گۆڤاری کوردستانیی بۆ لێکۆڵینەوەی ستراتیجیی

Investigating Iraqi Kurdistan Region Lecturers' Perceptions on the Effects and Usage of Written Corrective Feedback in EFL Students' Writing'

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Abstract

Written corrective feedback (WCF) in English as a foreign/second language (EFL/ESL) context is one of the controversial topics among researchers. Several researchers have debated and investigated its influences and effects on student learning, and different types of feedback have proven to be effective in improving writing skills. Although there is much research on this topic and in different EFL/ESL contexts, there are no studies on Iraqi Kurdistan Region lecturers' perceptions of WCF and its types. It is essential to investigate this topic and contribute to this line of research, given that it appears that no studies have accounted for lecturers' perspectives in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. This study, therefore, aimed to examine the perception of 30 EFL lecturers in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region in higher education institutions to understand their beliefs regarding WCF and the types of feedback used and found important to give to English language students. A questionnaire was used to collect data for this investigation that was delivered electronically. Statistical and qualitative analyses were conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the lecturers' responses to the survey. Results showed that the majority of lecturers use WCF and believe it is useful for their students. Lecturers use several types of WCF depending on the context and their students' level of proficiency. The study concludes that lecturers' responses align to a large extent with the literature available, including their agreement on the effectiveness of WCF in enhancing students' writing skills. The study also provides recommendations that can be useful for EFL lecturers and researchers in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and other similar contexts to improve their practices related to WCF. The findings of this study can be used to inform teacher training programs in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region and contribute to improving the quality of feedback provided to English language students.

Keywords: written corrective feedback, lecturers' perceptions, EFL writing

Introduction

There has been an increasing amount of research on the role of written corrective feedback (WCF) in the development of second language skills in the past two decades (Laland, 1986; Truscott, 1996; Ferris, 1999; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Lee et al., 2021). The purpose of WCF can be two-fold: (1) To facilitate second language (L2) acquisition; and (2) to help in writing development (Crosthwaite et al., 2022). WCF refers to any form of correction provided by teachers to students' written work, including grammar, vocabulary, and spelling errors (Ferris, 1999, 2003, 2004; Chandler, 2003; Lee, 2004; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Brown, 2012; Lee, 2020; Lee et al., 2021). WCF might be provided on local issues such as spelling, syntax, and punctuation and global issues such as ideas, content, and organization (Montgomery & Baker, 2007). Using WCF is crucial in language learning as it enables students to identify and correct their errors, thereby improving their writing skills.

Montgomery and Baker (2007) believe that by examining teachers' self-assessments, researchers gain insight into the teachers' awareness of their feedback practices. This information can be valuable in guiding lecturers to provide effective feedback types in improving student writing.

However, despite the considerable research on WCF, there is a lack of studies on the perceptions of EFL lecturers in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region regarding WCF. Therefore, this study is intended to further expand understanding of EFL lecturers' perceptions towards WCF and ascertain if their perceptions align with current research on the topic. Therefore, it is important to explore Iraqi Kurdistan Region lecturers' perspectives on WCF. By addressing this research gap, the study will contribute to a better understanding of the challenges and opportunities that EFL lecturers in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region face when providing WCF.

The study was designed to answer the following research questions:

What are lecturers' perceptions of WCF in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region?

Do Iraqi Kurdistan Region lecturers' views on WCF on foreign language writing align with contemporary perceptions from researchers in the field?

Definition of WCF

Several researchers define WCF as a corrective response provided by teachers to foreign or second language learners' written texts, which aims to improve subsequent work by correcting linguistic errors at both local and global levels of production through handwritten or electronic markings or symbols (Montgomery & Baker, 2007; Li & Roshan 2019; Mao & Lee, 2022). According to Bitchener and Storch (2016), WCF is a response to linguistic errors made by foreign or second language (L2) learners in written texts, and it can be either direct or indirect. Moa and Crosthwaite (2019) defined WCF as "feedback that is written by the teacher on students' work, to improve subsequent work" (p. 46).

