Investigation of written corrective feedback in an EFL context: beliefs of teachers, their real practices and students’ preferences

By

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Abstract

Researchers have investigated students’ preferences in respect to written corrective feedback (WCF), but few have investigated teachers’ beliefs about the use of WCF. The studies that explored the extent to which teachers’ beliefs and students’ preferences correspond to teacher’ practices of WCF are scarce. More specifically, no such study has been conducted in Saudi Arabia. This study served to fill this gap by examining the WCF provided by three writing teachers in one Saudi university to 45 students written texts, by using follow up interviews with the teachers to investigate their beliefs and the reasons behind their current practices of giving WCF, and questionnaires completed by the students. Forty-one of the 45 students completed a questionnaire to investigate their preferences about WCF. The study found that the teachers used the comprehensive approach of giving WCF. This practice matched the students’ preferences and the teachers’ beliefs, except for one teacher. The teachers also focused their WCF on mechanics. However, this practice neither aligned to the teachers’ beliefs of focusing WCF on vocabulary and grammar, nor did it match the students’ preferences of focusing WCF on grammar. The teachers also mainly used indirect WCF with codes. However, this practice neither corresponded to the teachers’ beliefs of giving WCF type based on the level of students, nor did it accord to the students’ preferences of receiving direct WCF. Based on the interviews data, it was found that these mismatches were partially due to the lack of awareness about WCF practices. However, the mismatches in the extent and type of WCF were mainly because of the university’s requirements. These requirements also partially resulted in the lack of communication between the teachers and their students regarding the use of WCF. It can be concluded that context has a greater influence on teachers’ practices than their beliefs. Also, it has an impact on teachers inquiry about their students’ preferences.
Statement of Authorship

I declare that this thesis does not contain material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university, nor does it contain material previously published or written by any other person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.
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Table of Contents

Abstract ........................................................................................................................................... i
Statement of Authorship ................................................................................................................. ii
Acknowledgments ............................................................................................................................. iii
Chapter 1: Introduction .................................................................................................................. 4
Chapter 2: Literature Review ......................................................................................................... 6
  2.1 Types of WCF .......................................................................................................................... 7
    2.1.1 Direct versus indirect WCF .............................................................................................. 7
    2.1.2 Comprehensive versus selective WCF ............................................................................. 9
  2.2 Students’ attitudes and preferences about WCF .................................................................... 10
  2.3 Teachers’ beliefs and practices about WCF ........................................................................... 11
  2.4 Studies conducted in Saudi Arabia ......................................................................................... 15
  2.5 The need for further research ............................................................................................... 17
  2.6 The research questions .......................................................................................................... 17
Chapter 3: Methodology ................................................................................................................. 18
  3.1 Study Context ........................................................................................................................ 18
  3.2 Participants ............................................................................................................................ 20
    3.2.1. The students .................................................................................................................. 20
    3.2.2 The teachers ................................................................................................................ 20
  3.3 Data Collection ....................................................................................................................... 21
    3.3.1 The instruments ............................................................................................................. 22
    3.3.2 Data analysis ................................................................................................................ 24
Chapter 4: Results .......................................................................................................................... 28
  4.1 Teachers’ WCF Practices ....................................................................................................... 28
  4.2 Teachers’ Interviews .............................................................................................................. 30
    4.2.1 Importance of giving WCF ............................................................................................ 30
    4.2.2 The extent of WCF (comprehensive vs. selective WCF) ............................................... 31
    4.2.3 The focus of WCF ....................................................................................................... 32
    4.2.4 Types of WCF (direct vs. indirect) given on writing errors ......................................... 32
    4.2.5 Teachers’ inquiry about students’ preferences for WCF ............................................. 33
  4.3 Student Questionnaire .......................................................................................................... 36
4.3.1 The importance of receiving WCF and students’ preferences for comprehensive or selective WCF .......................................................... 36
4.3.2 The students’ preference for the focus of WCF ................................ 37
4.3.3 The students’ perceptions of and preferences for WCF type .......... 37

Chapter 5: Discussion .............................................................................. 40
  5.1 Teachers’ Practices and Beliefs About WCF ................................. 40
  5.2 Students’ preferences regarding WCF and their accordance with teachers’ practices .. 44

Chapter 6: Conclusions ........................................................................ 46
  6.1 Summary of the findings ................................................................. 46
  6.2 Implications .................................................................................. 47
  6.3 Limitations .................................................................................... 48
  6.4 Future Research ........................................................................... 49

References ............................................................................................... 50

Appendices ............................................................................................. 56
  Appendix 1: Error codes list ............................................................... 56
  Appendix 2: Students’ plain language forms (English and Arabic versions) ........................................................................ 57
  Appendix 3: Teachers’ plain language form ........................................ 61
  Appendix 4: samples of the teachers’ WCF ........................................ 63
  Appendix 5: The topics of the students’ essays .................................... 64
  Appendix 6: The students’ questionnaire (English and Arabic version) ........................................................................ 65
  Appendix 7: Teachers’ Interviews Questions ....................................... 71
List of Tables

Table 3.1: The teachers’ background information .......................................................... 21
Table 3.2: Written corrective feedback categorizations with examples .......................... 25
Table 4.1: WCF points given by the three teachers ......................................................... 28
Table 4.2: The distribution of the types of WCF given by the three teachers ................. 29
Table 4.3: A summary of the teachers’ practices and beliefs about WCF ...................... 34
Table 4.4: The students’ preferences for the focus of WCF .......................................... 36
Table 4.5: The students’ perceptions and preferences for the type of WCF ................... 37
Table 4.6: The teachers’ practices and the students’ preferences for WCF ..................... 38

List of abbreviations:

WCF: written corrective feedback
EFL: English as a foreign language
ESL: English as a second language
IELTS: International English language Testing System
Chapter 1: Introduction

Writing in a second language is a complex skill which requires composition teachers to exert considerable efforts in order to assist their students to improve it. Finding the best ways to develop second–language writing skills has been a major objective for teachers and educational researchers (Polio, 2003).

One method which is commonly employed to help students to learn how to improve their writing is the provision of feedback. Giving feedback is seen as an essential part of teaching writing by both English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers and students. Feedback is defined as “any procedure used to inform a learner whether an instructional response is right or wrong” (Kepner,1991: 141). Feedback can take different forms such as teacher written feedback, peer feedback and oral feedback or conferencing. Teacher written feedback has been found to be the most preferable form of feedback for second language (L2) students (Jacob et al 1998). Teacher written feedback can cover all the different aspects of writing, including content, organization and form. Feedback which specifically indicates errors of language, such as in grammar, vocabulary and mechanics, is called written corrective feedback (WCF) and is probably the most commonly
form of written feedback used by ESL and EFL teachers (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). WCF has been found to be the most desirable kind of teacher written feedback for students but also the most time-consuming task for writing teachers (Ferris, 2003).

The effectiveness of WCF on writing accuracy has been hotly debated among researchers (e.g., Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999; Truscott, 1996; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). The debate was aroused by Truscott (1996), when he called teachers to abandon giving feedback on students’ writing as he argued that it may not only be unhelpful but actually detrimental to their writing. Nevertheless, several well-designed studies (e.g., Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen, 2010) have found that WCF can be beneficial for the accuracy of students’ writing.

Although the debate about the effectiveness of WCF has not yet been totally resolved, L2 students want feedback on their writing and expect to receive it from their teachers; they want to know if the writing they have produced is accurate or not (Ferris, 2004). Moreover, teachers generally consider that giving feedback on students’ writing is important and they believe that WCF can play a significant role in improving the accuracy of their students’ writing (Brown, 2007; Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In fact, teachers’ beliefs may have an impact on their teaching practices and the provision of the written corrective feedback. Thus, both teachers and students strongly encourage the use of WCF.

It is apparent from previous studies that teachers’ beliefs and students’ preferences are important determinants of the use of feedback. However, studies that have examined the extent to which teachers’ beliefs match their practices of WCF and teachers’ practices match students’ preferences are scarce, especially in the EFL context. More specifically, no study to date has examined the concordance between teachers’ beliefs and students’ preferences with teachers’ practices of WCF in Saudi Arabia.

The aim of the study described in this thesis was to investigate EFL teachers’ beliefs and practices of WCF in Saudi Arabia and to what extent they match. It also aimed to investigate
students’ preferences about WCF and to examine to what extent they align with their teachers’ practices.

This thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter two situates the study and presents the related literature, and ends with specification of the research questions. Chapter three describes the methodology and how data were analysed, and chapter four outlines the findings. In chapters five and six respectively, the discussion of the main findings and conclusions are presented.

**Chapter 2: Literature Review**

This chapter contains discussion of the literature to date about teacher written feedback and the various types of WCF. The review includes studies that have investigated students’ perceptions and preferences about WCF. Teachers’ beliefs and the studies that have examined the alignment between teachers’ beliefs and their practices are also discussed. The last section provides a detailed discussion of the studies that have investigated teacher written feedback in Saudi Arabia, where the current study also took place.

Feedback is seen as an essential factor in the improvement of students’ writing. Its aim is not only to indicate weaknesses in writing but to highlight the strong points (Bottcher, 2011). Feedback became more popular as a writing teaching tool after the writing process approach was introduced in North America in the seventies, in which it was initially used in classes for students writing in their first language (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In second language classes written feedback is typically provided on all aspects of writing, including content, organisation, and language. However, most research to date has focused on WCF (Russell & Spada, 2006). WCF has been identified by other names, such as teacher commentary (Fazio, 2001), teacher response (Harris, 1977; Searle & Dillon, 1980), teacher comments (Bardine et
al., 2000; McAndrew & Reigstad, 2001; Smith, 1989), teacher corrections (Fazio, 2001), and teacher editing (Feng & Powers, 2005).

There has been some controversy with regard to the value of WCF in improving students’ writing. As noted earlier, debate was aroused by Truscott’s (1996) article, when he called teachers to stop applying WCF as it was not beneficial and potentially harmful. Truscott’s argument was rebutted by Ferris (1999); she claimed that the evidence of the effectiveness of WCF in improving students’ writing could be seen in their revision of their writing. Ferris also added that students value WCF and their perspective should not be neglected. Since this debate in the literature, a substantial body of research has been conducted to examine the effectiveness of WCF and the findings were inconclusive. Some studies (e.g., Kepner, 1991; Robb et al., 1986; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992) found that WCF has no effect on students’ writing, while others (e.g., Bitchener et al., 2005; Ellis et al., 2008; Hartshorn et al., 2010; Sheen, 2007; Sheen et al., 2009), found that WCF had a positive effect on the accuracy of students’ writing.

