

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

EXPLORATORY CASE STUDY: PERCEPTIONS OF
ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE TEACHER AND
STUDENTS ON THE ROLE OF CLASSROOM
CONTEXTUAL FACTORS IN THE USE OF WRITTEN
CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK

by
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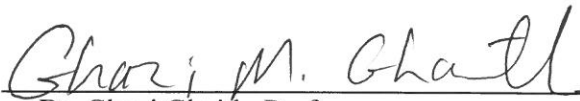
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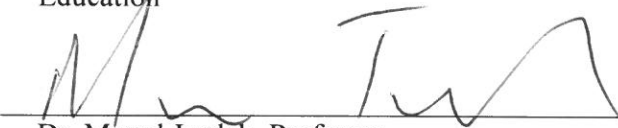
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I dedicate this thesis to my father, Nasser, my mother, Fatima, my husband Fawaz, and my son Jawad.

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Zeinab Nasser Safieddine for Master of Arts
Major: Teaching of English as a Foreign Language

Title: Exploratory Case Study: Perceptions of English as a Foreign Language Teacher and Students on the Role of Classroom Contextual Factors in the Use of Written Corrective Feedback

Written corrective feedback (WCF) refers to the comments and corrections that teachers provide students with on both content and form in an attempt to improve their performance during essay writing. Several studies on WCF have provided evidence that the use of WCF in English as a foreign language (EFL) writing classrooms enhances students' writing accuracy level. Despite its role in improving the accuracy level of students' writing, some learners still fail to make use of it when revising their essays due to the presence of various classroom contextual factors that influence the effectiveness of the provided WCF. According to various studies, this issue is not thoroughly examined and requires further investigation.

The study examined, from the perspective of both teacher and students, the factors that affected students' ability to apply WCF. Also, this study explored why some students within the same classroom applied WCF, while others did not. Six graduate EFL students and their teacher participated in the study. Multiple sources were used for data collection. Analysis was done using the Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), and a narrative construction approach was followed. Students reported on their own experience as they revised and re-wrote a second draft of their texts following teacher's WCF. The participants, teacher and students, described the factors that appeared to influence students' ability to utilize WCF.

Students and their teacher indicated that there were several factors within the learning context, individual, situational, and methodological, that interacted and influenced students' ability to apply WCF. It was found that individual factors played a major role in affecting students' utilization of WCF.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background

Written Corrective feedback (WCF) refers to the comments and corrections that teachers provide students with on both content and form in an attempt to improve their performance during essay writing. WCF is intended to help students improve their writings during second draft trials, and on the long run, improve second language (L2) accuracy. WCF is sometimes referred to as grammar correction or error correction (Ferris, 2012). Whether to respond or not to students' writings is a matter of great interest to second language L2 writing teachers and researchers.

Since Truscott published his landmark paper in 1996 entitled "The case against grammar correction in L2 writing classes," where he argues that grammar correction should be "abandoned" (Truscott, 1996, p. 327), the efficacy and value of WCF has been hotly debated (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Evans et al., 2010; Ferris, Liu, Sinha, & Senna, 2013; Sampson, 2012; Truscott, 2007). This is because numerous studies have produced conflicting results. For instance, while Truscott (2007) argues that "correction [is] a clear and dramatic failure" (p. 271), other studies show that there is encouraging evidence regarding the use of WCF in the writing classrooms. Chief among the studies which underscore the WCF benefits for learners in improving the accuracy of their writing compared to those who do not receive feedback are those of Bitchener(2008) and Ferris (2006). Similarly, regardless of the type of WCF that students receive, i.e. focused, unfocused, direct, or indirect, students' accuracy

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improved in new writings (Ahmadi, Maftoon, & Mehrdad, 2012; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, & Takashima, 2008).

B. Research Problem

Most of the extant research on the subject of WCF has focused on the question of whether learners should be provided with feedback or not. Few research studies have tackled the question of how WCF should be provided in order to maximize students' opportunities to benefit from it. Focusing on the "how" drives attention toward the various classroom contextual factors of every EFL classroom. These factors are related to the learner, situational, and methodological issues that might hinder or facilitate students' effort to benefit from WCF (Evans et al., 2010; Lee, 2011). Also, very little attention has been given to the reasons why some students fail to benefit from WCF, which according to Bitchener (2012), is "...may be the more important issue" (p. 857). This is because, within the same classroom, some students fail to use while others benefit from teachers' WCF. Hence, teachers need be aware of the various classroom contextual factors in their context of teaching in an attempt to improve the efficacy of WCF and increase learners' chances to benefit from this practice.

C. Rationale

There is a clear paucity in research when it comes to the issue of why some students fail to benefit from the provided WCF (Bitchener, 2012). Also, Goldstein (2006) mentions that "no study has looked at all the factors that can influence how teachers provide feedback and how students use this feedback and how these factors interact with each other" (p. 188). Only one recent study conducted by Ferris et al.

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(2013) examined how contextual variables might influence students' ability to benefit from WCF.

Therefore, this study builds up on and extends previous research on WCF in EFL classrooms and fills in a literature gap in the following ways: (1) it considers the various classroom contextual factors that interact and affect students' revision and utilization of WCF; and (b) it particularly attempts to understand and examine the reasons behind students' failure to make use of or benefiting from the provided WCF.

Further, this study adds to previous research by focusing exclusively on EFL graduate students, who come from different educational backgrounds and were pursuing their master's degrees in different disciplines. According to Hyland (2002), student writing in higher education is "at the center of teaching and learning," and it is "a key area in continuing professional development" (p. 2). For these graduate students, writing, as Hyland indicates, is not an "abstract skill, but a core aspect of the epistemological frameworks of our fields and of our identities as academics" (p. 22).

D. Purpose and Research Questions

Focusing on considering the perception of both students and teachers, the purpose of this study is twofold. First, the study aims to understand and examine the reasons why EFL university students, in the same learning context, fail to utilize feedback while others benefit from the provided WCF. Second, through considering the various classroom contextual factors in L2 writing classrooms as those presented in the paradigm proposed by Evans, Hartshorn, McCollum, and Wolfersberger (2010), the study aims to understand and determine the various classroom contextual factors that interact and, at the same, hinder or facilitate the process of benefiting from WCF.

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The study addresses the following two questions:

- 1) From the perspective of both teacher and students, why some EFL university students enrolled in the graduate writing course fail while others benefit from the provided WCF on their essays?
- 2) From the perspective of both teacher and students, what are the various contextual variables that interact and affect EFL students' ability to utilize the provided WCF?

E. Significance of the Study

By addressing the two preceding research questions, the study aims to make a contribution to both practice and researchers. As for practice, understanding the reasons behind students' failing to make use of or benefiting from WCF in EFL classrooms and understanding the various classroom contextual factors that limit or increase the effectiveness of WCF for some learners is a step that will call for teachers' attention to the various factors that occur within the context of their teaching and have to be considered when providing WCF. Besides, drawing teachers' attention to these factors will help and guide them in the process of providing their students with WCF. In fact, shedding the light on the contextual factors that affect any teaching context emphasizes "how feedback can be best delivered by different teachers to suit different learners in different contexts" (Lee, 2011, p. 393).

As for researchers, the study will motivate them to come up with methods that teachers can consider in responding to the various classroom contextual factors to maximize students' effort to benefit from WCF. For example, Evans et al. (2010) present an "innovative instructional methodology specifically designed to improve L2 writing accuracy" (p. 445), which they define as the dynamic WCF.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter examines the nature of error and feedback in EFL writing classrooms, describes the different types of WCF, reviews research on the effectiveness of WCF, and discusses the relation between WCF and classroom contextual factors.

A. Writing in EFL Classrooms

For several EFL learners, writing is not an enjoyable practice, and they try to avoid it because they believe it is a time-consuming activity that requires lots of concentration and determination (Ahmadi et al., 2012; Bruning & Horn, 2000; Deneme, 2011; Kormos, 2012; Salima, 2012). Besides, some learners consider writing a difficult skill since it requires certain L2 background knowledge about “rhetorical organization, appropriate language use or specific lexicon with which they want to communicate their ideas” (Ahmadi et al., 2012, p. 2590). Also, although L2 students believe that writing is “important and are quite certain of its link to success in school and life,” long writings, “evoke in them...mixed reaction.... The motivational balance tilts negatively—toward feelings of anxiety and dread, lack of control, and avoidance” (Bruning & Horn, 2000; p. 26). In fact, such reasons explain why some EFL students commit mistakes while writing in L2.

Salima (2012) indicates that both teachers and students provide several explanations for why students make mistakes when writing in English. According to teachers, students make mistakes because they have poor accuracy level, and they are not aware of the importance of developing their writing skills. However, students claim

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that they commit mistakes because they cannot concentrate while writing, do not have good accuracy level, and do not recognize the importance of acquiring the various writing skills. Salima (2012) indicates that errors in writing require serious consideration since good L2 learners implies good L2 writers. This high status attached to writing is based on the fact that, as Bjork and Rيسانen (1997) mention, it is a “tool for language development, for critical thinking and extension for learning in all disciplines” (as cited in Salima, 2012; p. 319).

B. Error and Feedback

Different perspectives have different definitions to the term error (Ravand & Rasekh, 2011). For example, behaviorists define error as a bad habit that should be eliminated through the process of learning. On the other hand, those who take Chomsky’s stand define error as an “indicator of elements not yet fully acquired or plain lapses in performance” (p. 1136). Both definitions indicate that one’s errors can be controlled or eliminated through teaching and learning. Thus, in EFL contexts, teachers can consider students’ errors to be the result of inadequate knowledge of the rules of L2. In order to overcome this shortage in knowledge, teachers provide learners with feedback, which is a method used in various educational contexts in order to notify learners “whether an instructional response is right or wrong” (p. 1136).

The importance of feedback in educational contexts lies in the fact that it is “crucial for both encouraging and consolidating learning” (Hyland & Hyland, 2006, p. 1). Feedback is continuously seen as a key “component of explicit and form-focused L2 instructions (i.e. instructions that includes grammar rule explanation and metalinguistic analysis)” (Riazantseva, 2012, p. 421). Feedback has motivational (Ahmadi et al., 2012;

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Ravand & Rasekh, 2011), informational, and reinforcing power when provided to students (Ravand & Rasekh, 2011). It is motivational because, through praise, it increases a certain behavior, informational because it provides learners with specific information to alter a behavior, and reinforcing because it “may specifically reward or punish very particular prior behaviors, e.g. a particular spelling error” (Ravand & Rasekh, 2011, p. 1136). Because of the important role that feedback plays in the development of students’ L2 skills, most teachers focus on providing their students with corrective feedback, which is constructive, beneficial, and fruitful.

C. WCF in EFL Writing Classrooms

Within EFL writing classrooms, WCF, regardless of its form, possesses the three aforementioned influential roles: motivational, reinforcing, and informational. Peer-responses, marginal or endnotes comments, rubrics, minimal marking through the use of codes to identify an error, tape recording some of the remarks, and electronic feedback through emails or using Microsoft Word comment function are all different techniques that writing teachers can use to provide corrective feedback to students (Ferris, 2003; Hyland, 2003; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Peterson & McClay, 2010). Hyland (2003) mentions that providing students with feedback is often thought of “as one of the ESL writing teachers’ most important tasks, offering the kind of individualized attention that is otherwise rarely possible under normal classroom conditions” (p. 177).

The role of feedback in writing classrooms started in 1970 where the focus shifted toward the development of learner-centered approaches in first language (L1) writing classrooms in North America (Hyland, 2003). With the shift toward such approaches, teachers were encouraged to follow the “process approach” in writing,

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which, through multiple drafts, urge them to provide students with WCF and recommend revisions through out the writing process “rather than at the end of it” (p. 1). There are two central purposes behind providing students with WCF. Teachers want to encourage some degree of change in the students’ subsequent writings, and they want to give students the chance to notice their errors in writings because, according to Schmidt’s (1990) “noticing hypothesis,” a “language input cannot be available for acquisition unless the learner consciously attends to it. Through noticing input becomes intake” (as cited in Ravand & Rasekh, 2011, p. 1138). Accordingly, by providing students with WCF, teachers are giving EFL learners more control over their writing skills when developing a second draft or when applying what they have learnt from the given feedback in new generated writings. Besides, EFL teachers are encouraging learners to notice their errors by making problematic forms noticeable and are offering them the opportunity for “noticing and consciously analyzing the [marked] linguistic forms” (Riazantseva, 2012, p. 422).

1. Types of WCF

Research has identified several types of WCF that teachers can use when correcting students’ writings. These types can be used to comment on errors in both form and content. Direct WCF is defined as the explicit elimination of the linguistic error, where the correct linguistic form is provided on top or near the error (Ahmadi, et al., 2012; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). In this case, if learners have to write a second draft of the essay, they only need to copy down the correct form (Ferris & Roberts, 2001). Direct WCF is of several forms. For example, teachers can cross out unneeded words, phrases, or morphemes, add and provide the correct words, phrases, or

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morphemes, and might include meta-linguistic explanation where certain grammatical rules and examples are written at the end of students' essays (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). Compared to other forms of direct WCF, meta-linguistic explanation may "produce greater accuracy" (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010, p. 211).

As an alternative, teachers can also provide students with indirect WCF, where they only indicate that an error has happened; they do not provide the correct form. Indirect WCF can be divided into coded feedback and un-coded feedback. Coded feedback points to the exact error through the use of codes that both teachers and students are familiar with. For example, teachers can use the code "ww" if a learner has a wrong word that needs to be corrected. On the contrary, un-coded feedback allows learners to notice a linguistic error because the error is underlined or circled. There is no code or any written comments that help learners recognize the type of error; students are left to diagnose and correct the identified error (Ahmadi, et al., 2012; Brown, 2012; Sampson, 2012).

