

Beyond the Margins: English Instructors' Perspectives and Practices in Written Corrective Feedback

Más allá de los márgenes: perspectivas y prácticas de retroalimentación escrita de docentes de inglés

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This case study examined English as a foreign language instructors' perspectives, preferences, and practices regarding written feedback, as well as their use of technology for feedback and related professional development needs, in an English preparatory program at a Turkish state university. Thirty instructors completed a survey with Likert-scale and open-ended questions. Most participants viewed written corrective feedback as essential and effective for improving writing skills. While 63% of participants preferred unfocused feedback, attitudes toward strategies varied: direct feedback was generally favoured, but indirect feedback was chosen for advanced learners and under a two-draft policy. Reported challenges included large classes and time constraints. The findings also revealed patterns in instructors' use of technology for feedback and highlighted their need for further professional development in this area.

Keywords: EFL writing, error correction, teacher beliefs, teacher feedback, written corrective feedback

Este estudio de caso analizó las perspectivas, preferencias y prácticas de docentes de inglés como lengua extranjera de una universidad estatal en Turquía respecto a la retroalimentación escrita, el uso de la tecnología para proporcionarla y sus necesidades de desarrollo profesional. Treinta docentes completaron una encuesta con preguntas de tipo Likert y abiertas. La mayoría de los participantes consideró eficaz la retroalimentación escrita no focalizada para mejorar la escritura. La estrategia de retroalimentación directa tuvo preferencia sobre la indirecta, que se aplicó a estudiantes avanzados y bajo la política de dos borradores. Entre los desafíos destacan las clases numerosas y la falta de tiempo. Los resultados revelaron patrones en el uso de la tecnología para la retroalimentación y en las necesidades de desarrollo profesional en este ámbito.

Palabras clave: corrección de errores, creencias docentes, retroalimentación correctiva escrita, retroalimentación docente, escritura en inglés como lengua extranjera

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Introduction

Feedback is viewed as crucial for developing L2 writing skills, given its role in facilitating learning and boosting student motivation. Therefore, written corrective feedback (WCF) remains a key component in most L2 and foreign language writing classes (Chen, 2023; Hyland & Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2024).

Much research on feedback focuses on categories such as strategies (direct vs. indirect), scope (comprehensive vs. selective), and focus (global vs. local), rather than on the rationales behind them (Lee, 2008; Osama, 2016; Zheng et al., 2022). Many studies have been conducted in controlled settings, highlighting the need for research in authentic contexts. Some work has revealed mismatches between teachers' beliefs and practices (Mao et al., 2024). Other scholars have found that WCF is shaped by individual and contextual factors, but broader influences (e.g., institutional policies, class sizes, and resources) remain underexplored (Ferris & Kurzer, 2019; Lira-Gonzales & Nassaji, 2020; Liu, 2024). Furthermore, little is known about teachers' instructional needs for WCF literacy, particularly regarding the use of technology. Given that automated writing evaluation (AWE) tools and AI technologies are increasingly used to support the feedback process in ELT, it is important to explore teachers' views and practices regarding these technologies.

To address these gaps, this study explores EFL instructors' perceptions, preferences, and self-reported WCF practices, with attention to contextual constraints and to professional preparation for WCF strategies and technology use. It was carried out in the English Preparatory Program of a state university in Türkiye, where recent policy shifts illustrate how institutional decisions, increasing student numbers, and time pressures shape feedback. These changes raise questions about how instructors adjust their strategies and what support they consider necessary to improve their feedback literacy and technology use

in WCF. Accordingly, the study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the instructors' perceptions, preferences, and self-reported practices of WCF?
2. How do contextual constraints or affordances influence the instructors' perceptions, preferences, and self-reported practices of WCF?

By linking institutional realities to individual teaching practices, this study shows how constraints such as workload, time pressure, and institutional expectations shape teachers' WCF practices and create tensions with established feedback principles (Ferris, 2014; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). Although grounded in one institution, these conditions mirror challenges widely reported across diverse EFL/ESL contexts, particularly in resource-limited settings (Lee, 2017). Thus, the findings offer transferable insights into how WCF frameworks can be adapted to real classroom demands and how more sustainable feedback practices can be supported in similar teaching environments.

Literature Review

Feedback, broadly defined as information provided to learners to guide and improve their writing and language performance (Ellis, 2009; Ferris, 2014; Hyland & Hyland, 2006, 2019), is a central element of language assessment. Teachers' feedback literacy—understood as their ability to understand, design, and enact feedback that effectively supports learning (Carless & Winstone, 2020)—is key to this process (Lee, 2017). In WCF, this literacy involves making informed decisions about when, how, and why to provide feedback within real classroom constraints.

Teachers' Feedback Scope

WCF scope refers to how extensively teachers correct errors (Lee, 2017), either comprehensively

(unfocused, covering all errors) or selectively (focused, targeting specific errors; Ferris, 2003). The former may overwhelm both teachers and students (Ferris, 2003), while the latter requires prioritisation, posing challenges for less experienced teachers (McMartin-Miller, 2014). Although limited evidence supports comprehensive feedback (Karim & Nassaji, 2020) and some find no significant difference (Ellis et al., 2008), focused feedback is often seen as more effective and manageable (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009).

