the participants to experience more types of WCF may also allow for richer data to be collected.

5.5 – Researcher reflections

As the research component of university qualifications requires supervision, the research and thesis writing processes have given me, the researcher, the opportunity to reflect on my own experience of receiving writing feedback. This has allowed me to consider my own preferences and beliefs as to writing feedback while also examining those of the participants in my study. Reflecting on these parallel experiences has shown me that there are similarities between us.

Perhaps the biggest similarity was the desire for extensive feedback. Much like the participants, I wanted as much feedback as I could get as quickly as I could get it. The fact that it was my first foray into research and the experience of the student researcher/supervisor relationship, the rules around how often to communicate, etc., were confusing at first. Despite these differences in awareness of rules, my desires for correction and those of my participants matched. I, too, wanted awareness of my own errors (both linguistic and in terms of genre-appropriateness) so as to avoid the same mistakes in future writing. It is likely that the participants and I deviated slightly in terms of our reasoning for this, as the participants typically sought perfection in grammar, and I lacked confidence in my ability to create writing appropriate to the genre.

There is a second parallel between my experience and some of my participants' beliefs – the roles of the teacher/expert and the learner/novice. This contradicts my advocacy for more egalitarian views of the teacher/learner relationship in my own ESL classes in the past. In the questionnaires, the participants showed their perception of teachers as 'experts', with one stating that, as a non-native speaker, it is hard for them to find their mistakes. I felt the same way. With no experience, the genre was like a foreign language for me. I found myself viewing the thesis as a mountain with no possible way to ascend it by myself. In this way, I viewed my supervisor as analogous to a sherpa; without her assistance, I would not have been able to successfully complete the climb. I read many books related to thesis and dissertation writing, but the feedback was what I felt to be more important.

From the experience of writing this thesis, it is now easier for me to understand how learners can continue to view a teacher's assistance as absolutely essential. This can occur even with the 'experts' themselves imploring their learners to feel confident in their ability to create new work autonomously. It also shows why it is imperative that a teacher is able to listen to learners' voices, while also maintaining the confidence and knowledge of best practices befitting an 'expert'. While this may feel uncomfortable for someone like me, who places great importance on egalitarianism in the classroom, being able to confidently establish oneself as 'the teacher' may be more valuable for the learners.

Undertaking this research project has opened my eyes to the full scope of work and detail needed to perform research at a university. All of the stages involved, from the initial application to proofreading the thesis, pushed me to improve in these areas. Until now, university study has mostly worked to increase my knowledge of certain areas, whereas this project has vastly improved a variety of other academic skills. The flip side of this is it has also shown me that there are many areas where improvements are still needed. Taking all of these factors into consideration, the experience has been invaluable for me.

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Appendices

Appendix A – Teacher information sheet



Teacher Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

1 May 2021

Project Title

Language learner perspectives on written corrective feedback provided by their teachers and the impact of the learners' perspectives on their performance.

An Invitation

Thank you for agreeing to inform your students about the opportunity to participate in this research. I would like to ask you to inform your students of this opportunity so that they are willing and interested in becoming participants.

All things going smoothly, it will take around 2 months for all stages of data collection to be completed. For a break down of what they will be required to do in this research, please see the section below.

Students who are interested in participating, or who have questions, should email me at William.giacon@aut.ac.nz for more information. I am hoping for up to 10 students to become participants.

What is the purpose of this research?

The research has two main purposes:

1. Discover how language learners feel about the ways their teachers provide correction feedback on their writing.

I would like to find more information from language learners about their feelings related to the writing correction they receive from their teachers. Currently, there is some debate as to the best way to help learners to correct their writing. However, I would like to know how the learners feel about it.

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

What will happen in this research?

The participants in this research will be involved in several stages and tasks:

- Participating in an online initial information session. Here I will give them relevant information relating to the research topic.
- Completing an initial questionnaire. It will be about their thoughts on writing correction styles.
- Writing a first piece of writing about a topic provided by me, and then correcting it based on my feedback.
- Writing a second piece of writing about a topic provided by me, and then correcting it based on my feedback.
- Completing a second questionnaire. It will be about their thoughts on writing correction styles.
- Participating in an online 1-to-1 interview with me. This is to find out more information from them about their thoughts on writing correction styles.