It is notable that most of the studies which have been conducted to investigate the effectiveness of WCF have been of an experimental nature. Their methods of examining the effectiveness WCF differ greatly from what actually happens in classrooms. In order to produce more credible and valid findings, more qualitative studies looking at what actually happens in language classrooms, are needed (Storch, 2010).

### 2.1 Types of WCF

The type of WCF may play a role in the effectiveness of feedback. The main types of WCF are direct, indirect, comprehensive, and selective WCF.

#### 2.1.1 Direct versus indirect WCF
Direct WCF, also called overt WCF, involves the teacher identifying an incorrect structure and providing its correct form (Ferris 2003). This may include deleting needless phrases or words, supplying absent words or phrases or offering the correct the form which is usually placed above the error (see Figure 2.1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Went</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He goed to the city yesterday.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>am</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I ∧ studying very hard every day.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 2.1: Examples of direct WCF**

Indirect WCF, on the contrary, involves the teacher indicating the structure that has an error but without giving explicit correction (Ferris 2003). The student then has to correct the error by himself. Indirect WCF can vary in terms of its implicitness and take different forms including putting a circle around the error, underlining it, indicating the number of errors on the paper’s margin, or placing a code (e.g. VT (verb tense) or WW (wrong word)) to indicate it is the error’s place and type (Ferris & Roberts, 2001) (see Figure 2.2).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>They did their homework every day.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>She arrived to the English club weekly.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 1.2: Examples of indirect WCF**

Several studies have compared the effectiveness of direct and indirect WCF, but the findings are mixed and inconclusive. Some researchers (e.g., Bitchener et al., 2005; Sheen et al.,2009) have found that direct WCF can be more effective than indirect WCF, especially for less proficient students who need more information to enable them to identify and avoid more difficult errors, such as errors related to syntactical structures or idiomatic expressions. Other studies (e.g., Lalande, 1982; Lee, 1997), however, have found that indirect WCF can be more
effective as it can help learners in promoting long-term acquisition. The explanation for this is that indirect WCF engages learners in a process of problem solving, leading them to notice and reflect on their errors more efficiently (Ferris and Roberts, 2001). In general, the literature suggests that direct WCF can be more beneficial for errors that are untreatable (i.e., errors that students may have difficulty in correcting them by themselves and which have no specific rules), whereas indirect WCF can be more effective when given in relation to treatable errors (i.e., errors that students may be able to self-correct and which have specific rules) (Ferris, 2006).

2.1.2 Comprehensive versus selective WCF

Comprehensive WCF, also called unfocused WCF, refers to the feedback that covers all errors in students’ writing. The use of a comprehensive WCF approach has been found to be very common among writing teachers (e.g., Ferris, 2006; Lee, 2004; 2008;). However, the comprehensive WCF approach has been found to create too great a burden on teachers and leads to the de-motivation of students, as their papers become full of corrections (Ferris, 2002). In contrast, selective WCF, also called focused WCF, refers to feedback which focuses on a very limited number of errors. Selective feedback has been found to be effective for improving writing accuracy in several studies (e.g., Bitchener, 2008; Ellis et al., 2008; Sheen et al., 2009). Selective feedback has also been found to be more manageable, for both students and teachers, than correcting every error (Evans et al., 2010). However, focusing feedback on just one or two errors has been questioned by researchers on the basis that students can make different errors in the same piece of writing which need to be given feedback (Van Beuningan, 2010). Therefore, selecting several errors can be more practical and beneficial for learners (Ferris, 2010; Storch, 2010).
2.2 Students’ attitudes and preferences about WCF

Teachers’ understanding of students’ attitudes and preferences about their feedback is an important consideration in the feedback process. This can help teachers to become more aware of any misunderstood practices of giving feedback, helping them to modify and improve their practices. It can also motivate students to respond actively to their teachers’ feedback.

Several studies (e.g., Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Leki, 1991; Rennie, 2000; Saito, 1994; Wang, 2010), have investigated students’ perceptions and preferences with respect to their teachers’ WCF. The studies found that students valued their teachers’ WCF and preferred it to be indirect. An example of those studies was that conducted by Leki (1991) in which 100 ESL university students were given a questionnaire to investigate the extent to which students were concerned about errors in their writing. It also inquired about the students’ opinions of the best ways of giving WCF. Leki found that students were very concerned about errors in their writing and aimed to have as few errors as possible. In addition, the students preferred to receive indirect WCF with codes explaining the nature of their writing errors. In contrast, other studies (e.g., Diab, 2005; Halimi, 2008; Lee, 2004) found that students preferred to receive direct WCF.

Few researchers have investigated students’ beliefs and preferences about their teachers’ written corrective feedback and also examined their alignment with their teachers’ practices. Lee (2004) conducted one such study, administering a questionnaire to 320 secondary school students in Hong Kong to investigate their perceptions and preferences about their teachers’ WCF. Follow up interviews were conducted with 27 students. Lee also examined teachers’ error correction by giving a written text developed by her to 58 teachers to be corrected. Lee found that 83% of the students wanted their teachers’ WCF to cover all their errors, and the
students’ preferences aligned strongly with their teachers’ WCF practices. In addition, most of the students (76%) preferred to receive direct WCF on their errors, a figure which correlated with their teachers’ use of direct feedback (65%). Most of the students admitted that they faced difficulty in comprehending some of the error codes in their feedback. Finally, almost half of Lee’s participants believed that it was their teachers’ responsibility to locate their writing errors whereas the other half felt that it was their own job to do so.

The abovementioned studies focused on one part of the WCF process; teachers are the other important component of this process. In fact, most of previous research “has relied too heavily on either student reports or researchers descriptions and judgments without adequately consulting teachers themselves as informants about what they do with feedback and why” (Ferris et al, 2011, p.19). Therefore, investigating teachers’ beliefs and also comparing them to their practices can be essential for a comprehensive investigation of the effectiveness of WCF. The next section discusses teachers’ beliefs and the studies that compared teachers’ beliefs about written feedback with their practices.

2.3 Teachers’ beliefs and practices about WCF

Teachers’ beliefs in relation to teaching of a second language and the pivotal role which they play in determining their practices have long been a topic of discussion in the literature (Phipps & Borg, 2009; Sommers, 1982; Zamel, 1985). The term ‘teachers’ beliefs’ was defined by Borg (2001) as the conscious or unconscious ideas that teachers hold which act as a guide to their opinions of instruction and which are echoed in their performance in the classroom. Multiple factors have been found to play a role in shaping teachers’ beliefs, notably the experience of learning (Pajares, 1992), teaching experience, and context (Pennington, 1996).

Context has been shown to have an impact on teachers’ beliefs, but it has also been found to influence their practices, particularly affecting teachers’ practices of giving written feedback.
Feedback occurs within interconnected subsystems (Brock, 1994). Hyland and Hyland (2006) asserted that feedback is impacted by teachers’ beliefs and the institutions and cultures in which teachers work. Casanave (2003) stated that policy and society (uneven authority relations) can play a significant role in situating and shaping teachers’ practices of feedback. In fact, it can be “laden with political content” (Leki, 1992, p. 125).

Only a few studies have investigated teachers’ beliefs and practices about teacher written feedback and also examined the alignment between them. An example is the study by Lee (2004), which aimed to investigate teachers’ beliefs and practices with regard to error correction (as well as students’ beliefs and preferences about their teachers’ written feedback, as described earlier). Lee administered a questionnaire to 206 teachers in Hong Kong. Immediately after they completed their questionnaires, 58 of the 206 participating teachers completed a correction task involving a written text developed by the researcher. In the task, teachers were asked to correct the errors in the same way they would correct their own students’ writing in their classes. The researcher then interviewed 19 of the teachers who participated in the correction task to produce an in-depth understanding of their views about error correction. Lee’s analysis of questionnaire data showed that the teachers preferred the comprehensive approach, which aligned with their correction of almost all errors in the given task. It was also found that a majority of the teachers stated that they preferred using direct feedback, which was also aligned with their practices in the correction task in which about 65% of the errors were corrected in this way. Indirect feedback with codes was the only other feedback type that the teachers used. The findings also revealed that the teachers felt that it was their responsibility to correct all their students’ writing errors; however, almost all of them reported that their students should learn how to identify and correct their own errors. Finally, Lee found that some of the teachers’ corrections (31%) were inaccurate. The teachers explained that this was due to some of the difficulties they faced when attempting to find the relevant codes to be given on errors. Lee concluded that teachers needed better training on error correction. However, as the teachers’ correction was done on an artificial text and in a
different situation of their actual class, it was possible that they had deviated from their normal practices.

Like Lee, Ferris (2006) investigated the consistency of teachers’ practices (in this case in relation to the error correction chart provided by their institution) and aimed to establish whether their correction of errors was accurate. Ferris investigated the strategies used by teachers in one US university for correcting freshmen texts over one semester (i.e., 15 weeks). At the end of the semester, the researcher interviewed three teachers to probe their views about their practices. Ferris found that although the teachers were aware of the chart of error correction that advised them to just use coded indirect feedback, they mostly used direct correction (60%) or uncoded indirect feedback (10%) and sometimes provided incorrect codes on the errors. It was also found that the most corrected errors were in spelling. Ferris also found that the teachers provided indirect feedback on treatable errors, whereas direct feedback was given on untreatable errors. In interviews, teachers stated that they adapted their strategies based on their intuition of the type of error. Ferris concluded that although the teachers did not follow the strategies recommended by the university and were inconsistent in their correction, they were able to adjust their correction strategies to the students’ needs.