Despite this, and due to contextual factors, many teachers still prefer comprehensive feedback (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Cheng & Zhang, 2021; Fitriyah et al., 2024; Lee, 2008, 2019b; Li & Vuono, 2019; Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021; Liu, 2024; Mao et al., 2024). Lee (2008) reported that teachers gave detailed feedback to meet inspection standards, with minimal correction viewed as negligent. Likewise, Alshahrani and Storch (2014) found that policy, responsibility, and fossilisation concerns influenced Saudi teachers' preferences. Osama (2016) highlighted fears that ignoring errors may mislead students. Fitriyah et al. (2024) emphasised the challenges of applying selective feedback due to holistic assessment and students' proficiency. In contrast, Mao and Crosthwaite (2019) indicated that Chinese teachers preferred focused feedback due to time constraints and large class sizes. In sum, feedback scope decisions are influenced by students, institutional demands, and contextual factors.

Teachers' Feedback Strategies

WCF strategies are categorised as direct (teacher corrects errors) or indirect (teacher indicates errors without correction) (Liu, 2024; Mao et al., 2024). Indirect feedback may be coded (e.g., "WW" for wrong word), uncoded (e.g., underlining), or metalinguistic when brief explanations are provided (Liu, 2024).

Research tends to favour direct feedback (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Karim & Nassaji, 2020; Suzuki et al., 2019), though indirect feedback has shown benefits (Ferris, 2003; Kurzer, 2017), and some studies find no notable differences (Sinha & Nassaji, 2022). Recent studies note teachers' general preference for indirect feedback (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021; Wei & Cao, 2020), though rationales vary. Teachers adapt their practices in response to students' proficiency (Alkhateeb & Daweli, 2024; Alshahrani & Storch, 2014) or university mandates (Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021).

Amrhein and Nassaji (2010) linked direct feedback to workload concerns, with most teachers believing indirect feedback fosters autonomy. Fitriyah et al. (2024) similarly found that indirect feedback is valued for promoting deeper engagement. Wei and Cao (2020) noted that instructors in Asia viewed indirect feedback as a face-saving tool that encourages self-correction. Liu (2024) found that Chinese teachers preferred direct feedback for local issues and indirect feedback for global ones. Although policies often promote coded feedback, Lee (2008) found that time pressures led teachers to choose direct feedback. In sum, feedback strategy is shaped by multiple factors, including beliefs, policy, context, and error type.

Teachers' Feedback Focus

WCF focus distinguishes between global issues (ideas, content, organisation) and local issues (grammar, vocabulary, mechanics; Ferris, 2003; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). Research shows that teachers generally focus more on local than on global issues (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Hardman & Bell, 2019; Lee, 2008; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019), despite perceptions that they address both (Chen, 2023; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). This misalignment can result from contextual pressures, teacher identity, student expectations, institutional demands, and workloads.

Professional Development and Technology to Enhance Teachers' Feedback Literacy and Feedback Practices

Lee (2017) highlights feedback literacy as essential for helping students interpret and use feedback effectively. As experience alone may be insufficient, teacher education should promote reflection and awareness of learning through feedback (Yu, 2021). Professional development activities, such as workshops and courses, can support the development of effective strategies (Cheng & Zhang, 2021).

In a longitudinal study, Lee (2019a) showed how a writing course led teachers to question traditional methods, emphasising the value of sustained development. Lee (2021) calls for continuous critical reflection, while Li and Ke (2024) recommend community-based learning to foster dialogue, diversify practices, and engage students in feedback.

Technological tools like ChatGPT and other language models have also influenced WCF practices (Lin & Crosthwaite, 2024). Despite concerns about higher-order skills, AWE tools help address grammar and mechanics, allowing teachers to focus on content (Wilson & Czik, 2016). Though initially demanding, such tools offer efficient feedback (Carless & Winstone, 2020), enhancing teacher development.

A recent review (Mamad & Vigh, 2024) shows that student perceptions are more frequently studied, leaving instructors' views on feedback types and their rationales understudied. This study addresses this gap. By analysing instructors' perceptions, the study highlights tensions between WCF theory and practice and identifies areas for professional development to increase instructors' feedback literacy and their use of technology for feedback.

Method

This case study employs a survey to examine instructors' perspectives, practices, and rationales for

their preferences, as well as how contextual factors influence their WCF practices. Survey designs are appropriate for collecting self-reported information on attitudes and practices (Creswell, 2012). The study is informed by a pragmatic stance, which emphasises practical relevance and methodological flexibility (Creswell, 2009).

Context and Participants

The study was conducted in the English Preparatory Program of a state university in Ankara (Türkiye). Between 2018 and 2020, the program followed a process-oriented approach requiring outlines and first and second drafts. Lower-proficiency students received direct feedback, while higher-proficiency students received indirect feedback with error codes. However, rising enrolment and time constraints caused policy changes. From 2022 to 2024, students submitted only a single draft and received direct feedback regardless of proficiency. During 2020–2021, instructors provided feedback using the track changes feature in Microsoft Word due to online teaching during the pandemic. At the start of 2023–2024, they briefly used PaperPal for WCF, but since classes had returned to face-to-face instruction and students were writing on paper, it proved impractical and was soon discontinued.