Some studies favor direct WCF at the expense of indirect WCF and vice versa. For those who call for the use of direct WCF, they argue that this approach to WCF, especially with lower proficiency students, "reduces the kind of confusion that can result when students fail to understand or remember the meaning of error codes used by teachers" (Bitchener, 2008, p. 106). Also, direct WCF provide students with adequate and satisfactory amount of information that help learners in understanding the labeled errors. This kind of information help learners "resolve more complex errors (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). Further, besides being more immediate, direct WCF "offers more explicit feedback on hypothesis that may have been made" (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010, p. 210). On the other hand, indirect WCF approach is thought to promote

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long-term acquisition of the labeled errors. This form of WCF will engage learners in guided learning, problem solving through having to discover the solution for the coded error rather than just copying the correct form, and hypothesis testing, which is a “process that induce deeper internal processing and promote the internalization of correct forms and structures” (Bitchener, 200, p. 105; Sampson, 2012). Besides, noticing a mistake is a major step toward making noticed forms intake. Once these forms become intake and learners produce them with greater ease, “they become routinized” (Sampson, 2012, p. 496). Accordingly, indirect WCF involve learners in the process of editing and revising their own work.

As a matter of fact, choosing the type of WCF, direct or indirect, depends on some factors. For example, the type of error, whether treatable (Ferris, 2011), i.e. can be easily corrected when recognized by students, such as subject-verb agreement, or untreatable (Ferris, 2011), i.e. it requires learners “to use acquired knowledge to make corrections,” such as word choice, plays a role in deciding whether to use direct or indirect WCF with learners (Brown, 2012, p. 863). Also, which type of WCF to choose and consider as more effective depends on the goals of the writers and their proficiency level (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010). So basically, teachers solely can decide which type of WCF to use so as to meet the needs of L2 learners.

Further, when providing students with WCF, teachers have to consider not only the type of feedback, direct or indirect, but also the scope of feedback, which is the number of errors addressed; this can be either focused or unfocused (Brown, 2012; Ellis et al., 2008). Focused feedback targets “only one or two linguistic forms or structures” (Bitchener, 2012). Therefore, it is more of a selective approach, where teachers select or focus on certain linguistic forms when providing students with WCF. According to Ellis

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(2005), focused WCF is “more effective with lower proficiency learners because it places a lighter intentional load on their processing capacity” (as cited in Bitchener, 2012, p. 856). In contrast, unfocused feedback is more of a comprehensive approach, where the teacher provides WCF on a wide range of linguistic forms or structures. According to Sampson (2012), providing students with selective, focused WCF is more effective than providing them with comprehensive, unfocused WCF because learners might find the latter frustrating and depressing.

D. Disagreements and Controversies on the Effectiveness of WCF

A great deal of research has continuously examined the effectiveness of WCF. The efficacy and value of WCF and its role in improving students’ accuracy in L2 writing has shown varying positions, dividing researchers into anti-WCF and pro-WCF.

1. Opponents of WCF

According to anti-WCF or opponents of the use of WCF in classrooms, WCF is not significantly an effective method that enhances students’ accuracy. Truscott (1996) defines grammar correction as “correction of grammatical errors for the purpose of improving a student’s ability to write accurately” (p. 329). He argues that this form of correction is “a bad idea” (Truscott, 1999, p. 111) and should be “abandoned” (Truscott, 1996, p. 327). Truscott indicates that there are some theoretical and practical possibilities that can explain the failure of WCF. For example, sometimes teachers, especially non-natives, fail to recognize students’ error, and if they identify it, “they still may not have a good understanding of the correct use” (p.350) because questions related to grammar can be hard “even for experts.” Further, if teachers do find the error

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and understand it, they might not be able to provide students with effective WCF because of the load of work that they have.

Another reason for the failure of WCF is the miscommunication between teachers and learners. Because teachers do not know why students make a particular mistake, they might provide them with unclear WCF. Lee (2008) claims that, sometimes, learners with low proficiency level in L2 might be frustrated and confused because their teachers' WCF can be unclear and difficult to understand. Also, students might benefit from WCF for short-term assignment, such as writing a second draft of an essay. However, because of miscommunication, students might commit the same mistake in long-term assignments for they did not comprehend or process the given WCF (Truscott, 1996). In a study conducted by Robb, Ross, and Shortreed (1986), although learners were provided with different forms of WCF: direct, coded, and uncoded, no significant differences were found in students' writings in regard to linguistic accuracy by the end of the course (as cited in Truscott, 1996, p. 331). Besides, in another study conducted by Sheppard (1992), it was found out that students given WCF did not perform better than their counterparts in relation to verb forms or complexity in writing (as cited in Truscott, 2004, p. 341).

Polio, Fleck, and Leder (1998) claim that WCF "isn't beneficial to second language writing" (p. 46). In the study conducted by Polio et al., they examined "whether or not English-as-a-second-language (ESL) students edit for sentence-level errors during revision and whether or not additional editing instruction helps reduce sentence-level errors in revised essays" (p. 43). Sixty-five undergraduate and graduate ESL students participated in the research. They found out that students' linguistic accuracy improved for both control and experimental groups over the semester and

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when revising draft. However, the experimental group, which received additional WCF, did not perform “any better” compared to control group.

Kepner (1991) studied the relation between two different types of WCF and the role they played in the development of writing skills in terms of both grammar and content. Sixty students enrolled in intermediate Spanish classrooms participated in the study. Participants were randomly assigned to experimental group, which received explicit WCF, and control group, which did not receive WCF. Kepner, after 12 weeks, found out that there is no difference between both groups. As Kepner postulates, “the consistent use of L2 teachers' written error-corrections combined with explicit rule reminders as a primary medium of written feedback to...L2 student writing is ineffective for promoting the development of writing proficiency in the L2” (p. 310).

Researchers who oppose the use of WCF argue that it is not only useless, but also sometimes it might be harmful to the learning process. Truscott (1996) mentions that providing students with WCF can be stressful. Stress hinders the learning process because learning is most successful “when students are relaxed and confident and enjoying their learning” (p. 354). Also, Kepner (1991) adds that WCF harms the complexity of students' writings. Students who do not receive WCF are likely to write more than those who receive WCF; the latter group becomes less motivated because of the disturbing presence of the red ink all over the written essay (Truscott, 1996). Further, Truscott adds that students who seriously and carefully consider WCF when reviewing their writings will spend and waste too much time on this process. This is harmful because time and energy can be spent on more important writing concerns.

2- Supporters of WCF

Other research, on the other hand, has provided ample evidence in support of the implementation of various types of WCF in writing classrooms (Ahmadi et al., 2012; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Chandler, 2003, Ellis et al., 2008; Ferris, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001). According to Ferris (2003), the question whether WCF helps students or no has one answer, which is yes. Ferris adds that through the past 10-15 years, research investigations revealed that “teacher feedback certainly can and often does help students writers to improve their writing from one draft to the next and over time” (p. 28). Thus, as Ellis et al. (2008) argue, WCF is an effective and valuable strategy that should be used in EFL contexts. Its effectiveness is realized through its contribution to students’ knowledge of L2 and the use of target language forms (Riazantseva, 2012).

In the study conducted by Ferris (2006), where 92 ESL students and three teachers participated, she found out that students, through utilizing both teachers’ direct and indirect WCF, were able to successfully edit their essays. Students made “statistically significant progress” (p. 97) in decreasing the number of errors between first and last essay assignment during the semester. Also, Chandler (2003) mentions that, teacher’s WCF lessens students’ error in subsequent writings. In his study, students in the experimental group, who received WCF and were asked to edit their essays, “showed a significant increase” (p. 279) in their accuracy compared to control group, which didn’t receive WCF. This finding was also realized in the study conducted by Fathman and Whalley (1990), where they noticed that students who received WCF were able to edit their own texts; fewer grammatical errors were recognized in the essays of these learners (as cited in Ferris & Roberts, 2001, p. 163).

Providing students with WCF is both educationally and psychologically

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important. WCF not only helps students develop their writing skills, but it also motivates them to complete the assigned writing task. Actually, for several L2 learners, writing is considered a difficult skill since it requires certain L2 background knowledge about “rhetorical organization, appropriate language use or specific lexicon with which they want to communicate their ideas” (Ahmadi et al., 2012, p. 2590). In the study conducted by Ahmadi et al., (2012), the accuracy level of students who received direct and indirect WCF on both participle phrases and resumptive pronouns was significantly greater compared to their counterparts. This finding is also supported by the study conducted by Ferris and Roberts (2001). Ferris and Roberts noticed that there is a “substantial highly significant differences” (p. 176) between feedback and non-feedback group. The feedback group outperformed non-feedback group.

Further, based on the study he conducted, Sampson (2012) mentions that WCF, regardless of its type, supports learners in “recognizing and correcting errors in their written work, and producing correct forms in subsequent pieces of work” (p. 494). Also, Bitchener, Young, and Cameron (2005), based on the research they conducted where 53 adults learners received WCF, realized that learner’s accuracy increased when WCF is present. Students’ accuracy level improved is the use of past tense and definite articles. Also, they suggest that providing students with various types of WCF accompanied with teacher-student conference is noteworthy. Besides, a study conducted by Bitchener (2008) indicated that, when 75 low intermediate international ESL students in Auckland received WCF on their essays, their accuracy level improved in terms of using definite and indefinite articles (the and a). Moreover, this outperformance of the experimental group was recognized not only in writing second drafts of corrected essays, but also it was retained 2 months later. Teachers are constantly concerned with the skills and

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competencies that their students will learn and acquire. Hence, EFL teachers provide learners with WCF on their essays in an attempt to help them know and identify their mistakes so as to avoid them next time.

The importance of WCF and the need for employing it in EFL contexts is also based on the fact that learners ask for it. Most students expect teachers to provide them with WCF, value and appreciate teachers' WCF, pay attention to it, and prefer it compared to other forms of feedback, such as peer feedback or oral feedback (Casanave, 2004; Ferris, 2003; Ferris & Roberts, 2001; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Moreover, students believe that the comments and corrections should address all aspects of their text, and that WCF is helpful even if they fail to incorporate it in their subsequent writings and see actual improvements (Casanave, 2004; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). As a matter of fact, some learners "may feel resentful" if teachers do not provide them with WCF (Ravand & Rasekh, 2011, p. 1138). Therefore, in an attempt to fulfill these needs and expectations, teachers have to consider the process of providing students with WCF to be an "ethical obligation" (Evans et al., 2010, p. 448).

Because of the relatively important status of WCF in EFL contexts, several scholars advocate some principles that aid teachers in increasing the efficacy of their provided WCF. Based on two questionnaires that were given to 24 teachers and 60 students, Salima (2012) mentions that, in order to increase the value of WCF, there are certain steps that both teachers and students should take. Teachers have to motivate EFL students to read and write, encourage them to learn from their mistakes that are indicated through WCF, select writing topics that are of interest to learners, and "look for new techniques and strategies" that urge students' to write (p. 326). As for learners, they have to take writing assignments seriously and not to be demotivated if their

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teacher indicates an error.

Additionally, Lee (2011) recommends strategies that are less time consuming and go beyond being teacher-centered. For example, teachers can use a checklist, which guide their WCF and allow them to cover all-important aspects of an essay. Also, teachers can provide learners with a combination of various types of WCF, which allows them to take students' proficiency level and error type into consideration. Further, teachers can reduce the amount of writing assignments. This step is an advantage with dual phases. The workload of teachers will be lessened because they will not be required to correct various essays, and they will get the time to consider each essay in-depth. It also gives students the chance to write multiple drafts and have the opportunity to utilize teacher's WCF in revising their writings. Writing multiple drafts give students the option to "develop composing strategies" (p. 390). Further, teachers can involve learners in the assessment process. When students evaluate their colleagues' writings, they are more likely to "become more conversant with the requirements of different writing tasks. They also develop a linguistic discourse for discussing their writing" (p. 392).

The suggestions Salima (2012) and Lee (2011) propose highlight an important factor that influence WCF, which is individual differences. Kromos (2012) indicates that "the impact of individual differences on the process of second language writing and the written product has been a neglected area of research" (p. 390). Motivation, proficiency level, and students' needs, etc. represent some of facets that constitute individual differences. This variable is one among the various contextual variables that may affect WCF.

E. WCF and Contextual Variables

Although providing students with WCF is central to the development of their L2 accuracy and writing skills, L2 students are confronted with serious challenges in developing these skills. There are various contextual variables, such as learner, situational, and methodological, that need to be taken into consideration within the total context of teaching to ensure the effectiveness of the provided WCF. According to Lee (2011), “there is no one-size-fits-all approach to feedback” (p.380). Teachers have to “examine their teaching context and students’ needs and deliberate on the best possible approaches to guide their feedback practices.” Also, as Goldstein (2006) argues, if teachers “concentrate their examinations on the shape of feedback alone, [they] will miss the incredible complexity of factors that interact with each other as students write, teachers comment, and students revise with this commentary” (p. 203). Evans et al. (2010) provide teachers with a paradigm that considers the various contextual variables within any L2 writing context (Figure 1)

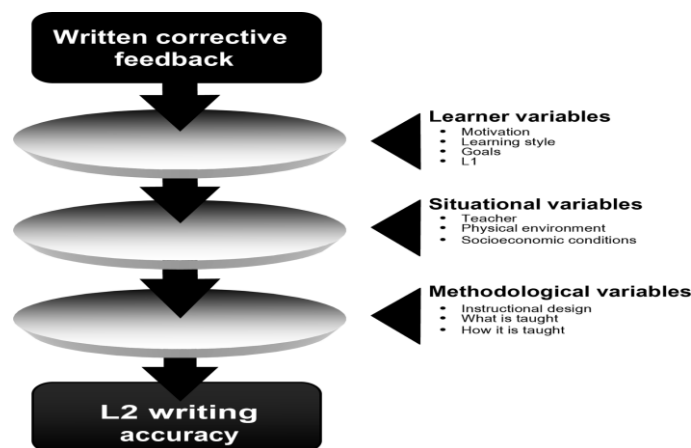


Figure 1: Evans et al. (2010) paradigm

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1. Learner variables

Learner variables are related to all things that learners bring with them to the learning experience. This consists of students' L1, motivations, goals, beliefs, nationality, cultural identity, achievement or proficiency level, socioeconomic status, attitudes, time constraints, responsibilities, and views of roles for both themselves and teachers (Evans et al., 2010; Goldstein, 2006; Ravand & Rasekh, 2011). Further, based on summarizing other research, Goldstein (2006) mentions that, "the feeling that the teacher's feedback is not valid or is incorrect, a receptivity to or resistance to revision, a distrust of the teacher's content knowledge, [and] a mismatch between how the teacher responds and the students' expectations for response" are all additional learner variables that impact the process of revising after receiving WCF. According to Li and Li (2012), individual differences, an under-researched area in WCF, "may have played a role in the controversies [among learners] in WCF empirical studies" (p. 39).