A study by Montgomery and Baker (2007) also aimed at comparing teachers’ beliefs and practices in respect to feedback. Their participants were 15 ESL teachers who were teaching writing in an intensive program in an English Language institute in the US. The teachers attended regular meetings every week in which they were instructed to focus their feedback on global issues (i.e. content and organization) in first drafts and to focus on local issues (i.e. form) in final drafts. Montgomery and Baker gave the teachers a questionnaire in which they were asked to estimate the amount of feedback they gave on different aspects of their students’ writing (i.e., organisation, content, form) and in the different drafts (first vs. final). The researchers then collected 12 compositions, including the first and final drafts, which were taken from the portfolios of six of the teachers’ students. The researchers calculated the frequencies of the teachers’ feedback given in different categories in the 12 compositions.
The researchers found that the teachers’ practices of giving written feedback were very
different to their beliefs as reported in the questionnaires. They found that teachers
overestimated the amount of the feedback they gave on global issues (i.e., organisation) and
underestimated the feedback they gave on local issues (i.e., form) in the final drafts. In fact,
most of the teachers’ feedback on the two drafts was related to form. The practices of
teachers were different from what they believed in and instructed to do in their weekly
meetings. The researchers noted that when the teachers were told about this discrepancy, they
were very surprised. This indicates that teachers clearly are not always aware of their actual
practices of feedback.

Lee (2008) investigated how secondary school teachers (n=26) in Hong Kong responded to
their students’ writing and whether their practices aligned with the principles recommended
in the curriculum documents. To do so, Lee collected 174 students’ texts from the
participating teachers (i.e. six to seven students’ texts were collected by each teacher). After
the texts were analysed, Lee conducted interviews with six of the teachers to inquire about
the factors that impacted their practices of giving feedback. The findings indicated that the
teachers’ practices, such as focusing mainly on form and giving feedback on only one draft,
contradicted the curriculum documents’ recommendations about how feedback should be
given. Based on the interview data, Lee also identified four factors that influenced the
teachers’ practices. The first factor was related to accountability; some of the teachers felt
they were accountable to school administrators and believed that using selective feedback
would be advantageous for students. However, because it was mandatory by their schools to
correct all writing errors, the teachers did not apply what they believed in to be beneficial for
students. Some teachers also were accountable to parents, and students to give detailed
feedback, otherwise they would have been seen as lazy. The second factor was related to
teachers’ beliefs, such as ‘grammar is important than organisation’ and which dictated the
practices of some of the teachers. The third factor was related to the predominance of exam
culture and that teachers gave feedback based on what would help students for their
upcoming exams. The fourth factor was related to lack of training on how to give feedback.
Lee concluded that many factors may impact teachers’ practices of feedback, and that these can be mediated significantly by their respective contexts.

The studies reviewed above revealed some discrepancies between teachers’ beliefs and their practices (except for Lee, 2004). These discrepancies were relative to extent, focus, and type of feedback. The reasons that contributed to the occurrence of such discrepancies were mainly related to lack of training, lack of awareness about actual practices, and the context in which the process of feedback occurred. These different factors may constitute what Densgcombe (1982) has called the “hidden pedagogy” (p. 249). The studies that investigated the alignment between teachers’ beliefs and their practices were mainly conducted in western countries, except for Lee’s (2004; 2008) studies. The next section contains a discussion of studies that have looked at teachers’ feedback in the context of the Saudi Arabian educational system.

2.4 Studies conducted in Saudi Arabia

Only two studies of teacher written feedback in Saudi Arabian settings have been conducted to date. These studies looked at either students’ perceptions and beliefs or teachers’ beliefs. The study by Grami (2004) focused on students’ perceptions about written feedback and Hamouda (2011) focused on the perceptions and preferences of both students and teachers about written feedback.

Grami (2005) investigated the perceptions and beliefs of 36 Saudi EFL students about teacher’s written feedback. He aimed to see whether Saudi students valued receiving written feedback on their own written work and also whether they believed in the effectiveness of their teacher’s feedback at improving the accuracy of their subsequent writing. To do so, he used a questionnaire which was divided into two sections. The first section inquired about the students’ beliefs about surface-level errors feedback (i.e., WCF). The second section also
inquired about the students’ beliefs about WCF, but this time by showing them examples of errors with feedback given on them. Grami found that the students wanted and valued the written feedback provided by their teachers and also believed that feedback on form is of great importance in improving their subsequent writing accuracy. Although Grami’s findings provide some insights into Saudi students’ perceptions of feedback, he did not inquire about the reasons for students’ beliefs which may have provided a broader understanding of students’ beliefs and preferences for written feedback.

Hamouda (2011) aimed to identify the attitudes and preferences of 200 first year Saudi EFL students and 20 of their teachers about written feedback. The study also aimed to identify any difficulties that the students and their teachers faced in the process of feedback. Different questionnaires were given to the teachers and the students. The findings indicated that both the students and their teachers valued the written feedback. The findings also revealed that there was substantial agreement between the teachers’ and students’ preferences with regard to the use of red pen for marking, giving constructive criticism and placing written comments at the end of an essay. However, there were a few discrepancies, such as the teachers’ preference for coded feedback not being shared by the students. Another discrepancy was related to the method of delivering feedback. While the students mostly preferred receiving feedback in a comprehensive way, the teachers preferred giving it selectively. The study also found that the teachers and their students faced some difficulties in the process of feedback. For the teachers, the foremost problem they faced was the immense expenditure of time and effort in giving feedback. The students’ difficulties included fear of making other mistakes when responding to the given feedback, the vagueness of feedback provided by their teachers, and the difficulty of rewriting the papers after they had been overwhelmed by feedback. Although Hamouda’s study revealed the difference between teachers’ and students’ preferences, it would have been better if the researcher inquired about the reasons behind those preferences. Also, the study would have produced more useful results by comparing the teachers’ beliefs with their practices to investigate their alignment.
2.5 The need for further research

The literature review above confirms that studies that have investigated both teachers’ beliefs and practices and students’ preferences are scarce. Furthermore, none of the studies conducted in Saudi Arabia so far has investigated the actual feedback provided by English writing teachers and examined to what extent these practices are aligned with their beliefs and students’ preferences. The study described in this thesis was an attempt to address this gap in research in the Saudi Arabian context. By doing so, it was intended that the study would contribute new knowledge to the existing literature by giving more insights about this specific context. In addition, the study was designed to give the teachers of writing in Saudi Arabia the chance to reflect on the feedback they give on their students’ writing.

2.6 The research questions

1 What are the practices of Saudi EFL teachers of writing with regard to written corrective feedback?

2 What are the beliefs of Saudi EFL teachers of writing with regard to written corrective feedback?

3 Do Saudi EFL teachers’ beliefs and practices align?

4 What are the preferences of Saudi EFL students with regard to written corrective feedback?

5 Do Saudi EFL students’ preferences accord with teachers’ practices?
Chapter 3: Methodology

In the previous chapter the author reviewed the literature about written feedback by discussing the types of written corrective feedback and the studies that investigated students’ preferences about it. Teachers beliefs and the studies that compared them with teachers’ practices were also described. The final section of chapter 2 discussed the studies that have investigated teacher written feedback in the context of Saudi Arabia. The aim of this study was to investigate teachers’ beliefs and practices about WCF in Saudi Arabia and examine the extent to which they match. Also, it aimed to investigate students’ preferences about WCF and examine their alignment with teachers’ practices. In this chapter, the context of the study is outlined as well as information about the participants. The instruments that have been used to gather the data and how data were analyzed are also discussed. The information about the context is based on the official website of King Abdul Aziz University (Eli.kau.edu.sa n.d.), the English language coordinator’s emails and calls and the participating teachers’ interviews.

3.1 Study Context

The study took place at King Abdul Aziz University, one of the oldest and largest universities in Saudi Arabia, located in Jeddah city. The data were collected from teachers and students in the preparatory year program of the university. This program is for one year and currently offered in almost all Saudi universities. The preparatory year program has various courses and aims to bridge the gap between secondary school education and university studies in order to prepare students for their major study specialisations. The English language course is part of the preparatory year curriculum at King Abdul Aziz University. It is an intensive course and is designed to assist students accomplish an intermediate level of proficiency of English language use within one academic year. Students are assigned into their relevant level after admission based on a placement test – the Oxford Online Placement Test (OOPT). The course has four levels of teaching: beginner, elementary, pre-intermediate, and
intermediate. Each level of the English language course is taught as a seven-week module at the rate of 18 hours of instruction each week. Students are taught the four key skills (reading, listening, speaking, and writing) in an integrated fashion by using the *New Headway Plus Special Edition textbook series* (New Headway Plus Special Edition textbook series, Oxford University Press n.d.). The assessment for each level is based on mid-module and final examinations (70%) and continuous assessment (30%) for speaking and writing throughout the level. In order for students to achieve acceptance into their targeted colleges, they must pass all requirements of level four (the intermediate level).

In writing classes of level four, students study four units which have different topics (e.g. friendship, travelling, advantages and disadvantages of the internet). Students undertake activities from their textbooks that are designed to equip them with the essential skills to produce a well-structured essay. Some of the activities focus on vocabulary to equip students with the necessary words for their writing. Other activities focus on sentence structure and how sentences are linked by using linking words. Still other activities focus on grammar. Students are also trained to brainstorm ideas through working in groups. The teachers show their students how to structure an essay using an example on the whiteboard. Students then start writing a three-paragraph essay of 150 words on the topic of their current unit of study, which they hand them to their teachers at the end of the class. The teachers return the essays to the students in the next class along with written feedback. Teachers give feedback on students’ writing errors based on an error codes list which was adapted by the English language centre from International English Language Testing System (IELTS) coding system (See Appendix 1 for the error codes list). Writing teachers are required to use the codes prescribed by the English department when correcting their students’ writing errors. The writing teachers are also supervised by a writing coordinator who regularly checks students’ written essays and teacher’s feedback. The university’s policy of giving feedback is that it should be based on the error codes list and be comprehensive – meaning feedback is provided on all errors. After the first draft with teacher feedback is returned to the students, they start writing the final draft on which they are assessed.
3.2 Participants

3.2.1. The students

The student participants were 45 Saudi males who were studying in level four (the intermediate level) of the English language course at the preparatory year, King Abdul Aziz University. The students’ age ranged from 18 to 21 years old. They were native speakers of Arabic and had been studying English for an average of seven years. The students were approached in their classrooms by their writing teachers (who agreed to participate) who explained to the students the aim of the study and what their participation involved. The students then agreed to participate by sending their essays with teacher feedback to the researcher. Only 41 of them completed the questionnaires.