Thirty instructors (out of 40 at the institution) volunteered to participate (age range: 35–44, women: 24, men: 6). Twenty-three held degrees in ELT, while others came from English Literature (4), Translation (2), and Law (1). Regarding qualifications, three were pursuing master's degrees, 12 had completed master's degrees, nine were pursuing PhDs, and five already held PhDs. All had at least 6 years of teaching experience, with many having 11 to 20 years.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data were collected through an online survey comprising Likert-scale and open-ended items. Although interviews or focus groups might have

yielded richer contextual insights, the survey was selected for its efficiency in gathering both quantitative and qualitative data, its flexibility for instructors, and its ease of analysis without transcription. Likert-scale items on feedback strategies and focus areas were adapted from Amrhein and Nassaji (2010). Document analysis of institutional rubrics and policies supported triangulation. Likert items identified preferred WCF strategies and frequency, while open responses provided reasoning and evidence of adaptability.

The survey was piloted with two instructors to test clarity and format. Based on feedback, open-ended items were moved to the end to reduce fatigue, and redundant items were removed. Following revisions, the final survey received ethical approval from the Institutional Ethics Committee and was distributed to preparatory program instructors.

Quantitative data were analysed with descriptive statistics (SPSS). The 23-item Likert scale showed acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$). Qualitative data were analysed thematically, following Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase framework and the coding and pattern-identification strategies described by Miles et al. (2019). MAXQDA facilitated colour coding, frequency checks, and excerpt retrieval.

Trustworthiness was achieved with the criteria outlined by Shenton (2004). Credibility was enhanced through peer debriefing, in which the emerging findings were discussed with a colleague to uncover potential researcher bias. The study's transferability was enhanced through a thorough description of the research context. Inter-coder reliability was high (.92) using Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula. To mitigate the limitations of a one-time survey, member checking was conducted with three instructors (P1, P6, P11) to clarify ambiguous responses. Document analysis of institutional rubrics and policies further contextualised findings by identifying feedback focus areas.

Results

The survey results were analysed under three themes (see Figure 1). The following subsections describe each theme.

Instructors' Perceptions of WCF

Overall Perceptions of WCF and Best Ways to Give Feedback

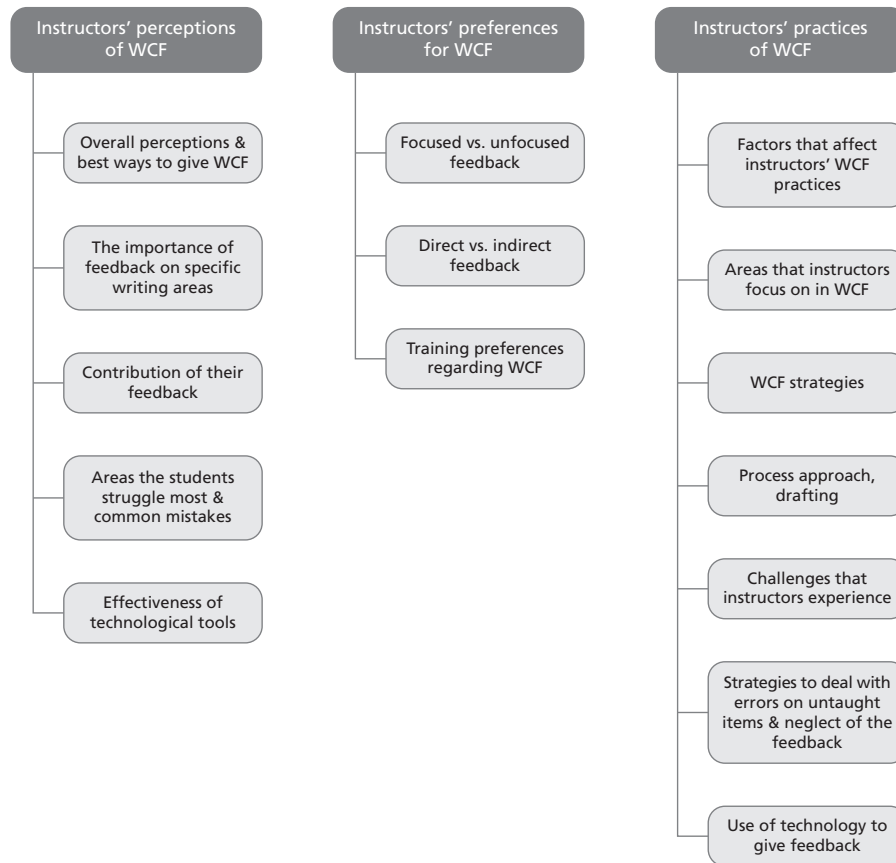
Findings indicate that instructors generally view WCF as essential for improving students' writing. Half explicitly stressed the importance of WCF, and nearly one-third affirmed its effectiveness. However, concerns emerged about its time demands and the risk of demotivating students when too many errors are marked.