The benefits for participants will be increased knowledge of methods of self-correcting, as well as some practice in these types of tasks. They will also be able to add their voice to the topic, as is the focus for this research.

In total, their participation in the research will take around 5.5 hours:

Initial meeting – 0.5 hours
 Information session + First questionnaire – 1 hour
 First writing piece + correction – 1.5 hours
 Second writing piece + correction – 1.5 hours
 Second questionnaire – 0.5 hours
 Interview – 0.5 hours

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no financial costs required to participate in this research. However, it may require several hours of their time to participate.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

They will have two weeks to consider this invitation. They should email me to inform me of their interest in participating.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Denise Cameron, denise.cameron@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext. 6085.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

William Giacon, william.giacon@aut.ac.nz.

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Denise Cameron, denise.cameron@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext. 6085.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27/8/2021, AUTEC Reference number 21/289.

Appendix B – Participant information sheet



Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

1 May 2021

Project Title

Language learner perspectives on written corrective feedback provided by their teachers and the impact of the learners' perspectives on their performance.

An Invitation

My name is William Giacon, and I am a postgraduate student at AUT. My master's degree involves research, and I would like to invite you to take part in the research as a participant. The research will focus on how you feel about the ways in which a teacher helps you with your writing, and this will require you to complete two writing tasks, two questionnaires and take part in an interview with me. Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any effect on your course of study or classwork. Your participation in this research will not advantage or disadvantage you in any way, and your identity will be kept confidential by the use of a pseudonym in the thesis which will report on this research.

What is the purpose of this research?

The research has two main purposes:

1. To discover how language learners feel about the ways their teachers provide correction feedback on their writing.
2. To attempt to discover if language learners' opinions about writing correction impacts their performance in writing correction tasks.

I would like to find more information from language learners about their feelings related to the writing correction they receive from their teachers. Currently, there is some debate as to the best way to help learners to correct their writing. However, I would like to know how you, the learners, feel about it.

In addition, I would like to find out if there is a connection between your feelings on the self-correction of your writing and your performance in these tasks.

The findings of this research will be written up in the form of a master's thesis and may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

All students at AUT International House, who are at or over an intermediate English level have been invited to participate in this research. You have received this information sheet because you have shown that you are interested in participating in the research.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You will be provided with a consent form for the study. You will be able to take away the forms with you so you can read them carefully. If you would like to participate, please email me and let me know. I will provide you with a date, time, and location for the next session. Please bring the consent form to this session. You agree to answering the questionnaire just by completing it. To show you agree to the interview, I will give you a Consent Form to sign. Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice). Your participation in this research will not advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the research at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the research, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

The two main purposes of this research are:

1. To discover how language learners feel about the ways their teachers provide correction feedback on their writing.

2. To attempt to discover if language learners' opinions about writing correction impacts their performance in writing correction tasks.

For the first purpose, there are several stages which will require your time. These will be:

- Participating in an initial information session. Here I will give you relevant information relating to the research topic.
- Completing an initial questionnaire. It will be about your thoughts on writing correction styles.
- Writing the first piece of writing about a topic provided by me, and then correcting it based on my feedback.
- Writing the second piece of writing about a topic provided by me, and then correcting it based on my feedback.

* The writing topics will be about general subjects similar to those found in an IELTS test. E.g., *Smartphone use by young people has been increasing in recent years. Some people feel that this has positive and negative impacts effects. Please write about the possible effects of this increasing smartphone use by young people.*

* You will be given one hour to write. There is no word limit, but please write as much as you can.

- Completing a second questionnaire.
- * The questionnaires to be completed at the beginning and end of the research are the same. With both questionnaires being completed as a group, you are requested to keep the identities of your fellow participants and the content of discussions confidential.
- Participating in a 1-to-1 interview with me. This is to find out more information from you about your thoughts on writing correction styles.

The second purpose requires no work from you.

All the tasks required for the research (the questionnaires, the writing, the correcting of writing, and the interviews) will take place at AUT in a private room. Your participation in this research will not have any impact on your English studies. The data gathered for this research will only be used for this research. No data will be shared with your class teacher/s.