The notion of individual differences and its relation to L2 learning has been receiving the attention of several researchers since 1960 (Dörnyei, 2005; Pawlak, 2012). There is an agreement that the differences realized among L2 learners in acquiring L2 is the result of individual variations that account for the fact that some learners are highly successful while others are not. When involved in learning L2, students enter the classroom with a range of cognitive, affective, and social variables. As described by Pawlak (2012, p. xx), learners carry with them a "personal baggage," which highly affects how they embark the learning process. Adapting this term, one can identify that the personal baggage of every L2 learner consists of factors related to age, maturation, sex, learning style, learning strategy, motivation, attitude, language aptitude, anxiety, creativity, beliefs, self-esteem, personality, temperament, mood and first language

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(Brown, 2000; Dörnyei, 2005; Pawlak, 2012; Saville-Troike, 2006). Accordingly, individual differences, as defined by Dörnyei (2005) refer to “dimensions of enduring personal characteristics that are assumed to apply to everybody and on which people differ by degree. Or, in other words, they concern stable and systematic deviations from a normal blueprint” (p. 4). An important aspect to keep in mind about individual differences is that they are not stable and context-independent. Rather, individual differences factors “enter into some interaction with the situational parameters” (Dörnyei, 2005, p. 218). The L2 context in which learning is taking place should be taken into consideration because, as Ellis (2004) mention, “the role of individual learner factors is influenced by the specific setting in which learning takes place and the kinds of tasks learners are asked to perform in the L2” (as cited in Dörnyei, 2005, p. 218).

When it comes to writing, as cited in Kormos (2012), Kellogg (1996) explains that, individual differences play a significant role in L2 writing. Kellogg proposes a model, where he mentions that writing consists of three major interactive and recursive processes: formulation, where writers plan the content of their writing and translate their ideas into words, execution, where writers start with the actual writing process either through handwriting or text-typing, and monitoring, where writers check their text and ensure that their intentions are expressed clearly and appropriately. According to Kellogg (1999), “individual differences might play a role in every stage of the writing process” (as cited in Kormos, 2012, p. 392) through motivational variables and cognitive factors. Thus, individual differences can have a great influence on the overall quality of the final written product.

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2. Situational variables

Situational variables, as Evans et al. (2010) define it, “include everything that shapes the learning context beyond what can be attributed specifically to the learner or to the instructional methodology” (p. 450). Goldstein (2006) refers to these variables as “contextual factors.” Situational variables consist of teachers’ motivations, priorities, workload, instructional philosophy, personality, attitudes toward students, and competencies, physical environment of the classroom, political condition, and economic condition.

3. Methodological variables

Methodological variables are related to “what is taught and how is it taught” (Evans et al., 2010). It is a matter of focusing on what should be corrected, in what way, and how often. Accordingly, the methodological variables allow teachers to decide upon the type of WCF, scope of WCF, specificity of feedback, which is “the level of information presented in feedback messages” (Ravand & Rasekh, 2011, p. 1140), and complexity of feedback. Thus, as Evans et al. postulate, there should be an alignment between the instructional activities, that is they should have “appropriate sequencing, effective pacing, or adequate practice and repetition” in order to increase the learners’ chances to benefit from teachers’ WCF.

These three major classroom contextual factors, learners, methodological, and situational, that exist in almost all teaching contexts, interact and affect the way teachers provide learners with WCF, the way students’ respond to these WCF, and the way students’ employ the provided WCF when revising their essays. According to Evans et al. (2010), “Rather than asking whether to provide WCF, the more essential question is

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how we help our students write more accurately in their unique learning context” (p. 446). This can be realized through examining the contextual factors that occur in the context of teaching, especially that these variables “influence teacher commentary and student revision” (Goldstein, 2006, p. 185). Therefore, as Schwartz and White (2000) suggest, when addressing the issue of WCF, we should take a “multidimensional view of feedback” where all three variables, learner, situational, and methodological, are considered (as cited in Ravand & Rasekh, 2011, p. 1142).

There is a clear paucity in research when it comes to the role that classroom contextual factors, mainly among learners in EFL classrooms, play in determining the usefulness of the provided WCF, and the reasons why students fail to utilize it. Several teachers provide students with WCF, but some still fail to benefit from applying it. According to Goldstein (2006), “The research has largely been noncontextual and nonsocial, focused largely on texts and concluded within a linear model of teacher respond and student revise...however there are a good many factors that probably play an interactive role” (p. 185) in how WCF is provided by teachers and how it is recognized and tackled by students. Besides, Lee (2011) mention that future research should focus on the contextual factors that affect teachers’ WCF to ensure that it is delivered in a way that meets the different needs of students in various educational contexts. Thus, as Goldstein mentions, “it is the unique constellation and interaction of variables...that must be looked at to truly understand what happens in the commentary and revision process” (p. 203).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

The study followed an exploratory qualitative multiple case design so as to get the chance to look closely at individual learners and understand the reasons why some students fail to use while others benefit from the provided WCF. The decision to conduct a qualitative research study was based on the premise that, as Yin (2009) mentions, such methodology “investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context” (p. 18). Further, deciding on a multiple-case study design was based on the fact that the aim of the study was to cover the contextual factors that are relevant to the phenomenon under study, which is WCF, and wanted to explore the differences and similarities within and between cases.

B. Population, sample, and context

The course English 300: “Writing in the Disciplines,” ENG 300, is a graduate course offered by the English Department at the American University of Beirut and should be taken by all applicants who do not fulfill the English Language Proficiency Requirement regardless of the graduate program they are enrolled in. As specified in the university Graduate Catalogue (2014-2015; p. 37), graduate applicants should achieve the following grades depending on the test they take in order to demonstrate evidence of English language proficiency:

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Test	ELPR Score for Graduate Students	Validity
TOEFL (computer-based)	250	2 years
TOEFL (paper and pencil)	583	2 years
TOEFL (internet-based)	97	2 years
EEE	530	1 year
IELTS	7.0	2 years
GRE General (Verbal Part)	147 (or 410)	5 years
GMAT (Verbal Part)	25	5 years

Table 1: English Language Proficiency Requirement

However, applicants should take ENG 300 course if they fail to score the required grade and achieved the following scores:

Score on English Language Proficiency Test				English Language Course
Computer-based TOEFL	Paper-based TOEFL	Internet-based TOEFL	EEE	
230–249	573–582	88–96	500–529	English 300

Table 2: ENG 300 Grade

Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to start with data collection was obtained by the end of the spring semester of 2013. Three sections of ENG 300 course were offered during the fall semester of 2014. A different teacher taught every section, which had around 16 students, but all sections followed the same syllabus. According to the course syllabus, ENG 300 is a course designed to help students with their writing in English at a graduate level. The class met once a week for two hours and fifteen minutes.

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An invitation letter was sent via email to ENG 300 teachers asking them to voluntarily participate in the study (Appendix A: Invitation Letter). Also, a consent form was attached to the same email (Appendix B: Consent Form for Teachers). Only one section was selected based on its teacher's agreement to participate in the study. Selecting one section was important for the purpose of the study because it allowed the researcher to ensure that the situational factors and methodological factors were the same for all participants. This section was taught by Dr. Angela (pseudonymous name), associate professor, who received her PhD in composition and rhetoric. Further information about the teacher's background is covered in the findings section.

Six students voluntarily agreed to participate in the study. Students were informed, face-to-face, about all the pertinent information of the research. A consent form was sent to them by email (Appendix C: Consent Form for Students), and they were asked to reply back within a week indicating their interest to participate in the study.

Student participants were first-year master's university students enrolled during the fall semester of 2014 in one section of the course ENG 300. According to university rules and regulations, all graduate students registered in this course are allowed to take only one course related to their major. This course is a pre-requisite for students to continue with their graduate studies. Thus, passing the course was highly important for all participants. This is a pass or no pass course. Students were guaranteed to pass the course if they followed the ten items listed in the syllabus under the title: "Course Grading Contract" (Appendix D: Course Grading Contract). These six students came from varied first language background: Arabic, Armenian, and Kurdish. Also, they were from different majors: engineering management, public health, civil engineering,

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finance, and physics. Table. 3 provides an overview of the characteristics of the six participants taken from a background questionnaire that they completed at the beginning of the study.

C. Role of researcher/interviewer

The role of the researcher, who also conducted the interviews with the participants, was to identify common themes and point out substantial differences or similarities that may emerge from the examination of different cases. Also, the researcher intended to provide a thick and thorough description of the various classroom contextual factors that coexist in one specific context and interact in a way that led some students to fail while others benefit from WCF provided by their teacher.

Understanding the phenomenon under study was realized from the emic perspective (participants' view point) and the etic perspective. As described by Gall, Gall, and Borg (2010), "researchers obtain the emic perspective through informal conversation with the case study participants" (p. 340). As for the etic perspective, it is defined as the researcher perspective of the phenomenon being studied; this perspective helps researchers "make conceptual and theoretical sense of the case and to report the findings so that their contribution to the literature is clear to other researchers."

D. Data collection

The data collected included data from student background questionnaires, one or two texts per student with teacher's WCF and revisions, the two essay prompts used to generate the texts, open-ended interview with the six student participants, and an open-ended interview with the teacher. As indicated by Yin (2009), the use of more than one

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source of evidence in a case-study design is realized as a major strength because the findings of the study are supported by more than one source of evidence, which in turn overcome potential problems of construct validity. Actually, it allows for “the development of converging lines of inquiry, a process of triangulation.... which [makes] finding and conclusion...more convincing and accurate” (p. 116).

1. Student background questionnaire

During the first meeting with the six student participants, they completed a questionnaire about their language backgrounds. The background questionnaire was used to describe the participants’ demographic details, which were not used as variables for analysis.

Students Name (Pseudonymous)	Gender	Age	Nationality	Major	First Language	Years of Learning English-Schooling	Languages Proficient at Speaking-other than English-
Araz	Female	25	Armenian	Engineering Management	Armenian	5	Arabic-French-Spanish
Aya	Female	21	Lebanese	Finance	Arabic	10	French
Jenifer	Female	24	Lebanese	Civil Engineering	Arabic	7	French
Kamal	Male	37	Iraqi	Public Health/Health Management	Kurdish	8	Arabic
Lora	Female	21	Lebanese	Physics	Arabic	18	
Sara	Female	24	Lebanese	Civil Engineering	Arabic	11	French

Table 3: Students' Background Information

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2. Student texts

The fall semester started on September the 4th. The interviews were conducted with the students between October the 4th and the 10th. During this time, they had written one informal essay with no revisions and a formal essay with two or three revisions based on teacher's WCF (Appendix E: Essays' Prompts). Both writing tasks were not timed and were required as part of the course curriculum. As for the formal essay, it was based on previously assigned readings that were discussed in class.

3. Open-ended interview

Open-ended interview questions were conducted with both the six student participants and their teacher (Appendix F: Interview Questions). The interviews were designed to examine and understand the issues raised in both research questions.

The interviews, ranging from 30 to 60 minutes, were audio- recorded and complemented with field notes. The use of in-depth interviews was based on the idea that these interviews allowed the researcher to collect a “substantial amount of data ... about the specific case or cases selected to represent the phenomenon” (Gall, Gall, & Borg, 2010; p. 339). They gave the researcher the opportunity to understand, through the words used by the participants, students and teacher, their own perspective and beliefs about the reasons that enabled them to benefit or fail to benefit from provided WCF. Also, through these interview questions, students got the chance to reflect on their own understanding and beliefs about written corrective feedback.

E. Data findings and analysis

The analysis of the transcribed interviews followed the Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994). According to this framework, the process of analyzing the data involved several stages. The stages involved are diagrammatically shown in Figure 2.

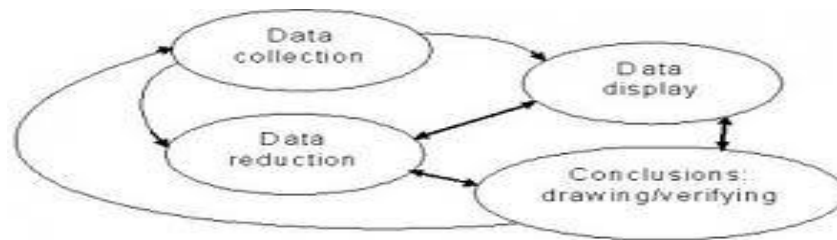


Figure 2: Components of Data Analysis

According to this model, analysis is a continuous process. The different stages involved constantly impact each other and are conducted simultaneously.

Data Collection: As described earlier, multiple sources of evidence were used for data collection.

Data Display: The interviews were transcribed and organized in a form of a narrative text. The main focus was that the data were organized into a display that simplified and facilitated the process of drawing conclusions.

Data Reduction: This step was not done in one shot. New categories and themes emerged constantly. This process involved reading over the transcribed interviews and highlighting concepts. The data were coded or categorized. In addition to writing notes, the researcher continuously looked for frequently used phrases or words, or for unexpected or salient things mentioned by participants. Then, to give a deeper meaning

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to the data, similar categories or codes were clustered together under one theme.

Content and thematic analysis continuously took place during this stage.

Conclusions: Drawing / Verifying: Drawing conclusions was possible when the data were clearly displayed. As a matter of fact, the ongoing process of data reduction and data display helped verify the drawn conclusions.