Types of WCF

The research on WCF discusses various types of feedback, indicating that the two most commonly discussed types are direct and indirect (Bitchener et al., 2005; Bitchener, 2008; Alimohammadi & Nejadansari, 2014; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). Direct feedback is the type of feedback where the teacher points out an error and provides the

correct form (Bitchener et al., 2005). This type of feedback can be provided in various ways, such as crossing out unnecessary words, inserting missing words, or providing the correct structure (Bitchener, 2008). Indirect WCF is the type of feedback that points out errors without providing an explicit correction. Furthermore, four methods of indirect WCF are commonly used including (1) circling or underlining an error; (2) mentioning the number of mistakes on a given line; (3) using a code to show the location of the error; (4) and using codes to identify the types of errors made (Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019).

Scopes of WCF

The scope of WCF can be of two kinds: focused and comprehensive/unfocused (Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019; Lee, 2020). Focused WCF is targeted feedback that aims to address specific error types or patterns in a learner's writing (Ferris, 2011). Whereas comprehensive WCF involves correcting all errors in a learner's piece of writing, regardless of the type or pattern of the errors (Ellis et al., 2008).

The Effectiveness of WCF in Improving Students' Writing

For decades, there has been considerable discussion about the importance of providing WCF on L2 writing. Some studies have found WCF to be highly effective in improving students' writing skills (e.g., Laland, 1986; Ferris, 1999, 2003, 2004; Lee, 2004; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Van Beuningen et al., 2012). These studies have explored the effectiveness of various types of WCF in enhancing the writing skills of students across different proficiency levels and situations. Results from these studies have consistently indicated that WCF can significantly improve students' writing abilities, regardless of their level of proficiency or the specific type of feedback provided. For instance, some studies (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Brown, 2012) have found that direct WCF can significantly improve accuracy levels in specific areas of writing. In addition, they found that students made fewer errors when receiving direct WCF if the teacher had written in corrections, which is also a preferred approach by students because it is easiest and fastest. Others (e.g., Lalande, 1982; Ferris, 2003, 2004; Jamalinesari et al., 2015) have shown that providing indirect WCF can lead to sustained improvements in accuracy, even after a considerable period without additional feedback or instruction. These studies concluded that indirect WCF engages students in cognitive problem-solving when correcting their errors. Additionally, other studies (e.g., Farrokhi & Sattarpour, 2012; Daneshvar & Rahimi, 2014; Fazilatfar et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2021) have highlighted the benefits of focused and comprehensive WCF, which can significantly enhance grammatical accuracy in subsequent writing tasks. These findings emphasize the importance of incorporating WCF into writing instruction, as it can positively impact students' writing abilities across different proficiency levels and contexts.

On the other hand, Cohen and Robbins (1976) examined students' written corrections in an advanced ESL course. The study found that "the corrections did not have a significant impact on reducing the student errors" (p. 50). The researchers identified the problem as a lack of consistency in the correction procedure. Although graders used a correction checklist, the instructor returned papers to students without recording the errors, which made it impossible to diagnose students' difficulties in any paper.

Similarly, Truscott (1996) claimed that correction is not only ineffective, but he argued that it could be harmful and worked to make a case for abandoning it. Some of his reasons were that research at that time showed that correc-

tion was ineffective and that it may have side effects on the students' attitudes, such as consuming time and energy in writing classes. In addition, he mentioned that previous studies (e.g., Knoblauch & Brannon, 1981; Hillocks, 1986) have shown that students who did not receive correction showed more positive attitudes towards writing compared to those who received correction. Although the uncorrected students were not necessarily better writers as a result, they tended to write more due to their presumably more favourable attitude towards writing. Truscott believed that the underlying cause of these issues could be traced back to the unpleasant nature of corrections. For example, to avoid corrections, students may shorten and simplify their writing, which can negatively impact their learning. Students who were corrected may also develop a less positive attitude toward learning, further hindering their progress.

Teachers' Perceptions of WCF

In the field of EFL and ESL writing instruction, written corrective feedback (WCF) from teachers is considered essential. Bitchener (2012) explains that most EFL/ESL teachers believe that providing WCF on students' errors is an important aspect of their role and one of their responsibilities, and while the benefits of feedback provided are not always immediately evident, teachers generally assume that their students will benefit from it. Ferris (2004) emphasized the importance of preparing teachers to plan and execute feedback effectively. According to Ferris (2007), preparing teachers to respond with feedback is an important aspect of teacher training courses. Each teacher has an approach to responding to students' writing, and according to her, "an enlightened approach to response includes a judicious mixture of teacher feedback (which can be oral, handwritten, or electronic), peer review, and guided self-evaluation" (p. 167). In addition, teachers should not try to correct all the errors they encounter on students' papers.