3.2.2 The teachers

The participating teachers were three and were invited by the researcher via an e-mail (explaining briefly the aim of the study) which was initially forwarded to them and to other teachers by the English language course coordinator. From a number of teachers’ responses, the three participating teachers were selected in consultation with the coordinator. The three participating teachers differed in their years of experience in teaching (EFL) and also differed in their countries of origin. The teachers were teaching writing in level four in the English language course at the preparatory year, King Abdul Aziz University (see Table 3.1 for a summary of the teachers’ background information).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teacher</th>
<th>Years of experience</th>
<th>Country of origin</th>
<th>Major</th>
<th>Previous training in giving written feedback</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>2 years</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Master degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>9 years</td>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>Master degree in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>1 year</td>
<td>England</td>
<td>Bachelor degree in Finance + a Certificate in English Language Teaching to Adults (CELTA)</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1: The teachers’ background information

3.3 Data Collection

This study obtained ethics clearance from the University of Melbourne Research Ethics Committee. An approval was also obtained from King Abdul Aziz University to conduct the study and collect the data. All participants received information (in their L1) about the study and signed consent forms (see Appendices 2 and 3 for students and teachers plain language forms). The data collection process took six weeks, which started on the 2\(^{nd}\) of April and finished on the 10\(^{th}\) of May 2013.
3.3.1 The instruments

The instruments used in this study were students’ written texts with teacher feedback, questionnaires for the students, and interviews with the teachers. These instruments are described in detail below.

1. Students’ written texts

The aim of collecting students’ written texts was to investigate teachers’ practices in giving WCF. After getting the students’ consent, the teachers collected 45 essays from their students with teacher feedback given on them (i.e. 15 essays were collected by each teacher representing different levels of proficiency); the English Language course coordinator scanned and emailed them to the researcher in Melbourne. (see Appendix 4 for samples of the teachers WCF). The essays were written in classes and were about different topics the students found in their textbooks. The essays were about advantages and disadvantages tasks. The students’ essays were first drafts and were not assessed. Each essay was required to contain about 150 words (see Appendix 5 for essays’ topics).

2. The student questionnaire

The aim of the student questionnaire was to elicit the students’ attitudes and preferences about their teachers’ WCF. The questionnaire was a modified version of the instrument used by Lee (2004). It was piloted with two Saudi students who were studying English Language in Melbourne.

The questionnaire had two sections. The first section was about the students’ background information. The second section inquired about the students’ attitudes and preferences in respect to the extent, focus, and type of their teachers’ WCF. Three of the questions were open-ended and were included to compensate for the fact that there were no interviews and
also to inquire further about the students’ reasons for their preferences about WCF. Short examples of WCF types were provided to help the students to answer questions accurately. The questionnaire was translated into Arabic to improve ease of response.

In mid-April 2013 the questionnaire was sent to the English Language program coordinator who gave it to the teachers. The teachers then distributed questionnaires to the students who had agreed to allow their essays to be sent to the researcher. The coordinator scanned and sent the completed questionnaires (41 questionnaires) to the researcher (See Appendix 6 for the questions contained in the student questionnaire).

3. Teachers’ interviews

The interview’s questions were adopted from Lee’s (2004), with some modifications. These modifications were based on the analysis of the teachers’ WCF given in the students’ essays (see Chapter 4 – Results, section 4.1). The aim of conducting the interviews was to investigate the teachers’ beliefs about WCF as well as the reasons behind their practices of WCF. The interviews were semi-structured, which requires the investigator asking interviewees open-ended questions to get significant and in-depth information (Creswell, 2005; McKay, 2006), and also to give the teachers room to express their beliefs and the reasons behind their practices in greater details. The interview consisted of two parts. Part one was about the teachers’ background information. Part two was about their beliefs regarding WCF and the reasons for their current WCF practices. The interviews were conducted in early May 2013, via Skype and were recorded using “Pamela” Software. Each interview lasted for about 30 minutes. The interviews were conducted in English with teachers (A and C), whereas with teacher B, it was conducted in Arabic (See Appendix 7 for a list of the interview questions).
3.3.2 Data analysis

1. Students’ written texts

In order to discover the common ways of giving feedback implemented by the teachers, the feedback points given in-text were identified from five students’ essays taken randomly from each teacher. A feedback point refers to any comment, underlining, or correction made on the student’s written text – that is, a written intervention made by the teacher (Hyland, 2003). For the purpose of this study, only the feedback points given in-text were identified. In-text feedback points (i.e., corrective feedback points) were identified and categorised following the categorisation adopted by Storch and Tapper (2000). Three categories were used:

- Focus on grammar, including morphological errors such as errors in verb tense and syntactical errors such as providing unnecessary words;

- Focus on mechanics, including errors in spelling, punctuation and capitalisation; and

- Focus on language expression, including lexical errors such as wrong words or unclear meanings.

These three categories were each further subcategorised into direct feedback, in which the correct form was provided, and indirect feedback, in which the error was indicated by underlining, circling or giving a symbol (See Table 3.2 for a summary of the categorisation of the written corrective feedback points with examples taken from the students’ written texts).
To increase reliability in this study, a second rater (a student studying for a Masters degree of Applied Linguistics) was used. The researcher trained the second rater in the coding by selecting one of the students’ written essays and showing how to identify the WCF points, their focus (i.e. grammar, mechanics or language expression), and their type (direct or indirect). The second rater then coded the teachers’ WCF for other five students’ essays, that

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus of corrective feedback (In-text comments)</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Grammar</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>studied</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>studying</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>VT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>He travel yester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Language expression</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>I went to the city (middle)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>WW</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>My live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Mechanics</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct</td>
<td>parnts (parents)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>indirect</td>
<td>SP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>chang</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 3.2: Written corrective feedback categorizations with examples**
were initially coded by the researcher, independently. Comparison of the coding of the researcher and the second rater indicated strong agreement on identifying WCF points (82%), the focus of WCF (86%), and the type of WCF (100%).

2. The students’ questionnaire

The questionnaires were analysed quantitatively and qualitatively. The students’ responses to the questionnaires items were counted manually as well as calculating the percentages; without using a certain software as other descriptive statistics (e.g. t-test, or correlation) were not employed. The two methods (counting frequency and calculating percentages) are used for descriptive statistics to describe raw data (Salkind, 2012).

The students’ responses to the open ended questions of the questionnaires were analysed qualitatively manually. The students’ responses to each question were transcribed in a separate sheet and then were translated into English. The responses were then read and coded for similar themes. The common themes were then grouped. As for question 1 in the questionnaire, three main reasons were identified; for question 2, two main reasons were identified; and for question 3, two main reasons were identified.

3. Teachers’ interviews analysis

The teachers’ interviews were analysed qualitatively and manually without using a certain software. A thematic analysis was used to report themes within interviews data (Merriam, 2002). As was mentioned the three interviews were recorded and during each interview handwritten notes were taken. The interview with teacher B was translated into English. All the interviews were then transcribed manually based on the interview questions, and individually. The responses to each question for each teacher were then summarized along with representative quotes. The responses to some questions were categorized based on
the emergent themes from the analysis of the teachers’ WCF given in the students’ written texts (i.e. extent, focus, and type of WCF) by each teacher. The summarized responses as well as the categorized ones were then grouped together.
Chapter 4: Results

This chapter outlines the results of the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the WCF points given by the three teachers by considering the extent, focus, and the type of WCF. It also outlines the results of the qualitative analysis of the teachers’ interviews. The results of the qualitative and quantitative analysis of the students’ questionnaires are also presented.

4.1 Teachers’ WCF Practices

Table 4.1 shows the amount and focus of WCF points provided by the three teachers inside the 45 students’ essays in terms of raw frequency of points for each category and percentages of total WCF points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Grammar (Freq) (%)</th>
<th>Mechanics (Freq) (%)</th>
<th>Language expression (Freq) (%)</th>
<th>Total WCF points</th>
<th>WCF points range</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>79 (26.2%)</td>
<td>197 (65.5%)</td>
<td>25 (8.3%)</td>
<td>301</td>
<td>18-24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>131 (48.9%)</td>
<td>121 (45.2%)</td>
<td>16 (5.9%)</td>
<td>268</td>
<td>14-21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>65 (29.7%)</td>
<td>96 (43.8%)</td>
<td>58 (26.5%)</td>
<td>219</td>
<td>10-18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>275 (34.9%)</td>
<td>414 (52.5%)</td>
<td>99 (12.6%)</td>
<td>788</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.1: WCF points given by the three teachers

Table 4.1 shows that the three teachers provided hundreds of WCF points but with some differences in the extent each teacher gave. Teacher A provided the largest number of WCF points and also the highest range of points per essay. Teacher C gave the fewest WCF points and also the lowest range of points per essay. It should be noted that teacher C used reformulations (i.e., rewriting sentence with incorrect structures) several times, which may have reduced the amount of WCF points that he gave. The average numbers of WCF points that the teachers gave per essay was high relative to the length of the essay (150 words) that
the students should have produced, indicating that they gave WCF comprehensively, on almost all errors.

Table 4.1 also shows that the teachers differed in the focus of their WCF in the three identified categories expression. Each teacher gave the most WCF on mechanics and the least amount on language expression. However, teacher B provided approximately the same amount of WCF on grammar and mechanics, and teacher C gave approximately the same amount of WCF on grammar and language expression. The most commonly identified errors in grammar were related to verb tense, articles and prepositions; in mechanics, spelling and punctuation; and in language expression, wrong word choice or unclear meaning.

Table 4.2 shows the amount of indirect and direct WCF the three teachers gave. Indirect WCF refers to the provision of codes above errors, which was the only identified type of indirect WCF, whereas direct WCF refers to the provision of the correct form above the inaccurate one. The table also shows how much of each type of WCF each teacher gave in the three categories. Findings are given in terms of raw frequency of WCF points for each category and percentages of total WCF points.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Teachers</th>
<th>Grammar</th>
<th>Mechanics</th>
<th>Language expression</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Direct WCF</td>
<td>Indirect WCF</td>
<td>Direct WCF</td>
<td>Indirect WCF</td>
<td>Direct WCF</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>24 (7.9%)</td>
<td>55 (18.4%)</td>
<td>23 (7.7%)</td>
<td>174 (57.8%)</td>
<td>3 (.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>78 (29%)</td>
<td>53 (19.8%)</td>
<td>12 (4.5%)</td>
<td>109 (40.7%)</td>
<td>3 (1.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>51 (23.2%)</td>
<td>14 (6.4%)</td>
<td>11 (5.1%)</td>
<td>85 (38.8%)</td>
<td>31 (14.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>153 (19.4%)</td>
<td>122 (15.5%)</td>
<td>46 (5.8%)</td>
<td>368 (46.8%)</td>
<td>37 (4.7%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.2 The distribution of the types of WCF given by the three teachers
It can be seen from Table 4.2 that the three teachers provided more indirect WCF than direct WCF (and that was also the case in the totals for the three categories. However, teachers B and C provided more direct WCF in the category of grammar, and teacher C provided similar amounts of direct and indirect WCF overall. (It was mentioned earlier that teacher C provided a number of reformulations in his students’ essays, and each reformulation was considered to be one direct WCF point.)