In total, your participation in the research will take around 5.5 hours:

Initial meeting – 0.5 hours
 Information session + First questionnaire – 1 hour
 First writing piece + correction – 1.5 hours
 Second writing piece + correction – 1.5 hours
 Second questionnaire – 0.5 hours
 Interview – 0.5 hours

Please note that I will be providing refreshments for you whenever we meet.

What are the discomforts and risks?

There is no risk or potential for discomfort in this research. I want to find out about your opinions on the methods of correcting writing, and there will be no potentially embarrassing questions in the questionnaire and interview. It will take about half an hour for the questionnaires and the interview. As the research will involve having your writing corrected, there is the possibility for embarrassment there. However, it will be only the researcher who will be correcting your writing and no other students, or teachers of yours will see it.

How will these discomforts and risks be alleviated?

It is unlikely you will experience any discomfort but if any activity or question makes you uncomfortable you don't have to answer it. You can withdraw from the research or stop the interview at any time. If you experience any problems related to the research, AUT Health Counselling and Wellbeing is able to offer three free sessions of confidential counselling support for adult participants in an AUT research project. These sessions are only available for issues that have arisen directly as a result of participation in the research and are not for other general counselling needs. To access these services, you will need to:

- drop into our centres at WB219 or AS104 or phone 921 9992 City Campus or 921 9998 North Shore campus to make an appointment. Appointments for South Campus can be made by calling 921 9992
- let the receptionist know that you are a research participant, and provide the title of my research and my name and contact details as given in this Information Sheet

You can find out more information about AUT counsellors and counselling on <http://www.aut.ac.nz/being-a-student/current-postgraduates/your-health-and-wellbeing/counselling>.

What are the benefits?

For participants, there is the benefit of increased knowledge about the topic of writing in English. You will also be able practice your writing and self-correction skills.

For me, I will be gaining research experience and a master's degree by performing this research.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your information will be kept confidential in several ways. Firstly, in the data, you will be allocated a pseudonym and anyone reading the written thesis will not know that you have participated in the research. Secondly, the person who will be transcribing the interview recording will also sign a confidentiality agreement, which means that they cannot tell anyone else what they hear in the interview recording. No one, except me, the researcher, and my supervisor, Dr Denise Cameron, will know whether or not you have participated in these interviews. The questionnaires, consent forms, and recordings on a memory stick will be kept in a locked drawer in Dr Cameron's office.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

There are no financial costs required to participate in this research. However, it may require approximately five hours of your time over two months to come to AUT and participate. These sessions will be scheduled outside your normal class hours at AUTIH.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

You will have two weeks to consider this invitation. Then you can email me to inform me of your interest in participating. If you decide not to take part, you are free to ignore this invitation.

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

If you would like to know the findings of the research, I can provide you with a short summary of the results. I will email you when the research is completed to ask if you would like the summary.

Questionnaire information:

The questionnaire will have numbers for you to choose relating to how much you agree with the statement. It also has a space below each question for you to write in more detail about your answers.

You will have time before starting the questionnaire to read through it and to ask me questions. However, I will be out of the room while you are completing the questionnaire.

Your participation in this research will have no impact on your English study while at AUTIH.

What will happen in this research?

You will be given time to read through this information sheet and the questionnaire. There will be some time given before the questionnaire time begins for you to ask me any questions you may have. However, during the questionnaire time I will be out of the room. When you have completed the questionnaire, please give it to me outside of the room once you leave.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your information will be kept confidential in several ways. Firstly, in the data, you will be allocated a pseudonym in the written thesis, and the person used for transcribing the interview will be required to complete a confidentiality form.

Interview Information:

The interview is semi-structured, which means that I have prepared questions, but we can also talk about ideas in more detail if they come up during the interview. The topic of the interview is only related to methods of correcting writing errors.

If you agree to take part, I will interview you outside your normal class at a suitable time for you. The interview will be recorded, and the recording will be transcribed by a professional transcriber who has signed a Confidentiality Agreement.

You also have the option of declining to be interviewed for the research.

What will happen in this research?