The most effective strategies included error codes with metalinguistic feedback (15), especially for advanced learners, while direct feedback (9) was preferred for lower-level students, showing alignment with proficiency levels. Seven instructors emphasised the value of one-on-one feedback for fostering engagement and understanding. Other useful approaches included content- and organisation-focused feedback (6), reformulation (5), and combining direct and indirect methods (5), reflecting the multifaceted nature of feedback.

Although mentioned less often, focused feedback was seen as useful in preventing students from feeling overwhelmed, and timely feedback reinforced learning. Additional suggestions—using coloured pens, incorporating L1, guiding students through peer review, and maintaining an open-door policy to discuss feedback with students—highlight personalised practices that promote autonomy and clarity.

Perceptions of the Importance of Feedback Focus

Instructors rated the importance of feedback on writing areas. Global errors, such as content and organisation, which affect the overall message, were prioritised over local errors, such as spelling and punctuation, which do not hinder comprehension (see Table 1).

Figure 1. Overall Findings of the Study

Note. WCF: written corrective feedback.

Table 1. Instructors' Perceptions of the Importance of Feedback on Specific Writing Areas

	Not important at all	Unimportant	Neither important nor unimportant	Important	Very important	Mean
Percentages						
Content				16.7	83.3	4.83
Organisation			6.7	13.3	80	4.73
Grammar		3.3	3.3	43.3	50	4.4
Vocabulary			6.7	43.3	50	4.43
Spelling			26.7	46.7	26.7	4
Punctuation		3.3	20	50	26.7	4
Capitalisation	3.3		20	46.7	30	4

The school rubric also attaches equal importance to content, organisation, grammar, and vocabulary. These findings show a primary focus on higher-order skills in feedback practices, aligning with the goal of enhancing students' ability to communicate ideas effectively.

Perceptions of the Contribution of Instructor Feedback

Many instructors affirmed that feedback significantly supports students' writing development. They noted reductions in recurring errors, fewer overall mistakes, increased use of complex structures, and improved awareness of genre-specific conventions—indicating that WCF fosters both immediate correction and long-term improvement. As P22 noted:

I have observed that when I give detailed feedback, the students think I spare much time for their paper, and they respect it and read carefully all the comments I write. They become more aware of the fossilized mistakes and of standard English, register, and academic language.

Thus, detailed feedback can boost student engagement and foster greater awareness of errors and academic conventions. The perceived effort behind the feedback appears to motivate students to engage more deeply with the writing task. This suggests that WCF not only addresses surface errors but also encourages students' metacognitive engagement, fostering greater self-regulation and deeper learning in writing.

According to the instructors, students' perceptions of feedback were generally positive. For example, P17 stated, "They learn a lot and feel fuelled to be more careful," while P25 remarked, "Most see it as beneficial and are neither offended nor discouraged." Although this positivity may seem surprising, earlier work shows that students often prefer comprehensive feedback to help them identify and correct errors

and avoid repeating them (Gedik Bal, 2022), which may explain why teachers felt detailed feedback did not discourage students. However, some instructors identified challenges, such as misinterpretation, negative perceptions, or equating feedback solely with error correction. These mixed responses highlight the importance of clear, accessible feedback to enhance effectiveness and support student engagement.

Perceptions of the Areas That the Students Struggle Most and Common Mistakes

Instructors reported that students struggle most with generating (14) and organising ideas (16), alongside grammar (17) and vocabulary (13). These findings suggest that beyond surface-level issues, students face deeper challenges in conceptualising and structuring content. As P27 noted, "Idea generation is the biggest problem...they cannot relate ideas to create relevant content." Similarly, P18 emphasised, "The biggest challenge is extending the topic and giving relevant information."

Common errors included verb tenses (13), subject-verb agreement (11), run-on sentences (10), word order (7), and word form (7). Less frequent issues involved noun/adjective clauses, prepositions, fragments, L1 interference (3 each), collocations, singular-plural agreement, punctuation, spelling, conjunctions (2 each), and passive voice (1). These patterns suggest that while grammatical errors are prevalent, a broader range of lexical and syntactic issues contributes to students' difficulties.

Perceptions of the Effectiveness of Technological Tools to Give Feedback

Instructors highlighted both strengths and drawbacks in this area. Key benefits included promoting learner autonomy (5), saving time (21), and practicality (13). Participant 30 noted, "It saves time, the writings are stored more easily. The students also respond better." Criticisms included limited feedback

on content and organisation (6), inefficiency compared to handwritten feedback (7), superficial or inaccurate responses (4), and lack of individualised feedback (2). Some participants noted teacher laziness and reduced attentiveness (2), along with concerns about students' digital literacy (2) and issues like cheating and plagiarism (1). These drawbacks highlight that, despite its efficiency, technology cannot replace nuanced, personalised feedback.

Instructors' Suggestions and Concerns Regarding Corrective Feedback in EFL Settings

Three instructors recommended allocating more time and reducing teacher workload to facilitate face-to-face feedback, while three others suggested incorporating oral feedback sessions. P8 proposed dedicating an entire lesson to feedback. As P13 noted,

All instructors will do their best if they have sufficient time to provide feedback. Time and the number of students can be challenging for instructors. Some students even may [sic] need oral feedback in addition to written feedback, which, of course, depends on time.