4.2 Teachers’ Interviews

The findings from the interviews with the three teachers are presented with regard to the main identified aspects of the teachers’ practices of WCF (i.e., extent, focus and type of WCF), in addition to their beliefs about the importance of WCF and their inquiry about their students’ preferences with regard to WCF.

4.2.1 Importance of giving WCF

The three teachers believed that giving feedback on students’ writing errors is very important so that students can identify their errors and correct them. The teachers also believed that WCF can help to improve the accuracy of students’ writing. Teacher A believed that “giving feedback on students’ writing errors will result in a significant improvement in their writing in the long term.” Similarly, teacher B regarded WCF as having a strong impact, saying that “it is very effective, I can now see the impact of the error correction on the improvement of my students’ writing.” However, teacher C expressed his uncertainty about the impact of WCF on students’ writing:

just we highlight the mistakes for a student, does that mean he understands that point of grammar, does that mean he understands how to use that point of grammar? Maybe
yes, maybe no. Are they learning something from their mistakes? I don’t know. We are sure that the student can write the text again correctly, but can he learn to write it independently later? It is not sure. You know, it’s a bit of a grey area.

4.2.2 The extent of WCF (comprehensive vs. selective WCF)

The three teachers reported that they responded to their students’ writing errors in a comprehensive way by correcting all errors that occurred. Teachers A and C believed in the practicality of the comprehensive approach, especially with their less competent students as teacher A said: “At this low level, students need to be guided and directed when giving feedback and so all their errors need to be highlighted”. He also said “If I don’t pick up every error, then the student would come to me and say oh teacher why didn’t you highlight this error?”. Teacher C reported the negative impact by not indicating all errors in writing saying that:

If I just, say, corrected grammar and vocabulary but left mechanics, then this might mean for the student that it is O.K for him to use a capital letter in the middle of a sentence. In this case I might not have done the full job.

In contrast, teacher B believed that there is no point in correcting all errors. He stated:

I personally prefer to correct some errors, the errors that are common and difficult among the students, and leave the rest of errors for students to identify and correct by themselves. This way can be more beneficial for students’ learning and help them to be self-editors.

Despite his preference for partial correction, he corrects all errors because it is a requirement of the university. He explained:
But in reality I found myself must correct all errors and this is in order to follow the instructions by the university. If it was found that I didn’t highlight all mistakes, then this would put me in a trouble with my coordinator. This may lead to affecting my annual appraisal.

4.2.3 The focus of WCF

The teachers had different beliefs with regard to the focus of their WCF. Teacher A and C reported that they focused their WCF more on vocabulary. They also believed that WCF should focus specifically on vocabulary. Teacher A said “vocabulary is the most important aspect that should be focused on at this current level of the students so I gave errors related to vocabulary most of my feedback.” Teacher C noted that “vocabulary has received a great deal of attention in the activities of writing classes.” Teacher B reported that he focused more on grammar and believed in its importance for students’ writing relative to other aspects of writing, saying “most of my feedback was given on grammatical mistakes whereas the rest of students’ writing errors received fewer corrections”. He added “writing by using accurate grammar is very important for the students’ current level. It plays an important role in conveying the right meaning of students’ sentences”.

4.2.4 Types of WCF (direct vs. indirect) given on writing errors

The teachers reported that mainly they used indirect WCF. However, they differed in their beliefs on which type is better. Teacher A believed that the type of WCF should be given based on the student’s level, a strategy that he did not implement. He explained the reason:

I mostly used the error codes because this is what we were instructed to do. If a teacher was found not to be using error codes, then this might affect his job appraisal which might also affect his job contract. Personally if it was up to me, I am in the
view that I think each case should be taken individually. When you have 20 to 30 students in class and maybe six to seven students whose level is very low, then they really need more direct corrections because when they write their final draft, they would just write the same errors again because they didn’t know what to do exactly with the codes I gave.

Teacher B believed that using indirect WCF can be practical with advanced students whereas direct WCF can be better given to low level students. Teacher B said:

Giving indirect feedback with codes is a good strategy. It is the strategy that is used internationally and is found in well-known books. It was also used by my past teachers when I was a student, but I think it is more practical only for advanced students whereas direct feedback is needed for poor students.

Teacher C reported that he rarely used direct WCF and was uncertain about the benefits of using indirect WCF. He explained:

Giving codes over errors can be better as it is required by the university. But in fact I don’t know whether it is effective for students’ learning or not. I am not sure if it is the best type of feedback.

4.2.5 Teachers’ inquiry about students’ preferences for WCF

The teachers reported that they did not ask their students’ about their preference with regard to feedback given on writing errors. Teacher A said: “there is no point in asking students about their preferences while I know that I won’t be able to fulfill them if they are not in accord to what was required by the university”.
Teacher C did not ask his students’ about their preferences and expressed his intention to do so in future. He said: “Actually, the idea of asking my students about their preferences for feedback on errors did not come to my mind.” He added “Maybe I will give it a thought next times.”

Table 4.3 in the next page summarises the teachers’ practices and beliefs about WCF.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Extent of WCF (comprehensive vs. selective)</th>
<th>Focus of WCF</th>
<th>Type of WCF (direct vs. indirect)</th>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Belief</th>
<th>Practice</th>
<th>Belief</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Provides comprehensive WCF.</td>
<td>Provides mainly WCF on mechanics</td>
<td>Provides mainly indirect WCF</td>
<td>Comprehensive feedback is important for students</td>
<td>Feedback on vocabulary</td>
<td>WCF should be given based on the student’s level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Provides comprehensive WCF</td>
<td>Provides similar WCF on grammar and mechanics</td>
<td>Provides mainly indirect WCF</td>
<td>Selective feedback is better for students’ learning</td>
<td>Feedback on grammar</td>
<td>Indirect WCF for advanced students and direct WCF for poor students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Provides comprehensive WCF</td>
<td>Provides mainly WCF on mechanics</td>
<td>Provides approximately similar amount of direct and indirect WCF</td>
<td>Comprehensive is better for students to prevent error fossilization</td>
<td>Feedback on vocabulary</td>
<td>Indirect feedback is better but uncertain of its effectiveness</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.3: A summary of the teachers’ practices and beliefs about WCF
4.3 Student Questionnaire

The findings from the questionnaire given to students are presented with regard to the main aspects of WCF (i.e., importance, extent, focus and type of WCF).

4.3.1 The importance of receiving WCF and students’ preferences for comprehensive or selective WCF

The results from the analysis of the students’ questionnaires indicated that all the students valued receiving feedback from their teachers. As for the extent of WCF, 94% of the students preferred to receive comprehensive WCF meaning that all errors were corrected. The students provided several reasons for their wish to receive WCF, mainly related to the importance of WCF in identifying their errors, avoiding them in subsequent writing, and improving their writing for future. One student said “by receiving feedback I can be aware of my errors and correct them”. Another student said that “indicating my writing errors by my teacher can help me to avoid them in subsequent writing”. One student highlighted the danger of ‘error fossilisation’ if not all errors were indicated, saying that “and in order not to fossilize wrong information in my mind.” A further student reported that “the shame is not to commit errors, but rather is that when you keep doing them repeatedly.”
4.3.2 The students’ preference for the focus of WCF

Table 4.4 shows the students’ preferences with regard to the focus of their teachers’ WCF. Findings are given in terms of raw frequency and percentages of students’ preferences.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Feedback focus</th>
<th>Students preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grammar</td>
<td>21 (51.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vocabulary</td>
<td>13 (31.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>7 (17.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>41 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.4: The students’ preferences for the focus of WCF

It can be seen from Table 4.4 that a majority of the students preferred their teachers’ WCF to be given on grammar. The students felt that grammar plays the leading role in the quality of their essays. One student stated “if my writing grammar is broken, then my essay cannot be read and understood.” Some students considered locating grammatical errors to be difficult comparing with other errors. A student explained “I can recognise my spelling mistakes, but grammar is difficult and my teacher should assist me by highlighting all my grammatical mistakes.”

4.3.3 The students’ perceptions of and preferences for WCF type

Table 4.5 shows the students’ perceptions of their current teachers’ use of WCF types, and also their preferences with regard to type of WCF. The types of WCF were direct, indirect coded, indirect uncoded and the most implicit type of indirect WCF, which is by using a sign in the margin to indicate that there is an error in the line.
Table 4.5 The students’ perceptions and preferences for the type of WCF

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of WCF</th>
<th>Students’ perceptions</th>
<th>Students’ preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1- Direct feedback</td>
<td>8 (19.5%)</td>
<td>28 (68.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2- Indirect coded feedback</td>
<td>31 (75.7%)</td>
<td>9 (21.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3- Indirect uncoded feedback</td>
<td>2 (4.8%)</td>
<td>3 (7.4%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4- Placing a code in the margin</td>
<td>0 (0.0%)</td>
<td>1 (2.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can be seen from Table 4.5 that most of the students were aware of their teachers’ mode of error correction and reported that they received mainly indirect coded feedback. As for their preferences, more than half of the students (68.4%) preferred to receive direct WCF, which indicates that there is a gap between the teachers’ practices and what students preferred.

The students provided different reasons for their preference for direct WCF. The main two reasons were related to the advantage of the immediate identification of the correct form and the speed in correction and also the certainty of the correct answer. One student said that he preferred direct feedback “in order to know where is my mistake and the correct form at the same time.” Another student explained its benefit by saying “It is because it would be clearer for me when revising my writing.” A third student expressed his preference for direct WCF, stating “It is quicker for revision.” A further student said “If my teacher does not provide the correct answer, then I may not be sure that the one I write can be correct.”