However, Lee's (2004) study found that teachers' practices and beliefs about error correction were not fully aligned. Students were heavily reliant on teachers for error correction, and teachers were not always aware of the long-term significance of feedback.

Methodology

To achieve the purpose of this study, a questionnaire was used to collect data. The survey was designed and written by the researcher to gather data on the Iraqi Kurdistan Region lecturers' perceptions towards WCF in EFL writing. Statistical and qualitative analyses were conducted to provide a comprehensive understanding of the lecturers' responses to the survey.

Participants

Lecturers from six institutions of higher education (HE) in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region participated in this survey study. The researcher enlisted one point of contact at each school. This person was the primary contact who shared the survey link with the English lecturers at the respective institution. Prospective participants were invited to complete a voluntary online survey. They were asked to complete the survey within three weeks of receiving the link with the invitation to participate and complete the survey using Google Forms.

The participants for this study were thirty lecturers who teach English in higher education institutions. Teaching experience among participants ranged from 1 to 20 years. See Table 1. In terms of academic degrees, 76.7% of participants held a master's degree, and 23.3% had a doctoral degree.

Table 1

Participant's Teaching Experience

(Teaching Experience (Years	n	%
1-5	13	43.3
6-10	8	26.7
11-15	5	16.7
16-20	3	10
21	1	3.3

Instrument

A two-part online survey was developed to collect data from the participants. The survey was introduced by a statement that offered information about the purpose and scope of the research study on WCF in EFL writing.

The first part of the survey consisted of 19 items. Each item was followed by a four-point rating scale with descriptors that ranged from 4 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). Participants were expected to select the option that best described their level of agreement with the statement presented. Below the rating scale, space was provided for lecturers to offer any additional comments.

The second part consisted of a brief survey to gather key demographics and obtain a richer understanding of the participants and their background/professional experience. Part 2 of the survey aimed to collect demographic information about the participants, their language proficiency, teaching experience, academic degrees, and their level of comfort working with EFL students in teaching them English writing in higher education in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region. It also asked about their experience as a writer in English and how this experience informs their practices in teaching English writing to language students. In addition, the participants were asked to indicate their level of comfort in using various types of WCF, if they had taken any relevant courses, and if they like to receive additional training regarding WCF.

Using SPSS, statistical analyses were computed to provide a quantitative account of the lecturers' responses to the survey in part one and part two. In addition, a qualitative analysis was conducted to discuss the common themes in the comments provided by lecturers.

Results

Quantitative Data Analysis

The quantitative analysis is presented under two themes: (1) the types of written corrective feedback (WCF) used by lecturer participants and (2) their approaches to WCF.

Types of WCF Used by EFL Lecturers

The theme discussed in this section pertains to the lecturers' perceptions of the types of WCF they use and what their students prefer, which are presented in Table 2. The items relate to various beliefs about providing WCF to students, such as their preferences for:

Providing indirect WCF

Student's preference to direct WCF

Focusing on form rather than content

Focusing on local rather than global

Providing unfocused/comprehensive WCF.

Direct vs. Indirect Feedback

The majority of participants (i.e., 90%) agreed that it is the lecturer's responsibility to provide indirect WCF (item 1). Additionally, 76.7% of the participants also agreed that they provide direct WCF by pointing out all grammatical errors when providing WCF (item 3). In response to another question related to indirect WCF, 50% disagreed with item 5, which noted that when providing WCF, teachers ask students questions about their errors rather than making statements. Regarding students' preferences, 86.6% of participants strongly agreed or agreed that their students prefer direct WCF and appreciate being directly corrected and provided with answers (item 7).

A majority of participants (i.e., 86.6%) agreed or strongly agreed that using editing symbols previously taught to students is an effective method of providing WCF (item 14), while a small percentage of lecturers (i.e., 13.3%) disagreed with this item. Moreover, a majority of respondents agreed with item 16, which noted that indirect WCF using metalanguage to point out errors in writing is important when providing WCF. Of the respondents, 23.3% strongly agreed, and 66.7% agreed. However, a minority of respondents (i.e., 10%) disagreed with this item.