The comment underscores the tension between the need for personalised feedback and practical limitations. Several instructors viewed technological tools as helpful in easing the feedback process, though this view was not unanimous (e.g., P16, P23, P25). P1 and P22 stressed the importance of addressing content, register, and organisation, while P3 and P25 emphasised raising students' awareness of the value of feedback.

Views on feedback approaches varied. Some instructors advocated flexible methods tailored to learners, while others preferred standardised procedures for consistency. This divergence points to the need for adaptable institutional policies. Suggestions also included integrating praise (P20, P22), providing timely, focused feedback, peer feedback, and self-evaluation (P16).

As P16 stated, "Feedback timing may vary, but it should be prompt and practical. Alternatives to teacher-centred feedback—like digital tools, peer, and self-feedback—should be considered." Additional suggestions included assigning instructors to specific learner groups (P4), adopting process-oriented feedback with multiple drafts and error codes (P15), and offering instruction on feedback strategies (P21), reflecting the multifaceted nature of effective WCF.

Instructors' Preferences for WCF

Preferences for the Scope of Feedback (Focused vs. Unfocused)

Survey results showed that 63.3% of instructors preferred unfocused feedback, while 36.7% opted for focused feedback. Those favouring unfocused feedback aimed to prevent fossilisation or students assuming that unmarked areas are correct:

Students complain when I don't correct all of them and they misunderstand that their paper is good when they see fewer corrections (P18).

I cannot stop myself correcting all the mistakes though I know sometimes just correcting the target structures is necessary as I feel they are going to fossilize the mistakes if I do not correct (P22).

Some cited institutional policies as shaping their choices. This highlights a tension between pedagogical ideals and institutional demands (see Table 2).

Conversely, instructors who preferred focused feedback tailored it to learners' proficiency, aiming to boost autonomy and avoid discouragement. Four instructors prioritised raising learner self-awareness, though selective feedback risks missing important errors. When choosing what to correct, instructors prioritised meaning-altering or frequent errors, also considering task aims and rubric criteria. The varied strategies reflect reflective practice but also suggest a lack of standardisation, raising fairness concerns.

Table 2. Instructors' Preferences Regarding the Scope of Feedback

Categories	Codes	<i>f</i>
Unfocused feedback	Not to create the idea of error-free sentences	5
	Not to cause fossilisation	3
	Due to school policy	3
	So that students can learn from their mistakes	1
	To clarify some mistakes	1
Focused feedback	Students' level requirements	5
	To raise self-awareness/learner autonomy	4
	Not to discourage students	2
	Correcting all errors makes it hard to remember	1
Criteria for error correction	Interference with meaning	11
	Error vs. mistake difference/repeated mistakes	10
	The purpose of the task	6
	Rubric	6
	Level of the students	5
	Impacting students' future learning	1

Preferences for WCF Strategies (Direct vs. Indirect)

Of the 30 instructors, 63.3% preferred direct feedback and 36.7% preferred indirect. Eight supporters of direct feedback also preferred indirect approaches depending on error type, draft stage, or student proficiency.

Three indirect feedback supporters emphasised flexibility. Direct feedback was favoured for lower-level students or single-draft tasks, while indirect feedback was preferred with more proficient learners or multi-draft writing (see Table 3).

Table 3. Instructors' Preferences for WCF Strategies

Categories	Codes	<i>f</i>
Reasons for direct feedback/correction of errors	Students' lack of attention to codes	5
	Good for low proficiency levels	5
	More practical/less time-consuming	5
	Students' lack of understanding of the codes	4
	To further clarify the mistakes	4
	Students' preference for direct feedback	3
	School policy, as we don't have drafts	2
	More useful	1

Categories	Codes	f
Reasons for indirect feedback/using error codes	Learners' discovery of their own mistakes	10
	Learning from their mistakes	4
	Promoting learner autonomy	3
	More process-oriented rather than product-oriented	2
	Making learning more permanent	2
	Initiating noticing	2
	Saving time/teacher-friendly	2
	More useful and meaningful	1

Time constraints and clarity were common reasons for choosing direct feedback. School policies also played a role:

It is more practical for me. When I use error codes, it does not help weaker students. When they try to correct mistakes, they make another one. Also, as I do not have enough time for face-to-face feedback, I feel safer when I correct errors and write my overall comments on the written work. (P1)

It depends on the policy of the school, but if I were to decide on the type of feedback, I would use mixed. Level 2 mistakes can be underlined, but mistakes that students cannot correct themselves or even do not recognise can be directly corrected or explained. (P24)

Document analysis confirmed that institutional guidelines often require direct correction. Still, several instructors valued indirect feedback for fostering learner independence:

Teaching students a correction code system and helping them get used to figuring out what their errors are based on codes is more useful than directly correcting errors. It helps them to become independent learners. Besides, working on the feedback and rewriting a text turns the writing activity into an ongoing process targeting development rather than a one-shot activity that yields a product to be given a score. (P15)

This highlights the pedagogical value of indirect feedback. Likewise, P21 emphasised the importance of cognitive engagement for deeper learning.