In contrast, the students who preferred indirect coded feedback expressed the importance of it in raising learner autonomy and boosting self-confidence. One student said “It will help me in learning from my mistakes and to be more independent in identifying my errors.”
Table 4.6. below shows a comparison between the teachers’ practices and the students’ preferences for WCF.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WCF aspects</th>
<th>Teachers’ practices</th>
<th>Students’ preferences</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extent</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
<td>Comprehensive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>Mechanics</td>
<td>Grammar</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type</td>
<td>Indirect</td>
<td>Direct</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4.6: The teachers’ practices and the students’ preferences for WCF
Chapter 5: Discussion

This study investigated teachers’ practices and their beliefs about WCF in the context of Saudi Arabia and examined the extent to which they are aligned. The study also investigated Saudi students’ preferences with respect to WCF and the extent to which they aligned with their teachers’ practices. This chapter consists of two sections in which the results related to the five research questions are discussed. In the first section I discuss the results from the first three research questions, and in the second section I discuss the results from the last two research questions.

5.1 Teachers’ Practices and Beliefs About WCF

The first three research questions asked about the teachers’ practices of WCF, their beliefs and the extent to which they were aligned. The findings from the qualitative and quantitative analyses of the teachers’ WCF practices revealed that the teachers used the comprehensive approach in giving WCF. This conclusion was reached from the relatively high range of WCF points that each teacher gave per essay. The comprehensive approach in giving WCF is commonly used by L2 writing teachers, as reported in previous studies (e.g., Ferris, 2006; Lee, 2004; 2008). Teachers A and C believed that the comprehensive approach was important in allowing students to fulfil their expectations and to prevent the error fossilisation that may occur if some errors were not corrected. However, teacher B believed that selecting only some errors in giving WCF can be beneficial for students’ learning and also to develop their self-editing abilities, yet he used the comprehensive approach because it was required by the university. Therefore, there was a mismatch between the teacher’s practice and his belief. In fact, teacher B used the comprehensive approach so as to avoid conflict with his coordinator which could eventually influence his annual appraisal. This indicates that the context (i.e., the university and its policies) can have a strong impact on shaping teachers’ practices of WCF. This finding is similar to Lee’s (2008) conclusions that some teachers believe that selecting
only some errors to be given WCF would be more beneficial for improving students’ writing accuracy, yet they eventually applied the comprehensive approach by correcting all errors in order to abide by their school’s policy.

Although using the comprehensive approach in giving WCF was supported and required by the university, and also two of the teachers (A and C) believed in its importance for students’ writing, the current research literature does not recommend the use of the comprehensive approach as it can have a negative impact on both teachers and students. Correcting every error may drastically increase teachers’ workload and de-motivate students as their papers are returned full of corrections (Ferris, 2002). Alternatively, selecting only a few errors for giving WCF can be beneficial for improving the accuracy of writing. Some studies found that signalling one or two errors of students’ writing resulted in improved writing accuracy (e.g. Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a; Ellis et al., 2008). However, targeting more than two errors is preferable as students may make different errors in a single piece of writing (Storch, 2010).

The findings from the analysis of the teachers’ practices of WCF also revealed that mechanics received more than half of the teachers’ WCF points. This result aligns with those reported by Ferris (2006), who found that teachers gave most of their WCF points on spelling mistakes. Each of the three teachers provided most of their WCF points in this category. However, teacher B provided approximately the same amount of WCF points on grammar and mechanics. He believed that grammar can be the most important aspect of language for students’ writing and is essential for conveying the right meaning of a sentence. This belief by teacher B, who is a non-native English speaker, can be attributed at least in part to this characteristic. Macdonald, Badger and White (2001) found that non-native speakers have a strong belief that every grammatical error should be corrected.

Language expression received the smallest proportions of all the teachers’ WCF points; this does not match with what teachers A and C reported. Both teachers reported that they focused their WCF more on vocabulary because they believed in its importance for their students at
their current levels of competence. This indicates that the teachers were not totally aware of their feedback practices. The reason why both teachers overestimated the WCF they gave on vocabulary can partially be attributed to the fact that the pre-writing exercises in the students’ textbooks partially focus on vocabulary. Montgomery and Baker (2007) found a similar discrepancy between teachers’ self-reports and their practices in regards to written feedback. The teachers in their study were found to underestimate the amount of feedback they gave on form and overestimate the feedback they gave on content. In the current study, the teachers overestimated the amount of WCF they gave on vocabulary (i.e., language expression) and underestimated the feedback they gave on mechanics.

The teachers who participated in this study used indirect WCF more than direct WCF, in contradiction to previous findings (e.g., Ferris, 2006; Lee, 2004, 2008). The predominant use of indirect WCF by the three teachers occurred mainly because it was a university requirement. The three teachers reported that they had to provide WCF on students’ errors in writing by using error codes which were given to them by the university. The dominant use of indirect WCF contrasts with the stated beliefs of some of the teachers. Teachers A and B believed that the feedback should be given based on the students’ level of proficiency. They believed that indirect WCF should be given for advanced students whereas direct WCF is better to be given for weaker students who struggled to self-correct their errors on the basis of error codes. However, the teachers used the error codes with all their students because it was what the university required. Therefore, there were mismatches between the teachers’ beliefs and their practices. Similarly, teacher C was not sure of the effectiveness of indirect WCF on students’ writing and its relevance to them. He reported that he used it because it was a university requirement. It is clear that the context (i.e., the university) significantly shaped the practices of the teachers for using WCF. This confirms Hyland and Hyland’s (2006) contention that feedback is impacted by teachers’ beliefs and influenced by the institutions and cultures in which teachers work, and that the context can make the process of feedback occurs in an unequal power relations between the stakeholders (Casanave, 2003). This also indicates that teachers’ practices are constituted by the influence of socio-political context.
which requires teachers to act the subservient role, which ultimately prevent teachers to “self-actualize a new and more autonomous, responsible role for themselves” (Hamp-Lyons, 2007, p. 495).

Both types of WCF – direct and indirect coded – were used by the three teachers in all three categories. However, their practices did not correlate with what has been recommended in the research literature. Ferris (2006) suggested that indirect feedback should be given on treatable errors (i.e., errors which can be self-corrected by students, such as errors in subject verb agreement and tenses), whereas direct feedback should be given on untreatable errors (errors which can be difficult to be self-correct, such as lexical errors). In the current study, errors in the category of grammar, which are considered to be treatable, were given more direct feedback by teachers B and C (e.g. my brother study [studied] in his room yesterday). In contrast, errors in expression, which are considered untreatable, were given more indirect feedback, specifically by teachers A and B (e.g., advantages and disadvantages of studying outside [WW]). This indicates that the teachers were not aware of which type of feedback should be given on each category. This may be attributed to the teachers’ lack of training about feedback, which was confirmed in the interviews conducted with them. In the interviews, the teachers reported that they never received any training on giving feedback on students’ writing. Teacher B said:

We have done many workshops about writing and we still do some of them on a regular basis. These workshops were mainly about how to improve students’ writing and the employment of the process approach of writing. Unfortunately, none of the workshops was about how to give feedback on students’ writing errors.

The three teachers differed in their teaching experience, countries of origin, and their majors, which may have had an impact on some of their beliefs. It was noticed that teacher B who had the longest experience, demonstrated a stronger correlation between his reported and actual practices, especially with respect to the focus of his WCF. This suggests that
experience may have an influence on the extent of teachers’ awareness about their practices. It was also noted that teacher C was less confident about his practices, in particular being uncertain of the effectiveness of his practices with regard to the focus and type of WCF. This can be attributed in part to his past studies (Bachelor in Finance) which did not relate to teaching. He reported that in future he may complete a Masters degree in the field of teaching English to speakers of other languages (TESOL).

5.2 Students’ preferences regarding WCF and their accordance with teachers’ practices

The last two research questions were about the Saudi EFL students’ preferences with regard to WCF and whether they matched their teachers’ practices. The results from the analysis of questionnaire data indicated that all the students valued and wanted to receive WCF on their writing errors and a large majority of them (91%) also preferred all their errors to be corrected. This finding is similar to those of previous studies (e.g. Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Halimi, 2008; Leki, 1991; Lee, 2004; Saito, 1994). The students preferred the comprehensive approach so they could identify all their errors, which can help in avoiding making them in their subsequent writing. The students’ preference for this approach, however, may have been influenced by the practices of their past teachers who always have corrected all writing errors. Cohen and Cavalcanti (1990) asserted that ‘‘learners’’ expectations and preferences may derive from previous instructional experiences, experiences that may not necessarily be beneficial for the development of writing’’ (p. 173).

As regards the focus of WCF, just over half of the students preferred their teachers’ WCF to focus on their grammatical errors. The students felt that grammatical errors cannot be tolerated because they affect the structure and meaning of their essays as well as the difficulty of identifying this kind of errors by themselves. The students’ preference, however, did not match their teachers’ practices, which mainly focused on mechanical errors. Also, a majority of the students preferred receiving direct WCF, a finding reported in previous studies (e.g.
The students preferred direct WCF because it would help them to be sure about the correct form, identify their errors and guide them to the correct form at the same time; however, their teachers mainly used indirect WCF.

These mismatches between the students’ preferences and their teachers’ practices with regard to the focus and type of WCF may indicate that there was no clear communication between the students and their teachers with regard to giving WCF. The teachers reported that they never inquired about their students’ preferences with regard to WCF. However, it should be noted that students’ preferences for teaching methods may not always be beneficial to them (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990). Therefore, teachers can help to change their students’ expectations by explaining to them the appropriate ways of giving WCF to improve their writing (Saito, 1994), and if situations do not permit teachers to change their practices, as was the case in the current study, teachers should clarify the rationale behind their current practices. Such clarification could lessen the contrast between the practices of teachers and the preferences of students (Katayama, 2007).
Chapter 6: Conclusions

The current study investigated teachers’ practices and beliefs with respect to WCF, and also examined their alignment, in the context of Saudi Arabia. Moreover, it investigated students’ preferences of WCF and examined whether they matched their teachers’ practices.