Form vs. Content

Regarding the importance of focusing on form versus content when providing WCF, the majority of the lecturers (i.e., 66.6%) disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that it is important to focus on the form rather than the content when providing WCF (item 2).

Local vs. Global Issues

In terms of the effectiveness of providing WCF on local versus global issues, a little over half of the participants (i.e., 56.7%) disagreed, and 6.7% strongly disagreed with the notion that providing WCF on local issues, such as spelling, grammar, and punctuation, is more effective than on global issues, such as ideas, content, and organization (item 12).

Providing Unfocused/Comprehensive WCF

Regarding the provision of comprehensive WCF (item 17), 76.7% of participants agreed that providing unfocused/comprehensive WCF to language students is necessary.

The results suggest that the majority of participants believe that providing both direct and indirect WCF to language students is important. However, the percentage of agreement on the direct WCF is a little lower than indirect, with 76.7% agreeing on providing direct WCF in contrast to 90% who prioritized indirect WCF by marking errors rather than directly correcting them.

Table 2

Selective Items on Types of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) Used

Types of WCF Used

# Item	% Strongly agree	% Agree	% Disagree	Strongly % disagree	
Providing indirect (1) WCF	30	60	10	0	
Focusing on form (2) rather than content	3.3	30	63.3	3.3	
Providing direct (3) WCF	30	46.7	16.7	6.7	
Question-based (5) indirect WCF	10	40	50	0	
Student's prefer- (7) ence for direct WCF	13.3	73.3	13.3	0	
Focusing on local (12) rather than global issues	3.3	33.3	56.7	6.7	
Indirect using (14) codes and editing symbols	13.3	73.3	13.3	0	
Providing indirect (16) metalinguistic WCF	20	70	10	0	
Providing unfo- (17) cused/ comprehensive WCF	20	56.7	23.3	0	

Feedback Approach

Lecturer's Consideration Toward WCF

Regarding the appropriateness of WCF provided to students (item 4), most of the respondents (i.e., 96.7%) agreed that the WCF provided needs to be appropriate to the student's writing level. In addition, most respondents (i.e.,

44.7%) strongly agreed, and 53.3% agreed with item 6, which noted that providing positive comments about students' writing strength contributes to their writing performance. A majority of the respondents (i.e., 53.3%) strongly agreed, and 10% agreed with item 8 that excessive WCF can discourage students and lead them to ignore the feedback. Meanwhile, 36.7% of respondents disagreed with this item. In addition, a significant majority of respondents (i.e., 90%) agreed or strongly agreed with item 10 that having a certain criterion/rubric available to follow when giving WCF to students is more effective. Only 10% of respondents disagreed with this statement.

In response to item 9, which noted that WCF is time-consuming for lecturers, 70% of the respondents agreed with the item. In addition, a large majority of respondents (i.e., 93.3%) strongly agreed or agreed with item 11, which noted that providing WCF improves students' language proficiency and writing performance. Moreover, a high percentage of respondents (i.e., 90%) strongly agreed or agreed that feedback strategies should be adjusted to meet the individual needs, preferences, and progress of each student (item 13). In response to item 15, regarding the provision of comments on errors that primarily interfere with the communication of students' messages, 90% of the respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the statement, and 10% disagreed.

It can also be seen from the data that most of the respondents (i.e., 93.3%) agreed or strongly agreed that providing opportunities for students to ask questions during one-on-one student conferences when providing WCF (item 18) is an effective strategy. Finally, item 19 asked participants about their assessment of the survey in terms of ease of task completion. 40% of the participants found the survey easy to rate, while 56.7% of them indicated that the survey was neither easy nor difficult to rate. Only one person (i.e., 3.3%) noted that the survey was very difficult to rate.

Qualitative Analysis

This section presents the qualitative analysis of the comments provided by the participants on their perspectives regarding WCF. The participants commented on several sections of the survey and shared their views on different aspects of WCF, including the use of direct and indirect feedback, the importance of form and content, the approaches to providing WCF, student preferences of feedback, time commitment, and their comfort level in using different types of WCF. All the comments were provided in the English language.