You and I will spend 15-30 minutes during the interview talking about methods of correcting writing. It is similar to the questionnaire topic, but because it is an interview, I can ask you questions in more detail. You will be recorded for the interview as it will help me to analyse the data more easily.

How will my privacy be protected?

Your information will be kept confidential in several ways. Firstly, in the data, you will be allocated a pseudonym in for the data. Secondly, the person who will be transcribing the interview audio will also sign a confidentiality agreement, which means that it is illegal to tell anyone else what they hear in the interview audio.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, Dr Denise Cameron, denise.cameron@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext. 6085.

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEK, ethics@aut.ac.nz, (+649) 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

William Giacon, william.giacon@aut.ac.nz.

Project Supervisor Contact Details:

Dr Denise Cameron, denise.cameron@aut.ac.nz, 921 9999 ext. 6085.

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27/8/2021, AUTEK Reference number 21/289.

Appendix C – Questionnaire



Questionnaire

Project title: Language learner perspectives on written corrective feedback provided by their teachers and the impact of the learners' perspectives on their performance.

Project Supervisor: Dr Denise Cameron

Researcher: William Giacon

This questionnaire is being conducted to find out English language learners' opinions about the ways teachers help them with their writing. Before you begin filling out the questionnaire, you will have time to read through it and ask me questions.

Please tick the box which best aligns with your opinion and, if possible, please explain more about your opinion in the space below each question. You are not required to answer every question if you do not want to. Your answers will be confidential.

When you are finished, please hand your questionnaire to me outside of the room.

Participant's name:

1. It is important to me to have NO mistakes in my writing.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

2. A teacher has asked me to correct my own writing mistakes in classes before.

Yes	No
Please explain about your experience in more detail:	

3. I prefer for my teacher (not myself or my classmate) to provide the correct English for any written mistakes I have made.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

4. It is the teacher's responsibility to mark my work. It is not my responsibility.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

5. I like to correct my own written mistakes with no help from the teacher.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

6. I like to correct my own written mistakes with the teacher marking only the location of mistakes.
(using an underline/highlight etc.)

Example: When I going to the shop to buy the milks, I don't never spend \$4.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

7. I like to correct my own written mistakes with the teacher showing only the type of mistake it is.

Example: *When I going to the shop to buy the milks, I don't never spend \$4. Article/plural*

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

8. I like to correct my own written mistakes with the teacher showing the location and the error type.

Article/plural

Example: *When I going to the shop to buy the milks, I don't never spend \$4.*

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

9. The teacher should mark ALL the mistakes I made.

Example: *When I going to the shop to buy the milks, I don't never spend \$4.*

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

10. Teachers should only mark ONE TYPE of mistake.

Example: *When I going to the shop to buy the milks, I don't never spend \$4 on a milk. (= plural/singular mistake)*

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

11. I feel anxious/stressed if all of my written mistakes are highlighted.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

12. Correcting my own written mistakes helps me to improve my English.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

13. Correcting my own written mistakes takes too much time.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

14. Correcting my own written mistakes is too difficult.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

15. I can mark my own writing mistakes well with no help from the teacher.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

16. I enjoy marking other students' work.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

17. I enjoy it when other students mark my work.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

18. When my teacher corrects my writing, I ALWAYS read their feedback carefully.

Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Please explain your opinion in more detail:				

Appendix D – Semi-structured interview questions



Interview Questions (indicative)

1. How useful do you think the self-correction tasks we did in this research are?
2. What advantages do you think there are to self-correction tasks?
3. What disadvantages do you think there are to self-correction tasks?
4. Have your feelings towards them changed after this research?
5. We did two different types of self-correction (correction of all error types + correction of one error type) , which did you prefer?
6. How did you feel during the self-correction task where you had to correct ALL mistakes? For example, Ok, anxious, stressed, relaxed. Would you be happy to go through this process again?

Appendix E – Online invitation



An invitation to English language learners

My name is William Giacon, and I am a post-graduate student at AUT. I am doing a research project into English learners' opinions on the methods their teachers use to correct their writing.



I am interested in researching learners' opinions about this topic because often researchers haven't included learners' voices, and I want to make sure that learners have an opportunity to express their important opinions.