6.1 Summary of the findings

This study found that the participating writing teachers used the comprehensive approach, meaning they tried to give WCF on all students’ writing errors. Although this approach was supported to be used by two of the teachers, one of them did not believe in its benefit for students’ writing. This indicates that there was a mismatch between the teacher’s belief and his practice. Also, it was found that the teachers focused their WCF more on mechanics, though they believed that focusing WCF on errors related to grammar and vocabulary was more important for their students. Thus, the teachers’ beliefs about the focus of WCF did not correspond to their practices. In regard to the teachers’ use of WCF types, it was found that they mainly used indirect WCF with codes that their university specified should be used for error correction. Although the teachers’ beliefs differed about the applicability of indirect WCF for all their students, they followed the university’s advice. This indicates that the teachers’ beliefs about the type of WCF differed from their practices. This study also found that the students preferred the comprehensive approach and felt that it helped them to improve their writing. Therefore, their preference corresponds to their teachers’ practices. Also, the students preferred their teachers’ WCF to be focused on their grammatical errors, whereas their teachers’ actual focus was mechanics which indicates a mismatch between the students’ preferences and the focus of their teachers’ practices. The students also preferred to receive direct WCF on their writing errors. However, the students’ preference did not align with their teachers’ practices of mainly giving indirect WCF.
Overall, the findings revealed mismatches between the practices of WCF recommended by the university administration and the teachers’ beliefs, gaps between the teachers’ beliefs about WCF and their actual practices, and gaps between the teachers’ beliefs and their students’ preferences. The mismatches were mainly in regard to the focus and type of WCF. The interviews data indicated that the teachers did not apply what they believed in so as to abide by the university’s requirements of giving feedback, which include giving feedback on all errors and also by using codes. This also resulted in de-motivating some of the teachers from inquiring about their students’ preferences for the ways of giving feedback. This indicates that modifying teachers’ practices not only requires the change of their beliefs (Ferguson, 1993), but also a change in the cultural and institutional systems that affect their work (Lee, 2008)

6.2 Implications

The study’s findings have several implications for university policy and for teachers’ practices of giving WCF. It is recommended that the English language institute leaders and university administrators, together with writing teachers, review the English language institute policy with regard to giving WCF with reference to the recommended principles in the literature. University academics could be invited to share their ideas on how WCF should be given on students’ writing errors so as to find the best ways of giving WCF to benefit students. More importantly, the English language institute leaders should be flexible in their decisions about giving WCF and encourage their writing teachers to apply what they believe to be useful for their students’ writing. It is also recommended that the English language institute conducts a workshop in which teachers share their experiences of giving WCF. Teachers should be trained so they understand which type of WCF they should give (direct vs. indirect) for different errors. Teachers can be trained by giving them actual essays written by their students and correcting errors as a group and individually. In terms of the extent of WCF, writing teachers can share their ideas on how to select errors to be given WCF. For example, teachers can select the important errors that commonly appear in students’ writing.
and discuss them with their students in class. Teachers can write sentences that contain the common errors and ask their students to find those errors by themselves. These sentences can be taken from students’ writing. However, the writers of these sentences should be kept anonymous. This way, teachers can motivate their students to be self-editors. Also, teachers may notify the students that the errors discussed in class will not be indicated in their subsequent writings. Finally, it is recommended that writing teachers at the university level in Saudi Arabia explain to their students the techniques of giving WCF (in particular, the expected amount and type). For example, teachers can spend part or all of the first class at the beginning of each module explaining to their students how they will give WCF, in addition to explaining to students the reasons and the rationale for their intended practices of giving WCF.

6.3 Limitations

This study had several limitations. First, because of the time constraints, the data were collected from just three teachers and 45 students, which makes it difficult for the results to be generalised to other teachers and students. In addition, this study was conducted in one Saudi university, which may also make the findings difficult to be generalised to other universities as they may have quite different policies on feedback. Second, the data were collected from the students by questionnaires only, so they were not as rich as the data from the teachers, who were interviewed individually. Third, the topics of the students’ essays varied, which may have influenced the teachers’ feedback practices and thus biased the overall findings. Finally, the student participants were all males, which may have had an impact on the findings and inhibits the generalisability of the findings to educational settings that include women.
6.4 Future Research

Future research on this topic could consist of a large longitudinal study involving conducting classroom observations to investigate teachers’ beliefs and their practices and also their students’ preferences about WCF. This kind of study will produce more in-depth results and enable the tracking of any changes that occur in teachers’ beliefs and/or practices. Moreover, it is recommended that future studies implement questionnaires and interviews for both teachers and students to investigate their perspectives in equal depth. In addition, as the feedback investigation in this study was restricted to only one type (inside text feedback (WCF), future research could examine teacher’s beliefs and practices with regard to all kinds of feedback given on all aspects of writing. Finally, female students and teachers should be included as participants in future research to examine if gender is a factor in the process of written feedback.
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Appendices

Appendix 1: Error codes list

King Abdul Aziz University
The English language institute

Suggested writing error codes
(Adapted from IELTS On-Line)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>VT</td>
<td>Wrong verb tense</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WF</td>
<td>Wrong word form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WW</td>
<td>Wrong word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NN</td>
<td>A word or phrase is not necessary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SP</td>
<td>Spelling mistake</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P</td>
<td>Punctuation error</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RO</td>
<td>Run-on sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WO/SS</td>
<td>Wrong word order or sentence structure</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SV</td>
<td>Subject verb agreement problem</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>^</td>
<td>Word or words missing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NC</td>
<td>Incomplete sentence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>?</td>
<td>Unclear</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 2: Students’ plain language forms (English and Arabic versions)

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Project title: “Investigation of written corrective feedback in an EFL context: beliefs of teachers, their real practices and students’ preferences”

Student Plain Language Form

Introduction
This study will investigate the teachers’ practices of giving written corrective feedback as well as their beliefs about their practices. It will also investigate students’ preferences for receiving written corrective feedback. The results of this project will help your writing teachers in understanding your preferences for feedback. They will also help us recommend the best ways of providing feedback on your writing so as to improve your writing skills and accuracy. This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

What you will be asked to do
If you agree to participate, your participation will involve:
1- Your consent that your teacher provides the researcher with a sample of your writing that has your teacher’s comments on it
2- Completing a questionnaire. Questions will be asked about your attitudes towards receiving feedback from your writing teachers about your writing that you either have to complete in your class
or in your home and return it to your teacher in the next class. The questionnaire will take you about 10 minutes to complete.

**How your confidentiality will be protected**

The fact that the sample size is small may have implications for protecting the identity of the participants. However, we intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. We will keep your name and contact details in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. Only researchers involved in this project will have access to this data. The data will be kept securely in the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne for five years after the completion of the project. The materials will then be destroyed. In any publication and/or presentation, we will provide information in such a way that you cannot be identified. We will keep confidential any information obtained in connection with this project that can identify you and we will only use it for the purpose of this research project (subject to legal limitations).

**How participation or non-participation affects you**

Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you want to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice.

**How you can get further information**

If you require any further information, or have any concerns, contact us by email or telephone using the details at the top of the first page. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, Melbourne Research Office, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

**How you agree to participate**

If you would like to participate, please complete and sign the consent form to show that you have read and understood this information.
عنوان البحث: تقصي الملاحظات الكتابية لمدرسي مادة الكتابة على الاخطاء الكتابية للطلاب: من منظور وجهة نظر المرسين وملاحظاتهم الكتابية الفعلية وكذلك أراء الطلاب.

مقدمة
سيقوم مشروع هذا البحث بدراسة وتحليل ملاحظات المدرسين على الاخطاء الكتابية للطلاب بالإضافة إلى أراء المدرسين واقتراحات الطلاب. ستشكل نتائج هذه الدراسة مرجعا مفيدا لمدرسي اللغة بخصوص مراجعة طرقهم الحالية في وضع الملاحظات الكتابية وكذلك تطويرها. علما أنه قد تم تمت المصادقة على مشروع البحث من قبل لجنة أخلاقيات البحث البشري في جامعة ملبورن.

متطلبات المشاركة
سيتم أخذ عينات من أحد كتاباتك النصية من المواضيع التي درستها في مادة الكتابة والتي يكون عليها موضح ملاحظات مدرستك الكتابية ومن ثم إرسالها للباحث حتى يتم دراسة ملاحظات مدرستك. بعد موافقتك لإرسال كتابتك للباحث سيتم توزيع استبيان قصير لمعرفة أرائك ومناطقك في أن تكون عليه ملاحظات مدرستك الكتابية في المستقبل.

كيفية ضمان سرية بياناتك
لابد من الإشارة أولا إلى أن صغر حجم العينة المشاركة قد يكون له انعكاسات تتعلق بحماية هوية المشاركين عموما. إلا أننا نحرص على إخفاء هوية المشاركين والحفاظ على سرية مشاركاتهم لأقصى حد ممكن. في حدود ما يسمح به القانون. سيتم الإحتفاظ بالإسم وبيانات الإتصال في ملف خاص بمحمي بكلمة مرور ومنفصل عن أي مصدر يحتوي على البيانات التي زودتنا بها خلال مشروع الدراسة. ولا يمكن حق الوصول للبيانات إلا الباحثون المشاركون في الدراسة فقط. سيتم الإحتفاظ بالبيانات بمأمن في كلية اللغات واللغويات في جامعة ملبورن وذلك لمدة خمس سنوات من بعد إنهاء مشروع البحث. وسيتم إتلافها عند إقراض كامل المدة. وفي حال تم نشر أو عرض الدراسة أو نتائجها فإن ذلك سيتم بأسلوب يضمن عدم إفشاء هويتك. ولنقوم بالحفاظ على سرية أي

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معلومات (زودتنا بها خلال مشروع البحث) قد تفضي إلى تحديد هويتك. وسنقوم بإستخدام بياناتك لأغراض هذا البحث فقط، ويخضع ذلك للشروط القانونية.

كيفية حصولك على نتائج الدراسة بعد اكتمالها
في حال كنت مهتمًا بمعرفة نتائج هذا المشروع البحثي، فيمكنك تزويدنا ببيانات إتصالك في نموذج الموافقة على المشاركة في المشروع، وسنقوم بإرسال ملخص مقتضب لنتائج الدراسة وأي معلومات تتعلق بأي نشر قائم على أساس هذه الدراسة أو نتائجها.