Professional Development Preferences for WCF and Technology-Based Feedback

Most instructors expressed interest in learning to use technology for feedback, with preferred formats including interactive in-service workshops. Motivations included staying current with digital tools, enhancing the effectiveness of feedback, saving time, and recognising the benefits of technology. In contrast, disinterest stemmed from confidence in existing skills, perceptions of ease of use, or the belief that technology offers no advantage over traditional methods. P15 emphasised the need for basic digital literacy, noting the importance of using Microsoft 365, online dictionaries, text analysers, paraphrasing tools, and plagiarism detection platforms.

Regarding general instruction on WCF strategy, more than half supported it to stay informed, encourage collaboration, compensate for the lack of formal education, and achieve a balanced approach. Those who declined cited confidence in their experience or methods. The findings indicate a strong inclination toward professional development in the use of technology for feedback.

Instructors' Self-Reported Practices of WCF

Factors That Affect Instructors' WCF Practices

The most cited categories influencing WCF practices were student-related factors (26)—proficiency (15), motivation (6), needs (2), coping skills (2), and familiarity with error codes (1)—and institution-related factors (15), including time constraints (8), policies (6), and class size (1).

Task-related factors (12) were also significant, involving task type or purpose (7), rubric criteria (3), and text length or genre (2). Error-related aspects (11) included type (4), severity (4), and frequency (3). Teacher-related factors (3)—such as burnout, workload, and mood—were noted less frequently. These findings reflect the complexity of WCF practices and the need to consider multiple contextual influences.

Areas That Instructors Focus on While Giving WCF

Instructors reported prioritising global issues such as content and organisation, consistent with their perceived importance. Grammar and vocabulary are followed in frequency. Spelling, punctuation, and capitalisation received the least attention (see Table 4).

Document analysis confirmed that the rubrics used also emphasise content, organisation, grammar, and vocabulary, aligning with the instructors' feedback focus.

Instructors' Practices of WCF Strategies

Instructors' self-reported practices were akin to their preference for the WCF strategy. They had mixed feelings about the use of direct and indirect feedback strategies, as reflected in their frequency of use (see Items 1 and 4 in Table 5).

The most frequently used strategy was to correct errors and provide comments. This aligns with school policy requiring instructors to give direct feedback on language errors and to use a rubric that addresses content and organisation, as well as language use, thereby necessitating comments on students' work.

Instructors' Practice of Drafting

Although the compulsory drafting policy had been removed, most instructors still required a second draft, while a smaller group did not. Reasons for assigning second drafts included providing extra practice, reinforcing learning, encouraging revision, enabling self-evaluation, and raising awareness of mistakes—principles aligned with the process approach, which emphasises iterative improvement. Nonetheless, those who did not require a second draft cited time constraints, a lack of institutional mandate, and workload concerns. This reflects the tension between pedagogical ideals and institutional limitations, highlighting the need for systemic support to sustain process writing practices.

Table 4. Areas That Instructors Focus on While Giving WCF

	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	Mean
	Percentages					
Content			3.3	16.7	80.0	4.77
Organisation			6.7	10.0	83.3	4.77
Grammar			6.7	33.3	60.0	4.53
Vocabulary			6.7	33.3	60.0	4.53
Spelling			23.3	43.3	33.3	4.10
Punctuation		3.3	20.0	40.0	36.7	4.10
Capitalisation		3.3	20.0	40.0	36.7	4.10

Table 5. Instructors' Practices of WCF Strategies

	Percentages					<i>Mean</i>
	Never	Rarely	Sometimes	Usually	Always	
1. The teacher gives clues or directions on how students can correct their work.		3.3	40.0	40.0	16.7	3.70
2. The teacher points out where the error is, but does not correct it.	6.7	23.3	40.0	23.3	6.7	3.00
3. The teacher corrects the error and makes a comment.		10.0	20.0	43.3	26.7	3.87
4. The teacher corrects the error.		13.3	26.7	36.7	23.3	3.70
5. The teacher gives the comments or codes, but errors are not corrected.	13.3	20.0	30.0	33.3	3.3	2.93
6. The teacher gives no feedback on an error.	56.7	33.3	10.0			1.53
7. The teacher gives feedback by making comments on ideas and content, but errors are not corrected.	20.0	26.7	43.3		10.0	2.53

Challenges That Instructors Experience While Giving WCF

Eleven instructors reported difficulties managing time and meeting deadlines, with large classes and heavy workloads cited as major obstacles to detailed feedback. P1 and P14 emphasised that class size and workload limited their ability to provide personalised feedback. Contextual factors such as incomprehensible student writing, challenges in providing content feedback, and restrictive institutional policies further affected the quality of feedback. As P15 explained, the single-draft, direct-feedback policy limited the use of correction codes and prevented assessment of students' progress through resubmission. These findings underscore concerns about the effectiveness of current feedback practices in supporting learning.

Strategies to Deal With Errors on Untaught Items and Feedback Neglect

When students ignored WCF, some instructors chose not to intervene, framing it as a matter of student autonomy, while others sought to raise awareness of the value of feedback, engaged in direct

discussions, or continued to provide feedback. For errors involving structures not yet taught, strategies varied: some corrected them directly, others ignored them, reformulated them using familiar language, or informed students that the structure would be covered later. A few provided oral feedback or referred students to supplementary resources. These findings illustrate instructors' flexible and adaptive approaches to untaught content and differing levels of student engagement with feedback.