If you agree to join this study, you will meet with me online to learn about different writing correction methods and then complete a questionnaire. Then, you will complete two writing tasks, and one more questionnaire. Finally, there will be a 1-to-1 interview with me. You can stop participating at any time. This study is not part of your classwork or assessments and will not be marked. Your identity will also be confidential. To participate in this study, an IELTS score over 4.0 is necessary.

If you would like to join in the study or would like to know more information, please email me at William.giacon@aut.ac.nz.

Thank you,
William Giacon

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 29/10/2021 AUTEK Reference number 21/289

Appendix F – Writing task 1



Writing Task 1

Project title: *Language learner perspectives on written corrective feedback provided by their teachers and the impact of the learners' perspectives on their performance.*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Denise Cameron*

Researcher: *William Giacon*

- Please spend ONE HOUR on this writing task.
- For this writing task, please write about the topic below. There is no word limit, but please write as much as you can.
- You may use a dictionary, but please do not use a computer or smartphone translator.
- Please write your essay in a **BLUE** font.
- You should focus on writing and justifying your opinion, summarising information, introducing possible solutions, supporting your writing with reasons and relevant examples.

Writing Task 1 topic

International students are becoming increasingly interested in studying abroad. What are the benefits and drawbacks to the students themselves, as well as the countries they go to?

Appendix G – Writing task 2



Writing Task 2

Project title: *Language learner perspectives on written corrective feedback provided by their teachers and the impact of the learners' perspectives on their performance.*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Denise Cameron*

Researcher: *William Giacon*

- Please spend ONE HOUR on this writing task.
- For this writing task, please write about the topic below. There is no word limit, but please write as much as you can.
- You may use a dictionary, but please do not use a computer or smartphone translator.
- Please write your essay in a **BLUE** font.
- You should focus on writing and justifying your opinion, summarising information, introducing possible solutions, supporting your writing with reasons and relevant examples.

Writing Task 2 topic

The earth will increasingly suffer from the effects of climate change, and it is a serious issue. What are the causes of climate change? What can governments and individuals do to deal with this problem?

Appendix H – Writing correction code



Writing Correction Code

On this sheet, you can find the code which has been used with your writing tasks.

Code	Meaning	Example
WW	Wrong Word	As our plane flew <u>on</u> the mountains, we saw snow.
WT	Wrong Tense	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <u>see</u> snow.
WF	Wrong Form	As our plane flew over the mountains, we <u>was seeing</u> snow.
WO	Word Order	As our plane over the mountains <u>flew</u> , we saw snow.
S/P	Singular/Plural	As our plane flew over <u>a</u> mountains, we saw <u>snows</u> .
SP	Spelling	As our plane <u>flue</u> over the mountains, we saw snow.
P	Punctuation	As our plane flew over the mounts <u>;</u> we saw snow.
X	Extra word	As our plane flew over <u>to</u> the mountains
ART	Article	As our plane flew over the mountains, we saw <u>a</u> snow.
M	Missing word	As our plane flew over the mountains, <u> </u> saw snow.
?	Not clear	
RW	Rewriting	Our vehicle flies, we snow find, over the mounts you saw it.

Appendix I – Consent form



Consent Form

Project title: *Language learner perspectives on written corrective feedback provided by their teachers and the impact of the learners' perspectives on their performance.*

Project Supervisor: *Dr Denise Cameron*

Researcher: *William Giacon*

- I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated 1 May 2021.
- I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.
- I understand the steps in this research: two questionnaires, two writing tasks, two self-correction tasks, two information sessions and an interview.
- I understand that identity of my fellow participants and our discussions topics is confidential to the group and I agree to keep this information confidential.
- I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.
- I understand that taking part in this research is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the research at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.
- I understand that if I withdraw from the research then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.
- I agree to take part in this research.
- I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): Yes No

Participant's signature:

Participant's name:

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

.....

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 27/8/2021, AUTEK Reference number 21/289.

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

Appendix J – Online information session slides

Information Session

Language learner perspectives on written corrective feedback provided by their teachers.

1

Reminder - What is this research about?

I want to find out your opinions about different methods of marking writing.

In order to do this, it is important that you know about these different methods and have some practice.

This is the purpose of today's meeting.