In addition to using the Components of Data Analysis: Interactive Model proposed by Miles and Huberman (1994), a narrative construction approach to organize information about the participants and display the data of the study was used. The themes that emerged from analyzing the data were used as the headings for the constructed narratives. As defined by Barone (2007), “narrative construction is an approach to social research in which data are configured into any of a variety of diachronic, or storied, formats” (p. 454). Also, Ferris et al. (2013) indicate that the narrative construction approach is a “systematic and integrated way to organize the various pieces of information about each individual writer and then to compare our findings across our...study participants” (p. 315). Barone (2007) adds that the use of narrative construction gives researchers the chance to “reconsider [their] intended readership” (p. 462) because

Unlike traditional research texts, storied texts often appear to be written for (or at least accessible to) school people residing within the research setting whose educational beliefs, values, and practices are portrayed, or toward school people in analogous settings who might gain sustenance from the sounds of voices similar to their own (p. 460-461).

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CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

This chapter briefly describes the general patterns that emerged from the interviews conducted with the six student participants. Next, it presents the case study narratives about the six participants and their teacher. Finally, a response to the two research questions that guided the study is presented.

As for analyzing the cases, each student participant case was analyzed separately. Analysis was based on the interview conducted individually with each student and on comparing students' multiple drafts of the same essay. It should also be noted that, based on the outcomes of the analysis, the six student participants were divided into two groups: those who applied the received feedback when they wrote a second draft, and those who did not.

A. General patterns in student data

1. Self-editing processes

In the interview, most student participants said that they revised their written text several times before submitting it. Some of them indicated interest in peer-feedback. One of the six participants, Lora, mentioned that she applied previously learnt rules, grammar rules, while editing her text: "I edit structure and approach, i.e. technical issues like grammar and punctuation.

2. Previous experience with English

Some participants stated that their English proficiency level affected their writing and utilization of WCF. Some, like Araz, expressed distress about ways she believed her previous English experience had failed her. Also, Aya conveyed that her level in English affected her self-confidence. As to instructions, some participants specified that they did not understand it, like Kamal: “I prefer simple language so I can understand and apply the feedback received. Once I did not understand what the teacher exactly wanted from me.”

3. Role of WCF

All participants indicated their strong belief in the role that WCF played in improving their writings. They appreciated teacher’s WCF and believed that it allowed their texts to be academically accepted. For example, Aya mentioned that “ [WCF] will make my language acceptable and appropriate within this academic community.” Interestingly, all six participants specified that they prefer feedback to be unfocused and direct. They believed that unfocused feedback was important because all aspects of their writing were being checked through teacher’s WCF: grammar, punctuation, ideas, cohesiveness, coherence, citation, and organization. Also, they preferred direct feedback because it is easier and faster to apply; they did not want to put an effort in guessing why what they wrote was incorrect. Sara thought it is better if the teacher correct the error instead of leaving her to guess the correct form: “Better if teacher corrects the mistake. And corrects everything.”

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4. Student attitude

All six participants clearly reflected how their attitude influenced their ability to write and apply WCF. Some of them expressed chagrin about finding themselves placed in the ENG 300 course. For example, Lora said that: “I do not feel that this course will, in any way, affect my affiliation to the university. It will not help me, academically, in being part of this academic community.” Some others believed that this course helped them become part of the new academic community. Aya indicated: “[The ENG 300 course] will help me express myself easily while writing in English. It will make my language acceptable and appropriate within this academic community.” Also, student participants specified that the anxiety that they felt about their situation- being required to take this course and pass it to continue with their master’s studies- affected their motivation to write, like Araz. Interestingly, some others focused on their goals and needs in order to overcome their anxiety level. Sara specified that: “at the very beginning, the fact that I had to take this course made me anxious and nervous.... But later this attitude changed. It is a course that I have to take and will learn something from it after all.”

B. Case study narratives

Case study narratives are introduced for both student participants and the teacher. These narratives provide a profound description of the student participants and their teacher.

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1. Case study narratives about the six participants

In this section, a case study narrative about each of the six student participants is presented. Despite the commonalities among the participants, each one of them represented a case worth a close and thorough examination.

a. Araz: discern WCF

Background information

Araz, who is an Armenian female student born and raised in Lebanon, was in her first semester as a master's student studying engineering management. Armenian was her mother tongue, and English was her fourth foreign language as she spoke Arabic, French, and Spanish. She only studied English for five years at school. For this, when she was asked to describe her proficiency level in English, she indicated that she is weak: "My vocabulary is very weak, and my words are very simple. Putting my ideas in a formal and professional language is difficult for me." She was confident that her weakness in English affected the way she writes because this obliged her to use very simple language to be able to express her ideas clearly: "[This] hardens things to me because sometimes it takes me a lot to express my ideas; I might use several words to discuss something that can be expressed in one word."

Attitude and motivation

Despite her weakness in English, Araz was certain that the ENG 300 course was not much of help and was not related to her major. She was worried about her language development, grammar and vocabulary, which she believed that this course did not enhance. Also, she was definite that the course affected her motivation since it was

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“delaying [her] master’s work.” She was able to take only one major course with this course. Yet, since it is a “compulsory” course, she was ready to “learn from it.”

During the interview, Araz mentioned that she was highly motivated to write; she even led several groups on social websites, like Facebook. She stated that: “Writing is an art. It is a personal act that has no limit.” She explained that, when writing is of personal and informal nature, she wrote endlessly with ease. Her motivation aroused from the fact that her thoughts, beliefs, and identity were comfortably articulated.

Editing methods

In the interview, Araz was able to show that she followed an oversimplified way for editing her writings: “I just remove what was written previously and rewrite in the correct way based on [comments].” Actually, this was clearly reflected when she wrote a second draft of her writing assignment. She minimally performed any corrections beyond what the teacher had suggested. She identified what she referred to as her strategy or principle that she follows for every writing: “I would like to rewrite again in my own way considering the instructor’s input. I would like for the essays to have my own identity rather than the instructor’s. This is a strategy or principle I follow for my writings.” Compared to other participants, Araz did not show any interest in peer-feedback. She even indicated that her attitude toward the course made her lose interest in teacher-student conference: “It is just a course that I have to pass...not related to my major. I was placed in this course because of a grade, which I do not understand...[so] no for one-on-one conference.”

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Opinion about WCF

Regardless of her negative attitude toward the course, Araz was positive that feedback helped her in improving her writings and making it acceptable in the academic community and boosting her proficiency level in English. She appreciated all kind of feedback that locates her mistakes. She identified feedback to be “the result of the instructor’s kind efforts to read about what I have to say.” Araz explained that WCF aimed to make her writings “more suitable in the academic world...[where] there must be some kinds of standard disciplines that we need to write within these boundaries. So [teachers] would see where we are in these terms and try to get us closer to a certain discipline.”

Araz was able to clearly describe the type and scope of feedback that she prefers. She welcomed feedback on grammar, ideas, organization, clarity, and cohesiveness. However, she preferred WCF to be straightforward, direct, short, and summarized: “Lengthy and long WCF does not motivate me. Teacher does not need elaborate. If I do not understand I will ask her for, then she can elaborate.” She appreciated feedback that commented on her strategy to answer the question and how she “came up with the answer.”

During the interview, she was able to differentiate between three types of feedback: “instructive, subjective, and objective”, which she named and identified. As for the instructive, Araz defined it as the type of feedback that “added value to what I have written. Positive feedback that reinforces what I have said.” For Araz, subjective feedback represented an uninteresting and unacceptable feedback that signified a “personnel opinion given by the teacher...an idea that represents a different background or perception that I do not agree with, and not of my own interest.... A way for the

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teacher to say think like this and not like that.” She mentioned that: “When I write an essay, there is something personnel that go into my essay. I want to write it in my own way.” Regarding the objective type, she defined it as the feedback given on “grammar mistakes and mistakes related to the cohesiveness of my essay. I do benefit from and will apply in all drafts.”

Throughout the interview, Araz restated that she felt that there are several factors that indicate whether she will or will not apply teacher’s WCF. These factors made writing a second draft troubling rather than joyful for her. Again here, she raised the issue of refusing any kind of what she defined as “subjective feedback.” She found no interest in such a feedback, which she disregarded and did not follow. Also, she indicated that the length of the comment affected her motivation to write. She even felt that teacher’s style affected her response to WCF: “Sometimes the class tends to be boring!”

Summary/ analysis

Araz represented a unique case. For her, writing is a motivating skill. To write successfully, she believed that writing should be spontaneous, expressive, and reveals the identity of the author. She was convinced that the more the text was related to the writer, the higher the chances for it to be written perfectly and flawlessly. For this, she felt that writing academic papers was some how troubling because a certain level of restriction is placed on her ideas and terms. This explained her strength and fortitude when writing informal texts. She believed that as a writer, she has the complete right to express her voice and identity; this what made her texts unique. Because of this, Araz categorized WCF. She explained that when WCF is provided, she had the ability to

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classify it and took only what she wanted and what she indicated as useful. How much she needed feedback defined the degree of utilizing it. She added that teacher's style and feedback were associated. The style of the teacher affected her use of WCF.

Upon comparing between the drafts of the same essay, it was realized that Araz employed minimal effort in re-writing her texts. She did not go beyond teacher's WCF. Surprisingly, she commented on every WCF provided by the teacher. She dealt with WCF as flexible guidelines. For example, Dr. Angela commented: "Is this accurate," Araz noted: "For me, yes." From comparing her drafts, it was clearly shown that Araz's application of feedback was basically based on her belief in the importance and purpose of the feedback provided. She was very selective in applying WCF.

b. Aya: language dilemma

Background information

Aya was a 21-year-old master's students studying finance at the American University in Beirut. She was during her first semester. Aya, who was born and raised in Lebanon, received her school and undergraduate education in French. Arabic was her first language, and she learnt English as a second foreign language at school for ten years. Aya had to take ENG 300 course because she failed in meeting the required grade in the English Entrance Exam. She considered herself a good English learner, who hopes to become a better writer in English through taking the ENG 300 course.

Attitude and motivation

In her interview, unlike other participants, Aya was not annoyed or disappointed from the fact that she had to take the ENG 300 course. She was totally convinced that this course will enhance her English writing skills. She also indicated that this course

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acts as a facilitator that will help her become a member of the new academic community: “I believe that the course will help merge into the university, where communication and transactions are done in English.” Aya was persuaded that the course will make her language acceptable and appropriate within the university and in her discipline. Interestingly, Aya mentioned that she has always been motivated to write, and the fact that she had to apply the provided feedback made her feel that she is “doing something good and this pushes her to write better.”

Editing methods

Compared to other participants, Aya’s ability to explain her editing strategies was limited. When asked about the methods she followed to edit her work, Aya indicated that she went for minimal revision. She dutifully went through the comments and corrections given by the teacher and worked to fix them: “When I receive feedback, I copy- paste my essay on another word sheet and remove the errors following instructions given by the teacher.” Later along the interview, she indicated that she might “revise essay one or two times before submitting [it].”

Opinion about WCF

Aya was thankful and grateful for the fact that her teacher provided her with feedback. She considered it an act of caring: “I think that the feedback is an important act from the part of teachers; it shows that the instructor really cares about your work and she wants you to make progresses.” She declared that feedback sheds the light on her errors and mistakes that she certainly can avoid in other writings. She mentioned that WCF is for her own good, and she enjoyed writing a second draft following

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teacher's comments and corrections. Aya believed that WCF allowed her to write with more confidence because, through feedback, she gets to know her errors and avoid them in consecutive writings. Also, during the interview, she stated that: "Feedback will improve my proficiency level in English. WCF will help me a lot in this new academic community, where all interactions and communications are in English."

As for the type and scope of feedback, Aya indicated that she prefers if the teacher provides her with WCF on both grammar and ideas. For every writing assignment, she expected feedback to cover all aspects of her writing. As for one-on-one conference with the teacher, she denoted that this is the most functional and supportive way of providing her with feedback: "[During teacher-student conferences], there is a direct communication between the learner and the teacher. I can understand exactly where are my faults and how I can improve myself."

Regardless of her intense belief in the role of WCF and in her ability to benefit from it and become a better English learner, Aya indicated that: "the fact that English is a [second] foreign language to me, and the fact that I was in a French school and also in a French university, I am not used to use English in my daily life." She was aware that this is a major factor that might hinder and obstruct her ability to benefit from teacher's WCF.

Summary/ analysis

Aya's case is an interesting one. Being from a different academic background, she recognized this course as the gate through which she can enter to the new academic community. She was persuaded that the first step she had to take to be part of this community was to learn its language in a proper way. For her, learning the language

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was the means through which she can communicate and interact with others within the community. For this reason, she was not disappointed from taking this course. Also, because of her strong belief in the importance of the language, Aya had a high level of confidence in the teacher who taught her this course. She believed that feedback symbolized an act of kindness and caring from the side of the teacher. Further, because she believed that language and ideas are dependent, Aya was extremely concerned. She was afraid that she might not be able to make English part of her identity, which in turn affected her ability to easily and fluently articulate her ideas while writing.

When comparing between the drafts of the same essay, it was realized that Aya was putting lots of effort to apply teacher's WCF. Nevertheless, her second draft was exactly like the first draft but with teacher's comments added. Reading along her drafts showed that she was having hard time organizing and clarifying her ideas. For example, Dr. Angela commented: "This is a better statement of the problem. Start with this?" However, when she wrote second draft, she did not consider this comment as well as all comments that had to do with the organization and clarification of her text: "A good short summary of Canagrajah's work. Consider starting the summary with this?"

c. Jenifer: no for writing!

Background information

Jenifer was during her first semester as a master's student in civil engineering. Arabic was her first mother language. Born and raised in Lebanon, she received her school education and bachelor's degree in the French language. She studied English for only seven years at school. When asked how she evaluated her English proficiency level, she indicated that she was able to understand when someone spoke to her;

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however, when it came to writing, she was sure that she needed “to practice more.”

Jenifer had to take ENG 300 course because she failed to score the required grade in the English Entrance Examination.

Attitude and motivation

Like some of the participants, Jenifer expressed her frustration and disappointment from the fact that she had to take ENG 300 course. She felt she was capable to proceed with her studies without this course. Also, she thought the course was of an assistant at a social level rather than academic level: “this course help me to meet new people from different majors.” Later, throughout the interview, she explained that her distress from the course aroused because she did not like to write: “We all hate to write.” Unlike other participants, she did not find interest in writing. She was clear that her proficiency level in English had a great impact on her motivation to write: “Sometimes I do not feel like writing. Some other time I quickly find all the words and I find it easy to write.”