Regarding the types of WCF used, the comments suggest that most participants believe in using indirect feedback. For example, regarding item 1, which is related to providing indirect WCF, 23% of participants commented on the fact that they believe it helps students identify and correct their errors, which can improve their language learning skills and confidence. However, there are some differences in opinions among commenters. For example, one participant believed that indirect WCF could encourage students to take more ownership of their learning and develop their problem-solving skills. This participant stated: "This may encourage students to search for their errors and learn the correct form". Meanwhile, another participant stated: "I believe teachers should correct errors".

Table 3

Selective Items on Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) Approaches

WCF Approaches Used

# Item	% Strongly agree	% Agree	% Disagree	% Strongly disagree
Student-level (4) appropriate WCF	46.7	50	3.3	0
Positive feed- (6) back enhances writing performance	46.7	53.3	0	0
Excessive WCF (8) is discouraging	10	53.3	36.7	0
WCF is (9) time-consuming	16.7	53.3	23.3	6.7
Using rubric (10) when providing WCF	43.3	46.7	10	0
WCF en- (11) hances language proficiency	40	53.3	6.7	0
Tailored feed- (13) back for individual students	26.7	63.3	10	0
Selective (15) WCF	20	70	10	0
One-on-one (18) conferences with students	43.3	50	6.7	0

Based on the comments provided, the lecturers find it important to strike a balance between providing direct and indirect WCF when necessary. One participant noted the following: "A teacher can directly correct the errors when student efforts to find the correct answer didn't work." Another participant stated: "The teacher may correct errors one or two times just to let students know or have an idea about the correct form. Then, he/she might just mark the errors."

Among other comments provided, a participant suggested using different strategies when providing WCF based on the student's level of proficiency, stating that "I use error correction codes and error schemes for the students at B1-B2 level and grading rubrics for B2-C1 students".

Regarding providing direct WCF in item 3, the comments suggest that while there may be some effort to point out all grammatical errors, the focus may vary depending on the students' levels of language proficiency, the amount and type of errors present, and the context of the writing task. Based on the six comments provided on this item, the responses suggest that there is some agreement with item 3. One comment suggests that the lecturer should focus on one grammar item at a time and use error correction schemes to help students understand their weaknesses.

A participant wrote: "It depends on the student's level. I usually teach 1 grammar item at a time and assess that only. If the student needs to understand his weaknesses, I mark all grammar errors combined with error correction schemes and ask students to enter the codes and analyse their errors. And then they have to rewrite and correct the errors." Another respondent suggested that while they try to point out all grammatical errors, sometimes there are too many to address all at once.

In relation to indirect WCF through asking questions (item 5), 16.6% of the respondents provided comments suggesting that lecturers have different perspectives and experiences in this area. While some lecturers prefer to ask students questions about their errors rather than making statements, as indicated in two of the comments, others use a mixture of different strategies or focus on knowing and solving the errors, as suggested in the other two comments. The challenges of implementing WCF in a large classroom are also highlighted in one of the comments, which suggests that practical constraints may limit the use of certain approaches, mentioning the following: "It takes time and effort to do that for every single student in a class containing more than 70 students". Additionally, a response suggests that asking questions might help to increase students' autonomy and self-correction skills, illustrating the potential benefits of this approach beyond just error correction. Regarding students' preferences for direct WCF, while 86.6% agreed that students prefer it, a respondent stated that despite students' preferences, overcorrecting may lead students to be less responsible towards their work and the errors they make.

There is some disagreement among participants regarding the importance of focusing on the form rather than content when providing WCF. The results show that 43% of the comments suggest that both form and content are important and that it can be difficult to separate the two. For example, one lecturer offered the following feedback: "It is important to focus on both; the content and form". However, 28% of the participants believe that the focus should be on the form, and another 28% believe that the focus should be on content. Some participants commented that students often struggle with the form of their writing and that this should be a focus of WCF. A participant noted: "Most students can deliver the content, but they have difficulty with the form which needs to be corrected". However, other participants argued that content is more important and that focusing on content can help students improve their overall performance. While there is some disagreement about the relative importance of form versus content in WCF, most participants (i.e., 66.6%), as presented in Table 2, disagreed with the statement that focus on form is more important than content, and they explain in the comments that both are important and should be addressed in feedback. It can be noted that lecturers do not prefer one over another; the reason could be that they do not separate those two or, as mentioned in some comments, both forms and content should be equally addressed, and one lecturer commented that "it is difficult to separate form and content".