أثر المشاركة من عدمه عليك
مشاركتك في هذا المشروع البحثي ينطوي تطوعي، وعليك أن تكون على علم أنك تستطيع الانسحاب في أي مرحلة، ولكل ذلك ان تطلب سحب بياناتك التي زودتنا بها من خلال مشاركتك وسيتم تحقيق ذلك دون أي تأخير من طرفنا.

كيفية حصولك على معلومات إضافية
في حال رغبت الحصول على معلومات إضافية أو كانت لديك أي تحفظات أو مخاوف، يمكنك التواصل معنا عن طريق الهاتف أو البريد الإلكتروني، وسنقوم بإرسال ملف بخصوص كيفية إدارة هذا المشروع البحثي، نحن نعمل على التوافق مع كل من تلقيت منا الملاحظات الأولية. في حال كان لديك أي استفسارات أو استفسارات أو استفسارات، فبإمكانك التوجه إلى الموظف التنفيذي في إدارة أخلاقيات البحث البشري في مكتب الأبحاث الخاص بجامعة ملبورن على الهاتف ۰۰۶۱۳۱۳۴۴۰۰ ۷۱۷۳۳۳۱ أو على الفاكس ۰۰۶۱۳۸۱۴۷۶۳۹۳۴۵۴۳۱۵۰۰۰.

كيفية الموافقة على المشاركة
في حال رغبت في المشاركة، نأمل تعبئة نموذج الموافقة والتوقع عليه بما يوضح قريتك وفهمك لهذه الشروط.
Appendix 3: Teachers’ plain language form

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Teachers’ plain language form

Introduction
This study aims to investigate the teachers’ perspectives and practices of giving written corrective feedback on students’ writing in addition to the students’ perceptions of feedback in the first year of the preparatory year program. Thus, I would like to invite you to help me in my efforts to collect data that is pertinent to this project. This project forms part of my masters thesis. It will investigate what you think about how feedback should be given to the writing of your students and what your students preferences are. The results of this project will help in understanding your beliefs and your students preferences toward feedback. They will also help us recommend the best ways of how feedback should be given on your students’ writing. This project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee.

What you will be asked to do
If you agree to participate in this study, you will be asked first to explain the project to your class and invite the students to participate. Then you need to send 15-20 copies of your students’ writing with
your feedback on them, to the English language program coordinator, who will be then forwarded them to me via e-mail. Finally, you will be asked to participate in an interview with the student researcher on Skype. The interview may last from 20-30 minutes, and will be audio-recorded.

How your confidentiality will be protected
The fact that the sample size is small may have implications for protecting the identity of the participants. However, we intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. We will keep your name and contact details in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data that you supply. Only researchers involved in this project will have access to this data. The data will be kept securely in the School of Languages and Linguistics at the University of Melbourne for five years after the completion of the project. The materials will then be destroyed. In any publication and/or presentation, we will provide information in such a way that you cannot be identified. We will keep confidential any information obtained in connection with this project that can identify you and we will only use it for the purpose of this research project (subject to legal limitations).

How you will receive feedback about the completed project
If you are interested to learn what the results of this project are, you can give us your contact information in the consent form. When the project is completed, we will send you a brief summary of the findings and any information about any publications based on the research.

How participation or non-participation affects you
Your participation in this project is voluntary. If you want to withdraw at any stage, or to withdraw any data you have supplied, you are free to do so without prejudice.

How you can get further information
If you require any further information, or have any concerns, contact us by email or telephone using the details at the top of the first page. If you have any concerns about the conduct of the project, contact the Executive Officer, Human Research Ethics, Melbourne Research Office, The University of Melbourne, on ph: 8344 2073, or fax: 9347 6739.

How you agree to participate
If you would like to participate, please complete and sign the consent form to show that you have read and understood this information.
Appendix 4: samples of the teachers’ WCF

Teacher A

The disadvantages of travelling by car, you can’t travelling to another country you will get a traffic congesting, you may have an accident with someone, you may sleep when you drive, maybe you will tired. Maybe you will get any problem in your car so you will need some help from another people are you need to fix your car. Finally I like travelling by car for neat places.

Teacher B

1. There are some disadvantages for getting older, like you will have a lot of free time because you will have a lot of work. For example, you have to go to work and you have to take your family (to any where). Another disadvantage is you will responsible about yourselves and your family.

Teacher C

Going to University

There’re many advantage when you go to university, and there’re many disadvantage also. The university and you should work hard to get a good job with a good salary and comfort life and your family will be so happy of you. But still when you
Appendix 5: The topics of the students’ essays

The topic of students’ essays (from teacher A):

Write a ‘for and against essay’ about travelling by car

The topic of students’ essays (from teacher B):

Write ‘for and against essay’ about getting older

The topic of students’ essays (from teacher C):

Write ‘for and against essay’ about going to university
Appendix 6: The students’ questionnaire (English and Arabic version)

Dear student: The aim of this questionnaire is to investigate your opinions and preferences about the corrective feedback that you receive from your writing teacher.

Section 1: About you
The purpose of this section is for the researchers to know more about you. Remember: you have the right not to answer any of these questions if you feel they are intrusive. (Just tick the correct answer or the most suitable one)

Name (optional): __________________________

1. Your mother tongue is Arabic:
   Yes ___  No ____

2. Your age is:
   18 ____
   Between 18 and 22 ______
   Over 22 ______

3. How many years have you been studying English in formal education?
   ______ years.
Section 2: This section is about your beliefs and preferences about your teacher’s written corrective feedback given on your English writing errors.

1. Do you like to receive feedback on your writing from your teacher?
   Yes_____ No ______

2. Is it important for your teacher to correct all of your writing errors or just select some of them?
   All errors ____   some errors ______
   Please explain your choice:

3. Which categories of your writing would you prefer teacher feedback to be focused on more?
   Please rank the following from 1 (most important) to 3 (least important).
   a. Grammar____
   b. Use and choice of vocabulary ____
   c. Mechanics (spelling and punctuation) _____
   Please explain your choice:

4. The following are different ways a teacher can respond to errors on students’ writing:
   a. Underline/circle errors
      e.g. he seen
   b. Underline and provide a hint about the type of error
      e.g. he seen (VT)
   c. Giving me the correct answer
      e.g. he seen (saw)
   d. Indicating that there is an error in a particular sentence by placing an X in the margin
      e.g. Yesterday I witness a robbery on my home from school. X
Which of the above types of feedback does your teacher give you mostly on your writing:

a. ___
b. ___
c. ___
d. ___
Other: please specify

Which of the above types of feedback do you want to receive on your writing:

a. ___
b. ___
c. ___
d. ___
Other: please specify

Why do you like to receive this type of feedback?

Thank you for your participation
عزيزي الطالب: هذا الاستبيان هو جزء من مشروع الباحث لإكمال رسالة الماجستير.

الهدف من هذا الاستبيان هو استقصاء قناة وآليات تقييم الطلبات فيما يتعلق بالملاحظات الكتابية حول كتاباتهم التي يلقونها من مدرسين الكتابة مما يساهم بمعرفة وجهات النظر حول هذا الموضوع من قبل الطلاب والمدرسين والتي سيكون لها أثر متالي في تحسين مستوى الكتابة باللغة الإنجليزية.

الجزء الأول:

الاسم (اختياري).............................................................................

هل لغتك الأم هي العربية:

- لا
- نعم

عمرك هو مابين

- 8
- أكبر من 22

كم عدد السنوات التي درست فيها اللغة الإنجليزية؟

السنة

الجزء الثاني:

 هل تفضل أن تحصل على ملاحظات فيما يتعلق بكتاباتك من قبل مدرسك

- لا
- نعم
2. في نظرك ما هي أهمية كل من العناصر التالية في الكتابة التي يجب أن تتركز عليها ملاحظات المدرس الكتابية (قم بالترتيب بالأهم من 1 الأكثر أهمية إلى 3 الأقل أهمية):

المفردات اللغوية     ( )
الدقة النحوية والقواعد ( )
الإملاء وعلامات الترقيم ( )

الرجاء ذكر السبب............................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................
............................................................................................................................

3. هل يهمك أن يقوم المدرس بتصحيح كل الأخطاء في كتاباتك:

نعم______ لا______

الرجاء ذكر السبب............................................................................................................................

4. فيما يلي أمثلة تطرق يستخدمها المدرس في تصحيح الأخطاء الكتابية:

أ: وضع دائرة أو خط
He seen
مثال:

ب: وضع خط تحت الخطأ مع وضع رمز لمن نوع الخطأ
Studing (sp)
مثال:

ج: كتابة الشكل الصحيح للخطأ:
He seen (saw)

د: وضع علامة على اليدام لتشير يوجد خطا ما على نفس السطر:
مثال:
Yesterday I witness a robbery on my home from school        X

5. أي نوع من الملاحظات أعلاه التي تلقاها حاليا من مدرسك:

أبج د
هل هناك نوع آخر (اذكره)

6. أي نوع من الملاحظات أعلاه التي تفضل أن تلقاها من مدرسك:

أبج د
هل هناك نوع آخر (اذكره)

بناءا على اختيارك من السؤال السابق، لماذا تفضل هذا النوع من الملاحظات:

............................................................................................................................

اشكرك على تفاعلك وإجابتك
Appendix 7: Teachers’ Interviews Questions

Background information:

1- Can you tell me which country do you come from?
2- Can you tell me about your experience of teaching English and how long have you been teaching English?
3- Can you tell me about your previous and major of studies?
4- Can you tell me about your experience of teaching writing?
5- Have you received any previous training on giving corrective feedback? Can you explain more

Written corrective feedback practices:

1- Do you think it is important to give feedback on students’ writing errors?
2- Do you give feedback on all students’ writing errors or do you select some of the errors to be given feedback? Can you explain the reasons
3- Which approach do you prefer? Can you explain you answer
4- Which categories of writing errors do you focus your feedback on more? Why?
5- Which categories do you think are important to be focused on for feedback? Why?
6- Which type of corrective feedback (direct vs. indirect) do you use when giving feedback on writing errors? Why do you use it?
7- Which type of corrective feedback do you think can be more beneficial for improving students’ writing? Can you explain the reason
8- Do you ask your students’ about their preferences with regard to how much and which type of corrective feedback should be given? Can you explain the reason
Author/s:
Al Shahrani, Abdul Aziz

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