Editing methods

Jenifer explained that she followed simple and direct editing processes. She made minimal corrections following teacher’s WCF: “I take the feedback of the teacher and try to rewrite the essay according to the feedback given.” Answering a follow up question, she mentioned that she did review her writing assignment two or three times before submitting it. Again here, her English proficiency level comes to surface. She reviewed several times because she wanted to make sure that her ideas were clearly expressed and were comprehensible.

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Opinion about WCF

Regardless of her lack of interest in writing a second draft, Jenifer believed in the importance and usefulness of WCF: “I do not like to write a second draft because I think it is boring.” For her, WCF represented the means that allowed her to write “more precisely,” which in turn affected her ability in “express[ing] the purpose of [her] writing.” She was confident that WCF gave her the chance to write “more concise and more clear essays.” For example, she said that the feedback she received on her second assignment helped her realize that she “generalize some idea... sometimes I have to be more precise while writing.” Also, she mentioned that WCF, whether given on grammar or ideas, gave her the opportunity to present her sentences in “clear and understandable way.” Overall, she trusted that the teacher provided her with WCF to “write in a better English.” She even expressed her astonishment from the fact that, when she followed teacher’s WCF, she “rewrote a text with...the whole structure [being] different,” and she wrote better. She was confident that she learnt from feedback and applied not only in consecutive writings, but also she used “it in other courses.”

During the interview, Jenifer identified that the best way a teacher can provide her with feedback was through writing marginal comments. Answering a follow up question about teacher-student conference, she mentioned that: “I prefer that she writes the comments on the paper and if I have any question I will let her know.” Despite her strong belief in the role of WCF, she stated that the way the teacher commented highly affected her utilization of WCF: “I like the fact when the teacher say it is good but if you said it this way it sound better.” She felt that this style of writing is motivating, especially that, as indicated earlier she hated to write. She was pleased with this form of commenting because she did not “find it as a punishment but rather as a suggestion for a

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better writing.” Actually, Dr. Angela pointed out this issue in the note letter that she wrote to Jenifer: “The summaries you present of the work of Krashen and Canagarajah are evidence of strong reading.... In terms of revision, I suggest that you work on clarifying your text more.”

Summary/ analysis

Jennifer demonstrated that there was a reasonable connection between her ability to write and the topic of writing. The topic defined her ability to write in the first place. To compensate for her frustration from having to take this course, she concentrated on her need to practice in writing. She believed that the practice that she needed in writing was part of and attached to WCF. She was convinced that WCF represented the biggest help that allowed her to develop very-well written academic texts. Her logical reliance on her need provided her with patience to persist and work in this course.

Comparing Jenifer’s drafts revealed that her attempts to rewrite her text were negligible. Although Dr. Angela asked her: “ to push...discussions a little bit more to be more precise,” her second draft was still, to a certain extent, very similar to her first draft. Precision was sensed in the paragraphs were Dr. Angela guided her on how to improve them.

d. Kamal: learning seeker

Background information

Kamal, a general health doctor, was a thirty-seven-years old student pursuing a master’s degree in public health/public management and policy at the American

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University of Beirut. Kamal was from Iraq, and Kurdish is his mother language. Arabic was his first foreign language. English was his second foreign language, which he studied for eight years at school. He took several intensive English courses and preparatory TOEFL courses at the American University of Beirut and at his homeland. When asked to describe his proficiency level in English, Kamal evaluated himself as good. He described his writing ability as good: “As a reader, you will be able to understand my ideas and purpose clearly from my essay.”

Attitude and motivation

During the interview, Kamal mentioned that taking this course was part of his journey of professional development. He was clear that any course he took added to his knowledge and to his personality, even if some information were repetitive. He mentioned that learning has no limit, and he is always motivated to learn: “Have knowledge from the cradle to the grave.” He felt that knowledge and education did not know a limit. For him, learning occurs if one is really motivated and interested in gaining and developing.

Editing methods

Kamal was clear in describing his editing processes. He mentioned that he revised his writings several time. Every time he was asked to edit his writing based on teacher’s WCF, he reviewed it thoroughly and tried to go beyond just applying the comments given by the teacher. Also, he explained that peer-feedback is a very helpful strategy in editing his writing assignments: “Some time I send my essay to a friend to give me his/her opinion about idea that I used in the essay, sentence formation and

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organization of the essay. Peer-feedback is very helpful; it can be clear and exact.”

Kamal’s interest in peer-feedback grew from his attention to his readers. He felt that it is very important if the reader, who knows nothing about the topic, understands it from reading his writing: “I always keep the reader in my mind, and I try to explain to make sure that she/he gets my idea. I do not like to be redundant.”

Opinion about WCF

Kamal indicated that feedback given on his writings is “very useful” because it helps him realize his errors in all aspects of writing: grammar, ideas, organization, coherence, cohesiveness, punctuation, and citation: “I accept feedback on everything that I write, and I do not take it personally. In fact, we are in need for someone to provide us with feedback; it is for our own benefit.” He was sure that feedback “re-shapes” his essays and “makes it better.”

He was clear that WCF helps improve his proficiency level in English, and he learnt a lot from it and applied it in his consecutive writings. Also, he was fine with the idea of discussing his errors publicly in front of the classroom. He believed that, if he committed the same grammatical error several times in the same writing, it is very helpful if the teacher explained the rule on the paper. While answering a follow-up question about teacher-student conference, he felt that such a form of feedback can sometimes be more helpful than WCF: “It allows me to explain my ideas and intentions directly. Also, it gives me the chance to ask her for clarification.”

Despite his strong belief in the role of WCF in enhancing his language proficiency level, Kamal identified that there are certain factors that hinders his ability to benefit from and apply WCF. He indicated that, in certain situations, teacher’s

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language was unclear: “[Teacher] need to use simple language so I can understand and apply the feedback received.” Also, the fact that ENG 300 course was a necessity to continue his master’s study placed him under a certain level of pressure, although he was certain that “I will pass.” Besides, he felt that teacher’s style in the classroom affected his response to WCF: “Sometimes the class [was] boring and lack[ed] some level of interactivity.” Further, he considered that “knowledge about the idea of the essay” was an obstacle. For certain writings, he found difficulty writing a response because the reading was difficult to comprehend.

Summary/analysis

In many ways, Kamal seemed inspired by his desire to learn. Besides enriching his personality, for him, learning and acquiring new information was a necessity because knowledge in the academic community is infinite. His strong confidence in the role of WCF emerged from his belief that it pin pointed errors, which if corrected, allowed him to produce very well written academic texts. Also, specifying the factors that hindered his ability to benefit from WCF indicated that Kamal considered WCF as part of the writing process. For him, WCF did not represent a separate act; every written text that he submitted should be followed by WCF. For this, he insisted that intellectual harmony between him and the teacher and the teacher’s style and way of commenting were highly significant and affected his ability to apply WCF. If these two conditions were not present, he clearly explained that although he believed in the role of WCF, he would not be able to use it in his text.

Kamal’s versions of the same text showed that he was highly motivated to learn from and apply WCF. His first, second, and third drafts were very different in terms of

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ideas' presentation and organization. He went beyond Dr. Angela's comments. For example, he added more citations from the text to backup his ideas, and he provided a reference list.

e. Lora: balance in the use of WCF

Background information

Lora was in her first semester as a master's student at the American University of Beirut studying physics. Born and raised in Lebanon, Arabic was her mother language, and she received her education in English. She learnt English throughout her years of schooling, i.e. for eighteen years. When asked about how she evaluates her proficiency level in English, she indicated that, academically, she judged herself as a good English learner. Failing to score the required grade in the English Entrance Exam, she was obliged to take ENG 300 as a prerequisite to continue her master's study.

Attitude and motivation

Lora expressed her distress from having to take ENG 300 course. Her feelings had a great impact on her attitude, motivation, and response to teacher's WCF. She felt that this course is not of a help of any kind: "I do not feel that this course will, in any way, affect my affiliation to the university. It will not help me, academically, in being part of this academic community." She reached a stage of indifference: "The idea of having to pass this course to continue studying... does not make me anxious, but it obliges me to exert more effort to get things done. However, I feel that I must deal with the situation anyways."

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Regardless of her negative attitude toward the course, Lora was certain that motivation is key to success. She indicated that she is not capable of achieving anything if motivation is not present. She signified that motivation impacts her writing abilities. This was clearly reflected in her opinion about and utilization of WCF.

Editing methods

Through the interview, Lora was able to articulate a straightforward clear insight about her editing methods: “I edit structure and approach, i.e. technical issues like grammar and punctuation. However, I think the concept remains intact.” She expressed high levels of confidence and self esteem in describing her strategies.

Opinion about WCF

During the interview, Lora expressed that she enjoys teacher’s feedback because it helps her realize something about herself that she “have not even notice[d].” This belief, as she explained, is realized from the fact that feedback is “indirectly inferred” from her own writing. She was convinced that teacher’s feedback is basically a second chance for her to rethink about her writing: “It would help me realize mistakes and/or other alternatives.” For this, she was satisfied that she is a student who benefits from feedback and applies it.

As for the type and scope of feedback, Lora specified that she welcomed WCF on both grammar and ideas. She indicated that the best way for a teacher to provide her with WCF is through comparing her multiple drafts because this way she can “know the areas that she is grasping and learning.” However, she did mention a condition for applying and accepting teacher’s WCF. She stated that WCF should not oppose her

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ideas: “Actually, if the comments do not offend the idea I am proposing then its fine, but if it contradicts or negotiates what I believe in then I will find difficulties accepting feedback.” She believed that, as a writer, she wants to guarantee her freedom of expression: “I want to sustain my freedom of writing since it is a way of expression.” She was clear that the way feedback is provided affected the way she applied it. For her to be compliant and edit her writings, she was explicit that feedback should be practical and applicable: “If I agree with the feedback and find it reasonable then I will enjoy writing a second draft. However if I was stubborn that it was perfect then I would definitely not enjoy editing it, that if I edited it.”

Summary/analysis

Lora was moved by her goal and her motivation. She created for herself a motive to overcome her distress from having to take this course. She had her goal ahead of her, and she focused on this goal. She wanted to proceed with her studies, and this was possible only if she passed this course. Also, her excitement about and deep involvement in her written text directed her motives toward focusing on how her thoughts, ideas, and beliefs were articulated. To achieve this, she had no problem in ignoring some of the feedback provided by her teacher. She felt that this was her only way to produce written academic texts that are intense and clear in terms of ideas and content.

Although Lora received very few comments on her first draft, she wrote a second draft that is more detailed and more organized. It was clear that, for her, rewriting a second draft went beyond just applying teacher’s comment; it is an opportunity to produce a piece of writing that is academically more accepted.

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f. Sara: determination to learn

Background Information

Sara was in her first semester as a civil engineering master's student at the American University of Beirut. She was born and raised in Lebanon, where she received all of her schooling and undergraduate studies. She received her education in French, and her mother language was Arabic. As for English, she learnt it as second foreign language for 11 years at school. She even started learning it by herself in order to communicate with her relative, who was living in the United States of America. She was placed in ENG 300 course because she did not receive the required English Entrance Exam grade. She described her proficiency level and writing ability in English to be very good, and she published several articles in her discipline.

Attitude and motivation

At the very beginning of the semester Sara was frustrated and bothered for having to take this course. Later however, she indicated that, eventually, this course will teach her something: "This course will trigger my attention toward research-related-issues, which I might not be familiar with. [Also] I get to meet new people who might be from different countries and this allows me to know how they think. So if the course does not increase my academic knowledge, it will change me personally." Sara, in a response to a question about whether her later attitude affected her motivation to write, she indicated that she will always remain motivated to write: "I am motivated to write. I read a lot, and that helps me. My attitude about the course does not affect my motivation."

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Sara's motivation to write encouraged her to keep her reader in mind while writing: "I do care about the reader. I always keep in my mind that my reader knows nothing about my writing topic, and through my essay he should know everything." Sara made sure to use a language that is simple and understandable to her reader and sentences that are short, clear, and concise. Based on her language background, Sara comprehended that writing in English differs a lot from writing in Arabic or French. She came to believe that simplicity adds to the beauty of writing and attracts the reader: "Based on a French proverb, which indicates that simplicity adds to the beauty of things, when I write in English I stick to simplicity. Doing so will encourage the reader to continue reading."

Editing methods

Throughout her studying years, Sara created her own editing methods that aid her in developing well written and readable pieces of writing. She explained that she always changes the introduction and conclusion during the revision phase because she likes to submit complete writing assignments. She mentioned that, usually when she writes an assignment and before she submits it, she reads it and revises it several times. She realized the importance of rereading and revising her work several times: "I take my time when I write. I revise a lot.... My writing assignments have to be perfect, and I do not like to miss a single detail." This was truly reflected in the note she received from her teacher: "You have written a very complete and specifically articulated draft representing each article.... You put together a coherent discussion." Further, Sara seemed to have developed insights about the advantages of having others look at her

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writings: “The best thing is to give your work to a person who does not know anything about the topic. If he is able to understand everything, then you have done your job.”

Opinion about WCF

Sara welcomed any kind of feedback provided by her teacher. During the interview, Sara specified that she had received “lots of feedback” in her prior education. She expected her teacher to comment on her ideas, organization, vocabulary, and grammar. She believed that teacher’s feedback arose from her own writing. Sara enjoyed writing and revising, even if she was required to do that multiple times: “I write and conduct research so revision on all bases is very important to me.... I am used to receiving feedback.... I write and rewrite, this is normal, and I do not have a problem with any kind of feedback that I receive.”

Sara felt that the best way her teacher can provide her with feedback is to comment on all aspects of her writing (ideas, grammar, organization, and vocabulary). However, if the teacher plans to comment on one thing only, then Sara thought that teacher’s feedback should focus on ideas and content rather than grammar. When it comes to grammar, Sara believed that it is better if the teacher correct the error instead of leaving her to guess the correct form. In addition, Sara suggested that, when she commits the same grammar error several times in one assignment, it is more useful if the teacher explains the rule for her on paper. She preferred feedback on paper compared to a one-on-one conference. Finally, she felt that although she might slip some “minor grammatical errors” in consecutive writings, she is a student who benefits from and applies teacher’s WCF.