Regarding the approaches lecturers use, 20% believed that providing positive comments about students' writing strengths can contribute to their writing performance. This approach is seen as a way of boosting students' confidence and their abilities.

Despite 70% agreement with item 9, which noted that WCF is time-consuming, some respondents (i.e., 16%) commented that the time commitment required for WCF could depend on factors such as class size and the amount of preparation required. They suggest that while WCF may be time-consuming, it can also be beneficial for students. One participant stated that it is "time-consuming but fruitful." Another participant mentioned that WCF could take up too much time and prevent lecturers from preparing other exercises for their students.

In the second part of the survey, lecturers were asked to express their comfort level in using different types of WCF, and the majority of participants expressed comfort in using all types and scopes of WCF. However, in terms of

comparison between focused and comprehensive WCF, the results show that the respondents were more comfortable using focused WCF. Out of the 30 participants, only 26.6 % expressed discomfort in using focused WCF, while 40% showed discomfort in using comprehensive WCF. Lecturers were also asked to describe their experience as writers in English and what had helped them or not to become effective writers. The responses highlight the crucial role of experience in becoming a proficient writer in English. Many respondents emphasized the importance of practice, reading extensively, and receiving feedback from others.

In addition to these points, the participants highlighted the importance of mastering grammar, learning English writing styles, and organizing arguments effectively. Finally, the participants were asked if they would like to receive additional training in the area of WCF, and 73.3% responded yes to the question.

The qualitative analysis of the participants' comments on their perceptions regarding WCF highlighted several important factors that influence effective feedback provision. The comments suggest that lecturers use different types of WCF and believe in its effectiveness. In addition, they acknowledge the importance of focusing on both form and content. Furthermore, participants recognize the need for an approach that considers students' specific context and individual needs. Additionally, the results indicate that participants believe that a mixture of different methods may be effective and that the time commitment required for WCF could depend on factors such as class size and the amount of preparation required.

Discussion

Regarding the first question of the study, the results demonstrate that lecturers in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region believe in providing WCF, and they use different types and scopes in their practices. Although they provide various types of WCF, including direct, indirect, and comprehensive WCF, most lecturers prefer indirect WCF.

The result suggests that there is no clear consensus among educators regarding the most effective way to provide WCF to students. Their reasons for preferring indirect WCF, as expressed in the comments, are related to factors about helping students to be independent and work on self-correcting their errors. In addition, lecturers believe that continuous corrections might lead to students repeating the same errors; however, providing indirect feedback helps students recognize and learn from their errors. Additionally, indirect WCF takes less time for lecturers compared to direct WCF, where lecturers write in the corrections. Therefore, using indirect WCF allows students to notice their errors and saves time for lecturers.

Some participants argued that focusing on form is more beneficial than content, while others had the opposite opinion. The reasons for their responses varied as indicated in the comments. Those who find providing feedback on form is more important than content believe that most students struggle with the form and consider it a priority to be addressed. However, others believe that focusing on the content will help students improve their overall writing over time. Moreover, most respondents emphasized that both form and content are equally important when providing WCF, as it is difficult to separate the two when teaching writing or giving feedback. Likewise, the study indicates that lecturers do not agree that providing WCF on local issues is more effective than global issues, as they indicate in their responses that both are equally important in improving student's writing skills and sometimes, they should be addressed together. This finding suggests that lecturers recognize the importance of addressing both local and global issues when providing WCF to students.

In addition, there is some inconsistency in their responses regarding focused and comprehensive WCF. In their responses to a statement about comprehensive WCF, the majority of participants agreed that providing comprehensive WCF is necessary. Additionally, when asked about their comfort level in providing these types of WCF, the majority indicated that they feel more comfortable providing focused WCF compared to comprehensive WCF. This result could suggest that participants have concerns about the time required to provide comprehensive WCF, which addresses all errors, and therefore prefer to focus on one area of error. In addition, there may be differences between the participants' beliefs about what is needed and their confidence in providing it. Some institutions might have regulations that expect lecturers to correct all errors, while lecturers prefer to focus on specific error areas.