Use of Technology to Give Feedback

When asked about their use of technological tools for providing feedback, responses varied: 20% of instructors reported frequent use, 30% occasional use, 16.7% rare use, and 33% indicated no use at all. The tools mentioned by the instructors included Google Docs or Microsoft Word (7), ChatGPT (7), Grammarly (6), PaperPal (2), Padlet (2), Turnitin (1), and hyperlinks (1).

Regarding the level of comfort of using technology to provide feedback, 7% of instructors reported feeling completely uncomfortable, 7% somewhat uncomfortable, 40% neutral, 33% slightly comfortable,

and 13% highly comfortable. These findings suggest a mixed level of technological proficiency and confidence among instructors. This may hinder the consistent and effective integration of technology into their feedback practices.

Some instructors integrate digital tools in feedback, but many remain hesitant. This underscores the need for professional development to improve technological literacy and promote confident, effective use of digital feedback tools.

Discussion

Instructors' Perceptions of WCF

Most instructors viewed WCF as essential for developing students' writing skills (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Osama, 2016). They supported both direct and indirect coded feedback with metalinguistic explanations and highlighted the value of one-on-one teacher–student conferences as effective practices (Ferris, 2014; Osama, 2016).

In terms of focus, instructors prioritised global issues (e.g., content and organisation) over local ones (e.g., mechanics). However, previous studies revealed a tendency to emphasise form over content in practice (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Lee, 2008; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). Mao and Crosthwaite (2019) attribute this to exam pressures, while Chen (2023) points to teachers' complex professional roles and practical challenges like workload. The emphasis on global issues in this study may also reflect institutional rubrics, which prioritise content and organisation. Further research is needed to explore the alignment between self-reported and actual feedback practices.

Most instructors believed their feedback was effective, citing improvements in students' writing scores or reductions in errors as evidence. Instructors also reported that students often struggled with organising ideas and language use, emphasising the need for instruction that fosters critical thinking, brainstorming,

and coherence. Grammatical issues—especially verb tenses, articles, and subject-verb agreement—were the most common error types, followed by lexical errors (which is consistent with earlier studies: Lira-Gonzales & Nassaji, 2020; Wei & Cao, 2020). To raise awareness, teachers might create worksheets using anonymised student errors, allowing learners to correct and reflect on common mistakes through data-driven tasks.

To improve the effectiveness of feedback, instructors proposed dedicating more time to oral feedback and one-on-one conferences (Ferris, 2014). These sessions address individual needs and promote clarity but require time and interpersonal skills and may cause anxiety (Hyland & Hyland, 2019). Although class time is allotted for peer/self-editing or oral feedback, large class sizes often limit detailed interaction. A potential solution could be a writing centre offering voluntary one-on-one sessions. Voice recordings may also supplement WCF, especially for content-related feedback.

Regarding technological tools, many instructors appreciated their practicality and time-saving benefits, though some questioned their reliability and depth, particularly for global issues. Research shows that AWE tools are more effective for surface-level errors, as many systems focus on grammar rather than content (Stevenson & Phakiti, 2019). However, integrating AWE with teacher feedback may allow instructors to concentrate more on higher-order concerns (Lin & Crosthwaite, 2024; Wilson & Czik, 2016). Professional development should highlight the pedagogical value of AWE tools while equipping teachers to evaluate and refine AI-generated suggestions.

Instructors' Preferences for WCF

Most instructors favoured unfocused WCF, echoing earlier findings (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Cheng & Zhang, 2021; Lee, 2019b; Li & Vuono, 2019; Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021; Liu, 2024; Mao et al., 2024; Osama, 2016). This preference is driven by concerns that uncorrected errors may be perceived

as accurate (Lee, 2019b; Osama, 2016) and by student preferences for comprehensive feedback (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Gedik Bal, 2022). However, focused feedback is often more accurate and easier to manage (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Bitchener & Knoch, 2009). Selective correction can enhance learners' processing of feedback (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012).

Feedback strategies should be tailored to learners' proficiency. Unfocused WCF suits advanced learners with fewer errors, while focused WCF benefits those with persistent issues (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Lee (2019b) suggests using unfocused feedback for essays and focused feedback for shorter texts. Instructors should engage in collaborative discussions to align practices with research and raise student awareness about feedback goals. Transparent communication and shared decisions on feedback focus, type, and frequency may also enhance motivation and engagement (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009). The observed variation in instructors' error prioritisation signals the need for clearer institutional guidelines and targeted professional development sessions.

Direct feedback was generally preferred (Hardman & Bell, 2019), as many students struggle to decode error codes or revise structures independently (Ekanayaka & Ellis, 2020). Yet some instructors supported indirect feedback to foster learner autonomy (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Fitriyah et al., 2024). Open-ended responses showed that most instructors adjust their strategy based on proficiency, which aligns with prior research (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014). Indirect feedback with codes was preferred for advanced learners in multi-draft systems, whereas direct feedback was preferred for lower-level students. This supports Ellis's (2009) view that beginners need more explicit correction, while advanced learners benefit from more independence (Li & Vuono, 2019; Lim & Renandya, 2020). Therefore, language proficiency should guide the choice of WCF strategies (Alshahrani & Storch, 2014; Ellis, 2009; Lim & Renandya, 2020).