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Summary/analysis

Sara was an example of a student who was moved by positivity. Despite her frustration from being placed in the ENG 300 course, Sara decided to pass over these feelings and was certain that she will learn new and useful things from this course. In her case, WCF symbolized the means that allowed her to produce perfect written academic text. Despite her past experience in publishing academic papers, and her first impression that this course was pulling her backwards, academically, she tried to stay positive and looked for all the possible advantages that she might gain from taking this course. Actually, this positive attitude gave her the opportunity to realize errors in writing that she was not aware of in the first place. Again, this positivity and confidence reinforced her belief in that WCF was a tool that made her ideas clearer and stronger, which in turn helped her readers easily and quickly realize her purpose and understand her ideas.

Like Lora and Kamal, Sara went beyond teacher's WCF. Her second draft was more organized and detailed compared to the first draft.

2. Case study narrative about the teacher

a. Dr. Angela: learner's commitment yield

Background in teaching second language writing

Dr. Angela is an associate professor of English at the American University of Beirut. She received her PhD in composition and rhetoric. She has been teaching several writing courses and is responsible of the writing center. She indicated that her formal training is in composition, which "does not specifically focus on second language writing." However, according to Dr. Angela, being a member of the writing center, the

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interest among teachers and researchers in developing “approaches that consider the needs and ideas of L2 writers,” working at the writing center, teaching writing courses to L2 writers, and reading about the topic represented the source of information about teaching writing to second language learners. As for the ENG 300 course, she mentioned that she “occasionally” taught the course. She worked collaboratively with another professor in order to change the nature of the course: “Focused much more on having students think about their own discipline, and how writing is used in their discipline, and thinking about academic writing.... [T]hink more about what the writing is trying to do, the purpose of the writing.” She mentioned that the nature of the course represented “a flexible way of thinking about writing” for graduate students, especially that “academic writers are always writing in relation to other writers.”

Error treatment approach

Dr. Angela explained that the type and scope of WCF depended a lot on the purpose of the assignment. She mentioned that, for the first assignment, which was an informal essay about students’ personal experience entering into a discourse community, she kept her comments minimal: “I did not correct their essay as a piece of writing. I only responded to them as a reader and just like any other person who is reading their essay. I had no interest to comment on this piece of writing because it will shut their personal reflection.” On the other hand, for the second assignment, where students’ job was to read two articles and write an extended summary of both following clear guidelines, she commented “in a much more specific way.” She provided WCF “on the purpose, accuracy of the language, and clarity of the sentences.” She felt that: “Sometimes you have to tell people because they just do not know.... It is not

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something that they need to figure out, it is something that they either do it right or wrong.”

Through her years of teaching, Dr. Angela created her own strategy of providing students with WCF. During the interview, she said that: “My approach to commenting tends to be fairly minimal.” Beside writing lots of marginal comments, she wrote individualized notes in the form of a letter (Appendix G: Letter Note). She explained that in the letter she “tend to, theoretically, follow a process were you focus on the big picture, are you getting the ideas, or it seems to me that you are missing the point of the author. Then I talk more about organization, and then minor things.” Also, she felt that her feedback should guide students to “think about their correction.” She asked them questions that directed them to correct their own papers: “Review this statement for accuracy.... Why does he bring in the models? What does he do with them?” She even commented on student’s strengths while writing: “Good—here you get at something important: What Canagarajah proposes as a model for seeing how multilingual writers write.” In addition to questions, she felt that directive comments are given to students occasionally because they need to be aware that “this is not how you say that.”

When it came to grammar, Dr. Angela did not believe “about correcting every grammar mistake, especially if the purpose of the assignment is for them to focus on a particular task.” She specified that if there was something “really glaring,” she would comment on it. If repeated, she would explain it on the paper. She indicated that, when they reach the phase of editing and working on having students’ writings more concise, the feedback on grammar will increase. She mentioned that she might take a paragraph from one of the students’ writings and edits it thoroughly: “Sometimes you need others to show you how to do things.... [I]t does not matter if you keep on hinting on

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something, if they do not know that they will not pick up on it. You need to say this is how it looks like.” In responding to a follow up question about what she would do to help students overcome continuous errors, she indicated that she might do a workshop or conduct two to three individual meetings with the students.

Belief about error treatment for EFL learners

Dr. Angela had a strong belief in the role of WCF in enhancing students’ accuracy level: “WCF, to me, is the essence of the course. It is essential.” She felt that this importance aroused from the fact that when she commented on students’ writings, she commented as a reader. This, as Dr. Angela believed, created a “conversation” between teacher and students. It gave students the chance to think differently about their writings and to use “the language [she] use, e.g. text.” She added that the criticalness of responding to individual writing is evoked by the fact that “you kind of being forgiving and giving [students] a room to think about their writing. It is about them at the end.”

When asked if the number of students in class, sixteen, affected the way she provided feedback, she indicated that this number is small. She said that correcting takes lots of time because she “read the works a lot. When they submit revisions, I compare documents to see what and how they revised. I write comments on the second draft, and then I write a note.” Regardless of the fact that providing students with WCF is time consuming, she felt that it is extremely important. She declared that, to learn from WCF, students should not do minimal corrections; they should not write a second draft by following her comments only. She felt that students should “go beyond my questions and comments” to really acquire something from the provided feedback.

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Ways to increase efficacy of WCF

Dr. Angela explained that there are several factors that influenced students' response to WCF. From her own experience, she believed that the relation between teacher and students was a critical factor: "The relationship that teacher sets up with the students, how they understand what it is that you are asking them to do... I teach this course once a week, so I might not be close to the students." Also, she was convinced that students' attitude and beliefs were highly influential: "What it is that students believe that they are doing and why they are doing it would affect me also." For Dr. Angela, students' effort was also essential. She mentioned that since the course is a pass or fail course with no grading, students were given more "liberty to respond the way they want." She was certain that while some students, who wished to invest in the course, had "the option," others were capable of putting "minimal effort," and both groups can pass.

She even regarded students' motivation. She mentioned that their motivation affected "how [they] respond to feedback." However, she was certain that although some students "occasionally" appeared demotivated, motivation was not something to worry about because "graduate students are already motivated", but "maybe I am diluted... I just do not have the feeling that [students are demotivated]." She was clear that with time they will realize the importance of the course: "I am not trying to tell them how I write in English, I am trying to them how they write in their discipline, nursing or engineering, and that is about them and their profession." She believed in the "value of the course," and that students enrolled in ENG 300 course "are more fortunate" than those who are not taking the course.

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As for the ways that she depended on to maximize the effectiveness of WCF, Dr. Angela explained various steps that overtook. First and foremost, she believed that for feedback to pay, it should be repeated and constant. Also, she made sure that the purpose of her comments was clearly explained. She felt that some learners needed to know why she responded this way and what she expected from them when they respond to the given WCF; she even sensed that this issue might be a factor that affected students' utilization of WCF: "it is the sense of what you are asking them to do. Some students think they just have to do minimal corrections, i.e. correct only what you ask them for. They just do not rethink about their writing." In responding to a follow up question about the need to educate students on how to use feedback, she said that: "It is possible that some students need to be educated about how to use feedback." She suggested that "students come from many different education backgrounds, and so they may have had different kind of experiences with WCF. So, they may find my way of commenting unfamiliar or strange because there is no universal way of commenting."

She specified that conducting an action research was of an assistance. It helped in highlighting students' needs, attitudes, expectations from the course, and, most importantly, it aids in knowing about students' "academic and language background." Further, she showed a high level of cooperation and sympathy with students: "If a student comes to me asking about a feedback that I gave, I will never tell him go figure it out yourself. No, I will sit with him and talk about it."

Summary/ analysis

Dr. Angela's approach to WCF is appealing. For her, WCF is at the heart of every writing assignment. Feedback affected the content and the quality of students'

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texts. Accordingly, she believed that WCF was driven by the purpose and genre of writing. Also, this belief made her delay the act of correcting grammar mistakes. She did not want her students to be demotivated and frustrated from the very beginning. Interestingly, while providing students with feedback, Dr. Angela played the role of both the reader and the teacher. The role of the reader was reflected through the letter note that she wrote to every student. Being a reader allowed her to provide her students with a bigger image in terms of commenting on their essays. She wanted them to use both the letter and WCF to produce drafts that were different in terms of ideas' presentation and organization. In fact, Dr. Angela relied on WCF to create the base for an academic conversation between her and her students. Importantly, WCF that she provided, mainly WCF in the form of questions, enhanced students' self-evaluation and self-reliance.

C. Dividing participants into two groups

All six student participants received WCF on their essays, and a note letter from Dr. Angela. Comparing between every student's first and second draft, and in some cases third draft, and relying on teacher's WCF and general note letter the six student participants were divided into two groups: those who utilized WCF when writing a second draft and those who did not.

1. Utilize WCF

Kamal, Lora and Sara represent the cases of students who utilized WCF when writing a second draft. These three cases wrote a second or a third (Kamal) draft, which revealed that they took teacher's WCF a step forward. They tried to utilize WCF in a way that allowed them to produce a text that differed in terms of organization, clarity,

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and cohesiveness in comparison to their first draft. From their writings, it was clear that they considered feedback to be a set of guiding questions that gave them the chance to elaborate, explore, and extend their ideas.

Going back to the narratives of Kamal, Lora and Sara, it was realized that several factors interacted and allowed them to smoothly integrate WCF into their writings. These three cases, based on their own evaluation, indicated that their English proficiency level is good. Also, they welcomed feedback on all aspects of their writing. Despite their distress from having to take this course, they did not allow this negative attitude to obstruct their learning process. On the contrary, they were motivated by their goals, needs, and desires to learn in order to move forward with the course.

2. Do not utilize WCF

Regardless of their strong belief in the role that WCF had on improving their writings, Araz, Aya, and Jenifer represent the cases of students who did not utilize WCF when writing a second draft. For instance, despite the effort invested in writing a second draft, Aya was not able to produce a text that took teacher's WCF a step forward. Rather, the drafts of the three cases were, to a certain level, a duplicate of the first draft with few changes. Actually, according to Dr. Angela, as mentioned previously in the narratives, students were expected to go beyond the WCF that she provided. Applying her comments only did not mean that the student did his/her job as expected and required. In deed, she insisted that students should think about their writing.

Araz, Aya, and Jenifer clearly specified that, as EFL writers, they needed more practice to be able to produce academically accepted written texts. Also, Araz evaluated her proficiency level in English as weak. Their proficiency level in English affected

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their ability to easily express their ideas while writing. For Aya, her proficiency level caused her serious fear; she was always worried that this issue might hinder her ability to be part of the new academic community. Her anxiety that aroused from having to make English part of her identity caused her a low self-esteem.

Distress from having to take ENG 300 course affected Araz's and Jennifer's motivation to write. Also, Araz's attitude toward WCF, her indication that she categorized WCF, influenced her ability to apply it in new writings.

D. Results of research questions

As mentioned earlier, this study aimed to examine and understand the reasons why graduate EFL university students, in the same learning context, fail to utilize feedback while others benefit from the provided WCF. Also, the study was designed to understand and determine the various classroom contextual factors that interact and, at the same, hinder or facilitate the process of benefiting from WCF. In this section, the two research questions that guided the following study are answered.

1. First research question

From the perspective of both teacher and students, why some EFL university students enrolled in the graduate writing course fail while others benefit from the provided WCF on their essays?

All six participants appreciated feedback and were ready to apply it in their consecutive writing because it allowed them to produce academically accepted texts. The six student participants, except for Sara, clearly described why they might fail in utilizing teacher's WCF. For Sara, receiving and applying feedback is part of the

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researcher's work, so there is nothing that hinders or obstructs her ability to apply feedback: "I write and conduct research so revision on all bases is very important to me, and I have to revise several times... I write and rewrite, this is normal, and I don't have a problem with any kind of feedback that I receive."

On the other hand, Aya felt that since her previous education was in French, she might not be able to smoothly and easily use the English language, which in turn will influence her ability to apply WCF: "The fact that English is a foreign language to me, and the fact that I was in a French school and also in a French university, I am not used to use English in my daily life. I believe my first language might be an obstacle."

Jenifer indicated that the way teacher provides her with WCF influences the way she applies it: "Because we all hate to write so I think when the teacher give us some motivation in her feedback we don't find it as a punishment but rather as a suggestion for a better writing."

For both Lora and Araz, for WCF to be utilized, it should not offend their ideas. Lora, for instance, mentions that: "if the comments do not offend the idea I am proposing then its fine, but if it contradicts or negotiates what I believe in then I'll find difficulties accepting feedback. I want to sustain my freedom of writing since it's a way of expression. Also, Araz adds that teacher's comments should be short "Long comments...are boring," and she needs to be interested in applying WCF: "If I found no interest in the comment, I would like to disregard or even in some cases not follow at all.... All comments for me are just indications rather than obligatory commands to follow. I want my writing to be free and independent and personal." Besides, Kamal specified that if the language used by the teacher when commenting is "unclear," if the class "is boring and lacks some level of interactivity," and if he does not have enough

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“knowledge about the idea of the essay,” he will not be able to fully and easily apply teacher’s WCF.

From the perspective of the teacher, Dr. Angela, students fail to apply or benefit from WCF when writing a second draft might be due to several reasons. “I think it is the sense of what you are asking them to do. Some students think they just have to do minimal corrections, i.e. correct only what you ask them for. They just don’t rethink about their writing.” Also, she added that “the relationship that teacher sets up with the students, how they understand what it is that you are asking them to do.” Accordingly, to help students utilize WCF: “I could explain how I respond and why, what my expectations are for revision and we could have a conversation about that. Explain the purpose of my comments.”

2. Second research question

From the perspective of both teacher and students, what are the various contextual factors that interact and affect EFL students’ ability to utilize the provided WCF?