2

What will we talk about today?

I would like to give you a brief introduction to some different writing correction methods.

After this, I will send you the first questionnaire to fill out.

3

How can writing be corrected? - Correction types

Here are examples of the two main types we will focus on:

Direct

When I ~~go~~ going to the shop to buy the ~~milk~~ milks, I never spend \$4. Provides the correct grammar

Indirect

When I ~~going~~ tense to the shop to buy the ~~milks~~ Singular/plural, I never spend \$4. Provides the location and error type

When I ~~going~~ to the shop to buy the ~~milks~~, I never spend \$4. Provides only the location

4

How often can writing be corrected? - Correction frequency

Here are examples of the two main types we will focus on:

Focused (Mistakes of only one type)

When I going to ~~shops~~ Singular/Plural to buy the ~~milks~~ Singular/Plural, I never spends \$4. Only mistakes of singular/plural

Unfocused (All mistakes)

When I ~~going~~ Tense to ~~shops~~ Singular/Plural to buy the ~~milks~~ Singular/Plural, I never ~~spends~~ Subject/verb agreement \$4. All mistakes made by student

5

Who can correct writing? - Correction responsibility

Who can correct writing?

1. The teacher

The teacher will provide direct writing correction. You only have to read their corrections after they give it to you.

1. You

In this case, the teacher will provide marking codes, and you will put in the correct grammar using these codes. The teacher usually checks for accuracy after.

1. A classmate

In this case, the teacher will provide hints, and the classmate will put in the correct grammar for YOUR writing using these hints. The teacher usually checks for accuracy after.

6

Do you have any questions?

I will now send you all the questionnaire.
please send me the completed questionnaire within 1 week!

You can also email me any questions.

william.giacon@aut.ac.nz

Appendix K – NVivo code example 1 (Marta transcript coded for ‘time’)

What disadvantages do you think there are to self-correction tasks?

M: I think take more long time.

W: Take a long time?

M: Yeah a long time to think about it. For me, yes, because I learnt in another ways was the most difference. So much difference. Yeah. I think time is the things that I can say that will be the difference.

W: So why did it, uh, take you a long time? Was it just thinking about what the correct grammar should be?

M: Yeah, because some, like, wrong word, you have to think about which kind of word can I use, for example. Or, wrong words, like ... oh, which kind of words I have to use in that context or things like that. So it's so much, it's not the same to when your teacher write correct word. Like, the options, yeah.

W: Yeah, I can understand that it takes... You have to think about it. So do you think it took you almost the same amount of the time to write the whole thing? How long do you think it took you to correct it?

M: Most of then, like one hour or more. Even more I think.

W: Of course, did the first one take longer than the second one?

M: Yeah.

Appendix L – NVivo grouping of ‘time’ codes

○ Time ×

☰ ▾ || ▾ ○ ▾ ✎ ▾ ↔ ▾

Zayed § 3 references coded [8.98% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 2.16% Coverage

It might be the time , you know? It takes time. But I think, it's an advantage. You have take time, in my opinion.

Reference 2 - 4.31% Coverage

W: Why does it take a long time?

Z: Because you think about what mistakes you have made. So, you think about it and correct it, where as when the teacher gives you the whole sentence corrected. So, I think ... you take more time.

Reference 3 - 2.52% Coverage

What are the advantages to the Direct method?

Z: The time. I think it's time. Uh, I think this is the only advantage to this method.

Marta - § 1 reference coded [10.74% Coverage]

Reference 1 - 10.74% Coverage

What disadvantages do you think there are to self-correction tasks?

M: I think take more long time.

W: Take a long time?

M: Ye ah a long time to think about it. For me, yes, because I learnt in another ways was the most difference. So much difference. Yeah. I think time is the things that I can say that will be the difference.

W: So why did it, uh, take you a long time? Was it just thinking about what the correct grammar should be?

M: Yeah, because some, like, wrong word, you have to think about which kind of word can I use, for example. Or, wrong words, like ... oh, which kind of words I have to use in that context or things like that. So it's so much, it's not the same to when your teacher write correct word. Like, the options, yeah.

W: Yeah, I can understand that it takes ... You have to think about it. So do you think it took you almost the