While instructors felt confident in general WCF practices, many were open to learning about technology integration. In-house workshops could focus on using AI-based tools to correct surface-level errors, thereby saving time and allowing instructors to concentrate on content and organisation. For reliability, tools should allow teachers to review automated suggestions before implementation.

Instructors' Self-Reported WCF Practices

Instructors' WCF practices were primarily shaped by student-related factors, including proficiency, attitudes, needs, and effort (Alkhateeb & Daweli, 2024; Lee, 2008; Liu, 2024; Osama, 2016). Task-specific elements like purpose and rubric, along with the nature of errors, also influenced feedback decisions, particularly when errors hindered meaning (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010; Wei & Cao, 2020).

Although no longer mandated by school policy, instructors continued to encourage second drafts, believing this supports learning and fosters revision—a practice supported by Ferris (2014) and recent studies (Ekanayaka & Ellis, 2020). Reintroducing a process approach, especially in advanced classes, could be beneficial, as single-draft policies hinder the ability to gauge the impact of feedback.

Challenges such as large classes, heavy workloads, and limited time were common and consistent with previous research (Lee, 2009; Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021; Liu, 2024; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). Reducing class sizes in upper-level courses, where students produce longer texts, could improve the quality of feedback and reduce the teacher's burden. Technology can also alleviate some constraints. AWE tools, for instance, can manage local errors, enabling instructors to focus on global issues. Wilson and Czik (2016) found that combining AWE with teacher feedback cut time by 33–50% and improved attention to higher-order skills.

Fewer than half of the instructors felt confident using technology for feedback (Lee & Mao, 2024), but many expressed interest in further professional development opportunities. Even experienced users sought ways to enhance efficiency or explore new tools. As Ferris (2014) emphasises, teachers need opportunities to experiment with digital feedback systems to enrich their feedback practices and support student learning.

Contextual Constraints and Affordances in WCF

Contextual changes in the institution substantially shaped instructors' feedback practices and perceptions. Shifts from a process-oriented, multi-draft system to a single-draft policy diminished opportunities for revision (though some continued to ask students to rewrite) and led instructors to resort to more direct feedback, aligning with findings that contextual pressures often limit pedagogical choices (Lee, 2009; Mao & Crosthwaite, 2019). These policy-driven restrictions meant that feedback strategies increasingly reflected institutional feasibility rather than instructional preference, affecting how instructors perceived the effectiveness and purpose of their WCF.

Contextual affordances and disruptions, such as pandemic-related online teaching and temporary experimentation with PaperPal, also affected how instructors viewed the use of technology for feedback. Although instructors valued the practicality of digital tools, their actual use remained restricted due to the transition back to handwritten student work and the constraints of face-to-face instruction, consistent with research highlighting workload and time as major determinants of WCF practice (Lira-Gonzales et al., 2021; Liu, 2024). These constraints and affordances demonstrate that instructors' perceptions and practices were shaped not only by pedagogical beliefs but also by institutional policies, technological conditions, and the evolving realities of the teaching context.

Conclusion

Instructors cannot enhance the effectiveness of their WCF practices by following generic "best practices" alone. Instead, they must develop a nuanced, context-sensitive understanding of feedback, grounded in the specific realities of their teaching environments. Context significantly shapes teachers' beliefs and practices, as well as students' responses. To evaluate WCF effectiveness—particularly which strategies work best for which learners, in which contexts, and under what conditions—these contextual influences must be considered. This highlights the need to align WCF with curriculum goals, learner needs, and institutional conditions rather than treating it as a universal technique.

This study offers several implications for improving feedback practices. First, in-service education should promote critical reflection and re-evaluation of current strategies. Professional development should also strengthen teachers' feedback literacy to support principled decisions about the focus on errors and the type of feedback. Clearer institutional guidelines are needed to reduce inconsistencies in error prioritisation. AWE systems can handle local errors, allowing teachers to focus on content and organisation. AI tools with instructor-review functions could enhance trustworthiness and enable efficient feedback. One-on-one feedback preferences may be addressed through writing centres, dedicated office hours, or voice-recorded feedback for detailed comments on global issues. For advanced learners, institutional support for indirect feedback and second-draft submissions—paired with reduced workloads—could enhance both feedback quality and student engagement. Moreover, instructors can raise learners' feedback awareness by clarifying expectations and explaining instructional decisions, thereby improving student uptake and motivation. These recommendations stress integrating feedback into the writing curriculum so that it functions as a learning tool, not just a corrective one.

This study has limitations. While its findings are not broadly generalisable, they may be relevant to instructors in similar institutional contexts. Future research could triangulate survey data with analyses of students' papers or classroom observations to examine whether teachers' self-reported feedback strategies align with their actual practices. Including learners' perspectives could also provide deeper insights into how feedback is received and acted upon. Longitudinal studies could also explore how teachers' feedback literacy and students' writing development evolve over time.

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