From the perspective of the six student participants, learner, methodological, and situational factors affected the utilization of WCF. As to learner factors, the six students participants explicitly described, by their own self-reporting, that their internal characteristics influenced their ability to apply WCF. Proficiency level in English, attitude toward the course ENG 300, value of the course ENG 300, motivation, interest in WCF, and years of learning English seemed to impact their utilization of WCF. Concerning situational factors, all six participants described their distress from the larger situational factor, which is related to university rules regarding who should be placed in the ENG 300 course and on what basis. Further, some participants, like Araz and Kamal indicated that teacher’s style in the classroom, that is whether the class is

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boring or motivating, affected their utilization of feedback. For Aya, the relationship between the teacher and student impacts the use of WCF. With respect to methodological factors, all six participants indicated that they preferred WCF to be direct and unfocused, and this what they actually received from Dr. Angela.

From the perspective of the teacher, Dr. Angela, learner and situational factors impacted students' ability to apply WCF. Learner factors are related to, as she said, students' motivation, attitude, and effort. Regarding situational factors, she specified that the relationship between teacher and students is influential. She added that the teacher should clearly explain to students the purpose and aim of her feedback so that they can easily integrate it into their consecutive writings.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

In this chapter, a discussion of the achieved results pertaining to both research questions in the context of the literature introduced earlier in addition to other studies is presented. Next, suggestions on how to respond to the different factors that exist in the classroom are offered for teachers. Then, the means for establishing the trustworthiness of the study are explained. Finally, recommendations for future research are presented.

A. Learner factors

As reported by the six student participants and their teacher, learner factors seemed to influence students' ability to apply WCF. This finding is in alignment with the results of studies found in the literature on the effect of individual differences in the utilization of WCF. In the study conducted by Ferris (2006), it was found that individual differences impacted students' utilization of WCF. Further, in the study of Ferris et al. (2013), it was found that "students' external constraints (busy schedules) and their internal characteristics (attitude, confidence) seemed to influence their ability to benefit from feedback" (p. 323). Also, in the study conducted by Li and Li (2012), it was realized that individual differences played an important role in how students responded to teacher's WCF.

Sara, Kamal, and Lora, as they reported, relied on their motivation in order to overcome their distress from being placed in the ENG 300 course. Csizér (2012) mentions that "without being motivated, little success awaits students on the long avenue of language learning" (p. 234). Motivation, a domain specific and a contextually

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situated factor, plays an important role in learning, to an extent that, it is almost always blamed if students fail or succeed in learning L2 (Brown, 2000; Dörnyei, 2005; Troia, Shankland, Wolbers, 2010; Schunk, 2009). Saville-Troike (2006) indicates, motivation is not a unitary construct; rather, it includes the following components “significant goal or need, desire to attain the goal, perception that learning L2 is relevant to fulfilling the goal or meeting the need, belief in the likely success or failure of learning L2, and value of potential outcomes/rewards” (p. 86). In summarizing the results of the different studies on L2 motivation that were conducted in Hungary, Csizér (2012) concluded that “motivation is a crucial contributor” for successful L2 learning.

For one of the cases, Jenifer, the utilization of WCF was clearly influenced by her demotivation to write. In some instances, the topic of the writing task acted as a demotivating factor. As defined by Hu (2012), demotivating factors: “impede learners’ learning motivation and, hence lead to unsuccessful mastery of English language proficiency” (p.88). Demotivation can hinder the acquisition of L2. Further, Mason et al. (2012) mention that students with high levels of interest “wanted to do well (as in getting good grades)...felt happy about their writing [and] did not feel that a great deal of effort was needed for writing and expressed strong positive feelings about writing as an activity” (p. 72).

Students’ attitude toward the course appeared to influence their utilization of WCF. In the case study conducted by Ferris et al. (2013), Mary’s attitude: “...helped her preserve through the multiple demands upon her time and energy and succeed in improving her writing enough to pass the course” (p. 323). Also, as cited by Csizér (2012), in a study conducted by Nikolov (1999), it was concluded that learners’ positive attitude toward the learning context increased their motivation, which in turn

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encouraged them “to put more effort into language learning” (p. 236). Actually, some of the six student participants, their attitude affected their perception of the value of the ENG 300 course. In a study conducted by Boscolo and Gelati in 2007, participants were more successful when they valued the outcome of the written task (as cited in Mason, Meadan, Hedin, & Cramer, 2012). Besides, Ferris et al. (2013) mention that: “[b]oth case study narratives [Mary and Tony] reinforce the importance of student confidence, attitude, and effort as learners interact with the various types of instructional interventions” (p. 322).

B. Situational factors

Situational factors, in certain contexts, “their influence may be so great that they completely overshadow the potential effects of the learner and the instructional methodology” (Evans et al., 2010; 450). The two profound situational factors that seemed to shape students ability to apply teacher’s WCF were related to the language used by the teacher while commenting and the relationship between teacher and students.

The request for a common language, a language that the teacher uses and students fully understand in order to comprehend the provided WCF, explains the fact that students must understand the feedback and know and realize its purpose. If students do not understand the purpose of WCF and how to apply it, they will apply minimal changes to their writings. Also, if the language used is difficult to understand, students will not be able to smoothly integrate WCF into their consecutive writings. Students will not be able to re-think about their writing. As Li and Li (2012) indicate in their study, if WCF goes beyond students’ ZPD, it fails to attract their attention, and it will be

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useless because this difficult input cannot become an intake: “WCF can work effectively as a scaffold only when it is within the learner’s present ZPD” (p. 39).

The relationship between teacher and student, for Dr. Angela and Aya, seemed a factor that influenced utilization of WCF. As postulated by Lee and Schallert (2008), “written comments can connect a teacher with a student on an individual level...they affect students’ writing and attitude toward writing” (p. 507). Because Aya was worried about integrating English into her identity, she believed that WCF is an act of caring from the teacher’s side, and it enhanced her proficiency level in English. In the study conducted by Lee and Schallert, where 14 students and their teacher participated, it was found that “the students generally defined the primary role of a caring teacher as one who could guide them to write English effectively” (p. 521). Also, in the study conducted by Hu (2011), she recognizes that some demotivating factors are “purely and directly” (p.92) related to teachers; one of these factors is poor teacher-student relationship.

C. Methodological factors

The type and scope of feedback can highly influence students’ ability to utilize WCF. According to Evans et al. (2010; p. 450): “Even the highly motivated learner...may miss the potential benefits of WCF when [we don not] determine the most effective way to have students process and learn from correction so they can apply what they learn in subsequent writing” (p. 451).

Preference of direct, unfocused feedback associated with meta-linguistic explanation if needed is in alignment with the findings of several studies. For example, in the study conducted by Bitchener (2008), it was realized “the addition of written and

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oral meta-linguistic explanation to direct corrective feedback significantly helps learners improve the accuracy of their writing” (p. 114). However, in the study conducted by Ahmadi et al. (2012), it was concluded that indirect, uncoded feedback in comparison to direct feedback is “a more effective strategy to react to students’ writings.” As for the scope of feedback, the study conducted by Ellis et al. (2008), established that: “CF was equally effective for the focused and unfocused groups” (p. 353). They concluded that there is “no statistically significant differences between the focused and unfocused CF groups in either the narrative writing tests or the error correction test” (p. 365). Again here, students’ needs and their proficiency level play a role in guiding the teacher through deciding whether to use direct or indirect feedback and focused or unfocused feedback.

D. Suggestions for teachers

As Goldstein (2008) postulates: “[WCF] is a complex process, with multiple factors interacting and mediating each other, through a cyclical process within which these multiple student texts and teacher commentary texts are created, rather than a one-dimensional and a linear process” (p. 24-25). Considering the three factors: individual, situational, and methodological, it is obvious that teachers have minimal control over individual attributes. However, teachers need to keep in mind that these attributes, in comparison to situational and methodological factors, fully control students’ ability to apply and benefit from WCF. Individual differences have a great impact on how students approach writing in L2. When asked to write a text, students’ personal baggage comes to surface. Students utilize and use all components of their baggage that can either hinder or facilitate working on a task. Also, when given feedback and asked to

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write a second draft, the same baggage appears again and influences the writing practice.

There are several ways that teachers can rely on to respond to the various individual factors. Since our concern is graduate students, then teachers can conduct an action research that allows them to gather as much needed information about students' individual attributes and previous educational background. Gathered information can cover issues related to students' previous experience with WCF, years of learning English, and knowledge about academic writing. Also, it gives teachers the chance to know students' expectations from this course, needs, and motivations. Such information permits teachers to understand and familiarize themselves with their learners in an attempt to avoid any kind of misunderstanding. For example, Dr. Angela thought all her students were motivated; however, all of them passed through a certain level of demotivation because they were placed in ENG 300 course, and some were still stuck there.

As teachers need to be familiar with students' needs and preferences, some students need to be educated on how to use teacher's WCF. According to Goldstein (2008), "teachers need...to educate students about their commentary practices and the rationales behind what they do, they need to educate students how to interpret their comments, and they need to teach students how to revise using their comments" (p. 43). For example, in order for all the six students' participants to benefit from WCF and apply it when revising, Dr. Angela needed to make sure that they understood the purpose of her WCF. She explained to them that, when they revise their text, they have to rethink about their writing using her comments and letter notes as guidelines for revision. Further, as Goldstein (2008) explains, teacher's WCF helps students in

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realizing the “mismatches between intentions and readings.... [and] how to solve these mismatches.” Accordingly, “students need to learn that the words they inscribe on paper are not static and that meaning resides not only in these words but also in what the audience brings to the reading of these words” (p. 5).

E. Trustworthiness of the study

The conducted exploratory multiple case study sought to enhance its trustworthiness through a number of mechanisms. In relation to transferability, a thick and thorough description of the context of the proposed research was provided. A detailed and in-depth description of the teacher and students was offered in order to allow others to compare their context with the one considered in this research and generalize the results to their own context. Also, the procedures of data collection followed in the study were specifically documented. Further, the use of multiple sources for data collection allowed the researcher to address problems of construct validity. As for inter-rater reliability, a rater other than the researcher read the narratives of the six students participants to approve the commonalities among the participants.

F. Implications for future research

This qualitative multiple case study supports the findings of other studies concluding that individual factors have a great impact on EFL students' ability apply WCF, keeping in mind that this topic is an under-researched area. Importantly, this study adds several aspects:

- (1) Like Ferris et al. (2013) study, this study considers both students' written texts and their own self-report and claims about their experience with and application

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of teacher's WCF. Also, it considers the interaction of three contextual factors: individual, situational, and methodological. For this purpose, students' texts were not considered separately and apart from the context in which they were written.

- (2) Exclusively, this study considers a sample of EFL students, who were pursuing their master's degree in different disciplines. Also, it divides students, who are in the same classroom, into two groups: those who apply WCF when writing a second draft and those who do not. It also compares between the two groups.

This study went beyond the long debate about whether WCF enhances students' accuracy level or not. Rather, it considered the factors that shape the effectiveness of WCF. This shift from the "if" to the "how" and "why" was intended to get a better insight into the factors, situational, learner, and methodological, that exist and interact in the classroom and at the same time facilitate or impede students' ability to apply teacher's WCF. The important role that WCF plays in enhancing students' accuracy level calls for the attention toward how teachers can increase its efficiency. This is accomplished through considering the individual characteristics of students.

The three factors, individual, situational, and methodological can be examined through a mixed study design where a larger sample of teachers and students are involved to gain a better understanding of how the efficacy of WCF can be increased through responding to the various factors that exist in the classroom.

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APPENDIX A: INVITATION LETTER

Dear Ms. / Mr.

American University of Beirut
This is Not an Official Message from AUB
Invitation to Participate in a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study entitled “Exploratory Case Study: Perception of English as a Foreign Language Teacher and Students on the Role of Classroom Contextual Factors in the Use of Written Corrective Feedback” conducted by Principal Investigator Dr. Ghazi Ghaith and Co-Investigator Zeinab Safieddine, Faculty of Arts and Sciences, Department of Education at the American University of Beirut. The conduct of this study will adhere to the IRB approved conditions and terms. The IRB approved method for approaching subjects is informed consent. The purpose of the study is to understand, from students’ and teacher perspective, why some students are able to re-write their essays making use of the feedback provided, while others do not make use of the feedback when writing their second drafts.

PROCEDURES

This message invites you to:

1. Read the consent form and consider whether you want to be involved in the study.

And to note:

- Participation is completely voluntary.
- If you agree to the consent form, open-ended interview questions will be asked. The duration of the interview will last approximately hour and a half.
- Only the data you provide in the open-ended interview will be collected and analyzed.
- The results of the study will be published in the form of a thesis and will be available by the AUB Library in printed form.

POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY

The benefits, which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, are related to both teachers and researchers. As for teachers, understanding the reasons behind students’ failing to make use of or benefiting from written corrective feedback in English as a foreign language classrooms and understanding the various classroom contextual factors that limit or increase the effectiveness of written corrective feedback for some learners is a step that will call for teachers’ attention to the various factors that occur within the context of their teaching and have to be considered when providing feedback. Besides, drawing teachers’ attention to these variables will help and guide them in the process of providing their students with feedback. As for researchers, the proposed study will motivate researchers to come up with methods that teachers can consider in responding to the various variables to maximize students’ efforts to benefit from written corrective feedback.

You will not receive payment for participation in this study.

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The **risks** of the study are minimal. The collected data will remain **confidential**, and a pseudonymous name will be used instead of your true name.

As for **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**, you can choose whether to be in this study or not. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind.

Agreement of Research Subject

If after reading the consent document and having any questions you might have answered to your satisfaction, you voluntarily agree to take part in the study, please reply to this email so we can set a suitable date for the interview. Otherwise please ignore this invitation to participate in the study.

Kind Regards,
Zeinab Safieddine

Appendix B: Consent Form for Teachers

Exploratory Case Study: Perception of English as a Foreign Language Teacher and Students on the Role of Classroom Contextual Factors in the Use of Written Corrective Feedback
[Dr. Ghazi Ghaith]
[Zeinab Safieddine]

Hello. My name is Zeinab Safieddine. I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at AUB. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study about the role of classroom contextual factors in students' utilization of the written corrective feedback provided on their essays when writing second draft essays. Written corrective feedback refers to the corrections and comments given to students on their essays. The purpose of my study is to understand, from students and teacher perspective, why some students are able to re-write their essays making use of the feedback provided, while others do not make use of the feedback when writing their second drafts.