The result highlights the complexity and variability of WCF practices and the need for lecturers to consider multiple factors when deciding on the most effective approach for their students. The lecturers mention large class sizes, time constraints, and student's level of proficiency, which all can affect the process of giving feedback, in addition to lecturers' own beliefs that explain the variety in their responses.

Regarding the second question, the results indicate that the views of lecturers align with current perspectives on WCF to a large extent. Most participants believed that WCF improves students' language proficiency and writing performance. This finding is consistent with previous research, which has consistently shown that WCF can help improve students' writing skills.

Most lecturers believe that indirect WCF is an effective way to provide feedback to language students, allowing them to learn from their errors and develop better language-learning skills. This view corroborates with studies such as Brown (2012) and Jamalinesari et al. (2015), who showed evidence that indirect feedback is more effective. The results also show that lecturers recognize the need for an approach that takes into consideration the specific context and individual needs of students.

Regarding students' preference for WCF, the respondents agreed that their students appreciate being directly corrected, especially if students' efforts to find the errors did not work. The lecturers find it their responsibility to correct errors, which is consistent with what Bitchener and Knock (2010) explained that direct WCF is preferred because it is more beneficial to students. This is because it reduces confusion, provides information to resolve complex errors, offers explicit feedback, and is more immediate.

There is a strong agreement among the participants that providing positive comments about students' writing strengths can be a useful approach to improving their writing performance, particularly when combined with constructive feedback that addresses improvement areas. The respondents of this survey believe that students' motivation is important; therefore, lecturers should provide positive WCF that boosts student's confidence. Concerning this, Tang and Liu (2018) revealed that additional effective comments on students' writings helped to develop a positive mindset among them, encouraging them to take further steps to improve their writing.

In line with the available literature, lecturers' preferences for types of WCF varied, including direct, indirect, focused, and comprehensive, but had one aspect in common, which is allowing students to notice errors. This is consistent with Boggs (2019), who explained that corrective feedback aims not only to provide accurate linguistic form but also to direct the learner's attention toward it.

Conclusion

It is evident from this study that lecturers in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region generally believe in the effectiveness of WCF and employ various types of feedback to enhance students' writing skills. The results also show that they prioritize indirect WCF. The preference for indirect WCF is attributed to practical considerations related to the teaching environment. Moreover, lecturers believe that indirect WCF is more constructive and provides students with opportunities to self-evaluate and reflect on their writing.

However, lecturers have varying opinions regarding whether it is more effective to prioritize form or content when providing WCF. They believe it depends on factors such as students' needs and the lecturers' beliefs about what is more important.

The study also revealed that lecturers in the Iraqi Kurdistan Region value providing feedback that is appropriate to students' levels of proficiency, which is consistent with contemporary research in the field. This means that lecturers take into account the individual needs and abilities of their students when providing WCF.

Recommendations

The findings of this study have several pedagogical implications that can inform teaching practices related to WCF. Firstly, the study highlights the importance of understanding lecturers' beliefs and perceptions about WCF. Lecturers with a more positive attitude towards WCF are more likely to incorporate it into their teaching practices, which can positively impact students' writing development. Therefore, ongoing professional development opportunities should be provided to support lecturers in continually improving their feedback practices. This would involve providing opportunities for lecturers to participate in workshops, conferences, and other training programs that focus on feedback best practices and that provide them with the latest information and techniques for providing effective WCF. This will develop lecturers' beliefs and perceptions towards WCF and provide opportunities for them to develop their knowledge and skills in providing effective feedback.

Secondly, lecturers should aim to provide feedback focused on specific aspects of the student's writing and provide clear suggestions for improvement. This can help students to better understand the areas they need to work on and make more targeted improvements in their writing. Moreover, it is important to keep in mind that students may have different preferences and needs when it comes to feedback. Therefore, it may be helpful to provide feedback in a way that is tailored to each student's individual needs and learning style and to communicate with students to understand their preferences and how they find feedback most helpful.

Finally, it is also important to investigate the alignment of lecturers' beliefs with their actual practices. It can be difficult to fully understand the effectiveness of a particular teaching approach or technique without examining the alignment between beliefs and practices. Therefore, future research could include a more direct examination of lecturers' practices. This could help to determine whether there are any discrepancies between lectures' beliefs and their actual practices and provide a more complete understanding of the effectiveness of WCF as a teaching technique.

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