Before we begin, I would like to take few minutes to explain why I am inviting you to participate in my research study and what will be done with the information you provide. You will be asked to participate in an open-ended interview. The interview will be done individually. Also, based on your agreement, the interview will either be tape-recorded or not. The following is the list of questions that I will be asking you:

- 1) What is your own understanding of the idea of written corrective feedback?
- 2) In your opinion, what are the factors that affect the way students respond to the provided written corrective feedback?
- 3) On what basis do you provide written corrective feedback to students, i.e. why do you choose to comment on these issues and ignore others? How do you identify that these errors are major ones while others are minor?
- 4) Do you think that there are certain steps that you can take to maximize the effectiveness of the provided written corrective feedback?

The information you provide me with when answering these questions will help me understand the factors related to teachers, like motivation, priorities and workload, instructional philosophy, attitude, competencies, and instructional methodology based on which you decide what and how to correct students' essays. These factors, according to several researchers like Evans et al. (2010) and Ferris et al. (2013), play an important role in affecting students' ability to utilize or not the provided written corrective feedback.

I am doing this study as part of my studies at AUB. I will be interviewing only one teacher and his/her students, maximum 6. I will use the information as the basis for my thesis project. I may also use this information in articles that might be published, as well as in academic presentations. *Your individual privacy and confidentiality of the information you provide will be maintained in all published and written data analysis*

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resulting from the study. Your name will stay anonymous, and I will use a pseudonymous name, i.e. fake name when I quote from your answers.

Your participation should take approximately an hour and a half. Please understand that your participation is entirely on a voluntary basis. Refusing to participate in the study has no penalty of any kind and doesn't affect your relation with AUB. Also, you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. There will be no risks that you might face from participating in this study. All interview questions cover issues related to your own understanding and process of providing students with written feedback on their essays. No sensitive or personal issues will be tackled. So, the questions are of a minimal risk. The benefits, which may reasonably be expected to result from this study, are related to both teachers and researchers. As for teachers, understanding the reasons behind students' failing to make use of or benefiting from written corrective feedback in English as a foreign language classrooms and understanding the various classroom contextual factors that limit or increase the effectiveness of written corrective feedback for some learners is a step that will call for teachers' attention to the various factors that occur within the context of their teaching and have to be considered when providing feedback. Besides, drawing teachers' attention to these variables will help and guide them in the process of providing their students with feedback. As for researchers, the proposed study will motivate researchers to come up with methods that teachers can consider in responding to the various variables to maximize students' efforts to benefit from written corrective feedback. As for potential direct benefits or the existence of certain incentive(s) for participation, there will be none.

If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to answer any of the questions, please feel free to skip those questions by saying 'skip this question.' If at any time you would like to stop participating, please tell me. We can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You will not be penalized for deciding to stop participation at any time.

I would like to tape record this interview so as to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. These tapes will be kept with the Principal Investigator (PI), Dr. Ghazi Ghaith because, according to Institutional Review Board, he has the "ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the study." Only Dr. Ghaith and I will have access to these tapes. After the research is done, the tapes will be disposed of. In case you prefer not to tape record the interview, this will not be a problem. I will just write down your responses.

If you have any questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at:

Email: zns08@mail.aub.edu / zeinabsafieddine@gmail.com

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Mobile: +961 78 902 422.

Or, you may contact Dr. Ghazi Ghaith, chair of Education Department at AUB.

Email: gghaith@aub.edu.lb

Office number: 01 374 444, ext: 3070

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the following office at AUB: *Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office*

Address: Gefinor Center, Block B, 5th Floor

Tel: 00961 1 374374, ext: 5445

Fax: 00961 1 374374, ext: 5444

Email: irb@aub.edu.lb

Are you interested in participating in this study?

Consent to Record Interview

May I record this interview?

Consent to Quote from Interview

I may wish to quote from this interview either in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used in order to protect your identity, unless you specifically request that you be identified by your true name.

Do you allow me to quote from this interview?

Participant Signature

Date

Time

.....

.....

.....

Interviewer Signature

Date

Time

.....

.....

.....

Appendix C: Consent Form for Students

Exploratory Case Study: Perception of English as a Foreign Language Teacher and Students on the Role of Classroom Contextual Factors in the Use of Written Corrective Feedback

[Dr. Ghazi Ghaith]

[Zeinab Safieddine]

Hello. My name is Zeinab Safieddine. I am a graduate student in the Department of Education at AUB. I would like to invite you to participate in my research study about the factors that affect students' ability to make use of the feedback given by the teacher when writing second draft essays. The purpose of my study is to understand, from students and teacher perspective, why some students are able to re-write their essays making use of the feedback provided, while others do not make use of the feedback when writing their second drafts.

Before we begin, I would like to take few minutes to explain why I am inviting you to participate in my research study and what will be done with the information you provide. You will be asked to participate, individually, in an open-ended interview. Also, *based on your agreement, the interview will either be tape-recorded or not.* The following is the list of questions that I will be asking you:

- 1) What do you think about the feedback that you receive on your essays?
Why?
- 2) In your opinion, why do teachers provide students with feedback on their essays? What is the aim or purpose of this feedback?
- 3) How do you respond to the comments provided by the teacher, i.e. do you consider writing a second draft joyful or burdensome? Why?
- 4) How do you edit your essays? Are there certain processes or strategies that you follow or apply?
- 5) What are the factors or beliefs, which you think affect the way you respond to the comments on your essays?

Also, I will ask you to fill out the following background questionnaire:

Age

Gender: Male Female

Nationality:

Major

First Language:

Years of learning English:

Other language you are proficient at speaking:

The information you provide me with when answering these questions will help me understand, from your own perspective, the factors that might play a role in affecting your utilization of the provided feedback on your essays. Please stop me at any time if you have questions about the study.

I am doing this study as part of my studies at AUB. I will be interviewing maximum 6 students, who are willing to participate in the study and their teacher. I will

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use the information as the basis for my thesis project. I may also use this information in articles that might be published, as well as in academic presentations. *Your individual privacy and confidentiality of the information you provide will be maintained in all published and written data analysis resulting from the study. Your name will stay anonymous, and I will use a pseudonymous name, i.e. fake name when I quote from your answers.*

Your participation should take approximately one hour and a half. Please understand that your participation is entirely on a voluntary basis. Refusing to participate in the study has no penalty of any kind and doesn't affect your relation with AUB. Also, *you have the right to withdraw your consent or discontinue participation at any time without penalty. There will be no risks that you might face from participating in this study.* All interview questions cover issues related to your own opinion and process of learning English. No sensitive or personal issues will be tackled. So, *the questions are of a minimal risk. No potential direct benefits are to be expected from this study. Also, no incentives of any kind will be offered as a reward for participating in the study.*

If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to answer any of the questions, please feel free to skip those questions by saying 'skip this question.' If at any time you would like to stop participating, please tell me. We can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You will not be penalized for deciding to stop participation at any time.

I would like to tape record this interview so as to make sure that I remember accurately all the information you provide. These tapes will be kept with the Principal Investigator (PI), Dr. Ghazi Ghaith because, according to Institutional Review Board, he has the "ultimate responsibility for the conduct of the study." Only Dr. Ghaith and I will access to these tapes. After the research is done, the tapes will be disposed of. In case you prefer not to tape record the interview, this will not be a problem. I will just write down your responses.

If you have any questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at:

Email: zns08@mail.aub.edu / zeinabsafieddine@gmail.com

Mobile: +961 78 902 422.

Or, you may contact Dr. Ghazi Ghaith, chair of Education Department at AUB.

Email: gghaith@aub.edu.lb

Office number: 01 374 444, ext: 3070

If you have questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the following office at AUB: Institutional Review Board (IRB) Office

Address: Gefinor Center, Block B, 5th Floor

Tel: 00961 1 374374, ext: 5445

Fax: 00961 1 374374, ext: 5444

Email: irb@aub.edu.lb

Are you interested in participating in this study?

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Consent to Record Interview

May I record this interview?

Consent to Quote from Interview

I may wish to quote from this interview either in the presentations or articles resulting from this work. A pseudonym will be used in order to protect your identity, unless you specifically request that you be identified by your true name.

Do you allow me to quote from this interview?

Participant Signature

Date

Time

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Interviewer Signature

Date

Time

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Appendix D: Course Grading Contract

You are guaranteed a grade of “Pass” in this course if you:

1. Attend class regularly;
2. Complete **all** formal writing assignments;
3. Meet due dates and writing criteria for all major assignments;
4. Participate in all in-class exercises and activities;
5. Complete all informal or low-stakes writing assignments (on Moodle, at home, or in class);
6. Give thoughtful feedback during class workshops and work faithfully with your working group on other collaborative tasks (such as sharing papers, commenting on drafts, responding to discussions on Moodle);
7. Sustain effort and investment on each draft of all papers;
8. Make substantive revisions, when the assignment is to revise—extending or changing the thinking or organization—not just editing or touching up;
9. Pay careful attention to citation and practice academic integrity;
10. Attend scheduled conferences with the instructor.

If you agree to the ten points on this contract, please sign and date the contract and return it.

Appendix E: Essays' Prompts

A. Prompt for Informal Essay

“A “discourse community” is a group of individuals bound by a common interest who communicate through approved channels and whose discourse is regulated. An individual may belong to several professional, public, or personal discourse communities. [...] A discourse community shares assumptions about what objects are appropriate for examination and discussion, ... what constitutes "evidence" and "validity", and what formal conventions are followed.[...] Some discourse communities are firmly established, such as the scientific community, the medical profession, and the justice system, to cite a few from Foucault's list. In these discourse communities, as Leitch says, "a speaker must be 'qualified' to talk; he has to belong to a community of scholarship; and he is required to possess a prescribed body of knowledge (doctrine).... [This system) establishes limits and regularities[:] ... who may speak, what may be spoken, and how it is to be said; in addition [rules] prescribe what is true and false, what is reasonable and what foolish, and what is meant and what is not." James E. Porter. *Rhetoric Review*

Writing:

Informal Essay:: Becoming a member of a Community:. Write an essay about learning to be a member of a particular community of practice. Tell the story of your experience of belonging to this community. Reflect on the qualities of the community and the process you went through as you learned to participate in it. Try to be as specific as possible: Consider the values, norms, discourses, and conventions that establish your community. What did you do/believe/value to participate? How did you learn to do that? Who helped you? How were texts used? What kinds of reading, writing, and speaking are used to facilitate social interaction among members of the group (Are there specific genres? A special vocabulary?)

Logistical Guidelines:

- Type your essay.
- Aim to write between 750 and 1,250 words.

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- Bring a hard copy of the essay to class for the scheduled: *sharing and responding* session.
- Post the first draft and the revised draft on Moodle with a process note no later than the assigned due date.

B. Prompt for Formal Essay

Coming to terms with texts we have read: Guidelines

Krashen, T. (2011) Academic proficiency (language and content) and the role of strategies. *TESOL Journal*. 2(4): 381-393.

Canagarajah, A. S. (2006) Toward a pedagogy of shuttling between languages: learning multilingual writers. *College English*. 68(6): 589-604

Preparation:

Read the text before class on Monday, September 22. Discuss the reading in class with three of your classmates.

Mark key words and significant passages as you read.

Note key concepts and terms that you encounter in each reading.

Make use of the following questions to guide you:

Aims: What aim is the author or authors of the text trying to achieve through writing? What position(s) do they want to argue? What issues or problems do they explore?

Methods: How does the author relate examples to ideas? How does he or she connect one claim to the next, build a sense of continuity and flow?

Materials: Where does the author go for examples and evidence? What texts does he or she cite and discuss? What experiences or events does the author describe?

Writing:

Drawing on your discussion in class, the marked passages of the articles, and on your notes, write an account of **each** text that represents the work of the author in your own terms. Be sure to represent the text both “globally” in terms of the author’s aims and “locally,” turning to direct quotation and paraphrase, when that will add specificity to your discussion and highlight particular points.

Guidelines:

- This assignment should be typed.
- For the discussion of each article, aim to write between 300-500 words (1.5-2 pages, double spaced).
- Bring a hard copy of your writing to class on September 29 for the assigned sharing and responding session.
- Submit the first draft, a revised copy, and a process note on Moodle by October 1.

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Criteria for the coming to terms summary:

A good example of such an effort will be accurate and generous in representing the aims of the author, methods, and means of supporting their ideas. It will present ideas fully enough for a reader to understand them. Like any piece of academic writing, it will also observe logical structure, organized into paragraphs and sentences that make sense to a reader. Final editing will attend to such issues as clarity and punctuation.

Appendix G: Letter Note

The following is an example of a letter note that Dr. Angela used to provide students, individually, with feedback.

First Example

Dear [student's name],

The summary of Krashen is very succinct—direct and to the point, and gets at the heart of Krashen's arguments. I have made some marginal notes. It seems to me that when you revise, you might consider including a description of what Krashen calls the "classic method"—the method he is rejecting. You refer to it already, but could do so even more explicitly.

In your discussion of Canagarajah's text, you also navigate very carefully though his argument. It is precise in the way it represents the models that Canagarajah is rejecting, and in representing the author's purposes in writing the essay.

In both, I suggest including a mention of the full text of the title and the author's full name.

Careful reading, and well done,
[Teacher Signature]

Second Example

Dear [student's name],

These are good first takes at writing cohesive statements about these two articles. My impression from reading is that the instructions from the chapter in Harris may have misled you in terms of the idea of how to put together the discussion. Your summaries seem to “report answers” to the guiding questions, rather than making sense as a paragraph on their own. In fact, Harris's questions are meant to provide a framework for analysis—a way in to understanding the reading. However, they are not the end of the analysis or a strong way to structure your discussion. For example, when you write that Canagarajah “uses many keywords” this is not to say something really fruitful about the article. Noting the key words as a reader is a way for you to understand what is driving the author's thinking and the problem he is working on. It would be more productive for you as a writer to simply discuss what Canagarajah argues, and use his words in your discussion, for example. Or discuss how he disagrees with a key word, perhaps.

Please see the general comments for revising coming to terms texts.
[teacher's signature]