

## Nhận thức của giáo viên THPT về hoạt động phản hồi lỗi trong bài viết tiếng Anh

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### TÓM TẮT

Phản hồi lỗi bài viết tiếng Anh của các giáo viên khi đánh giá bài viết của học sinh luôn là đề tài của các nghiên cứu về phương pháp giảng dạy. Bài báo này tìm hiểu nhận thức của giáo viên về thực hành phản hồi đối với các lỗi xuất hiện trong bài viết. Dữ liệu định lượng được thu thập từ phiếu khảo sát với 65 giáo viên tiếng Anh trung học phổ thông ở các tỉnh miền Trung và Tây Nguyên của Việt Nam và dữ liệu định tính từ phỏng vấn 10 giáo viên thực hiện khảo sát. Kết quả nghiên cứu cho thấy nhận thức của giáo viên tiếng Anh về việc cung cấp phản hồi sửa lỗi bài viết là rất tích cực. Họ tin rằng việc phản hồi sửa lỗi rất cần thiết cho sự phát triển khả năng viết của học sinh trung học và phục vụ nhiều mục đích. Về thực hành phản hồi sửa lỗi bài viết được ghi nhận qua kết quả khảo sát, các giáo viên ưu tiên sử dụng phản hồi sửa lỗi có chọn lọc hơn là sửa lỗi toàn bộ. Họ có xu hướng nghiêng về chiến lược sửa lỗi trực tiếp hơn gián tiếp, chủ yếu tập trung vào sửa lỗi hình thức ngôn ngữ.

**Từ khóa:** Phản hồi sửa lỗi bài viết, giáo viên ngoại ngữ, sửa lỗi, nhận thức của giáo viên.

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# High school EFL teachers' perceptions of written corrective feedback in writing classrooms

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## ABSTRACT

Written corrective feedback (WCF) referring to the feedback that writing teachers offer to students' writing has been popularly investigated. This study aims to investigate teachers' perceptions of their WCF practices in a Vietnamese EFL context. The data was quantitatively collected from a questionnaire delivered to 65 English high school teachers in central and Central Highlands provinces in Vietnam and follow-up interviews with 10 of those who had completed the questionnaire. The findings of the study revealed that the high school EFL teachers' perceptions of WCF provision were overwhelmingly favorable. They believed that WCF was essential for high school students' EFL writing development and served multiple purposes. In terms of their self-reported practices of WCF, the teachers preferred selective over comprehensive WCF; furthermore, they were in favor of direct feedback strategies and they focused primarily on language forms. By raising teachers' awareness about their beliefs of WCF provision, this study can further bolster self-reflection on how their tacit knowledge shapes the way they perform in writing classes.

**Keywords:** *Written corrective feedback, EFL teachers, error correction, teacher perceptions.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching and learning English in Vietnam aims to help learners develop both oral and written communication. Along with speaking, writing skill is also an important aspect of communication because it enables learners to express their thoughts, feelings, and opinions.

Upon learning writing skills, for novice students, making mistakes is an unavoidable and natural aspect of development. Teachers' Written corrective feedback (WCF) to students' mistakes in this situation is crucial in assisting them in enhancing their writing accuracy so they

can effortlessly advance to a higher language proficiency level.

As a crucial component of second language (L2) writing instruction, over the last decades, a notable corpus of empirical studies has been carried out to look into the function of WCF in Second Language Acquisition and L2 writing. The vast majority of recent better-designed research has produced favorable outcomes for WCF.<sup>1,2</sup> Besides, many studies focus on students' views of teachers' WCF.<sup>3,4</sup> However, even though major efforts have been made to study many various aspects of L2 teaching from a teacher-

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belief perspective in foreign countries, there have been only a few studies looking at teachers' views in the context of EFL high schools in Vietnam. What is more, in terms of the area of the study in the Vietnam context, only some studies are found in the tertiary context, focusing mainly on one type of participants-students.<sup>5,6</sup> In light of the need to understand teachers' perceptions, the knowledge gap in the research area and the issue present in the context, the researchers are interested in investigating teachers' perceptions of WCF in writing classes. With the participation of 65 high school EFL teachers from Vietnam's middle region and Central Highlands provinces, this qualitative and quantitative study aims to explore the teachers' perceptions of WCF in four areas: WCF main purpose, WCF efficacy, WCF strategy practices, and WCF techniques.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### *Definition and importance of WCF*

WCF is considered to be an essential component in the process of learning a language and is one of the key factors for curriculum development. Various terms have been used to refer to WCF, including "teacher commentary", "teacher corrections",<sup>7</sup> "teacher response"<sup>8</sup> and "teacher editing".<sup>9</sup> WCF in the most basic form can be defined as "the type of information, which is provided for learners about their performance of a learning task, typically with the goal of enhancing this performance".<sup>10</sup> WCF, as explained by Bitchener and Storch,<sup>11</sup> is "a written response to a linguistic error that has been made in the writing of a text by an L2 learner". In order to encapsulate the key ideas in their definition, the responses may be divided into three categories: pointing out the mistake, proposing the correct form, and giving a metalinguistic justification for it. For the purposes of this study, WCF is described as "feedback which specifically indicates language errors, such as in grammar, vocabulary, and mechanics".<sup>12</sup>

Despite conflicting data on the WCF's efficiency, a substantial body of studies has

demonstrated the value of WCF in raising students' writing accuracy.<sup>13</sup> According to these studies, WCF can help students become more conscious, knowledgeable, and competent in their writing strategies. Lee,<sup>14</sup> who conducted a survey and interviews with secondary English teachers in Hong Kong learned that instructors viewed WCF as a way to help students notice their errors and to help teachers systematically mark students' paperwork.

### *Types of WCF*

With an increasing amount of proof demonstrating the value of WCF in L2 learning, researchers have worked to determine the best methods for delivering WCF and the breadth of instructor response to written errors. Although both methods and scope are crucial factors to take into account in WCF, the scope or the amount of WCF that teachers should provide students is of immediate importance. This includes deciding whether to address all written errors or just a subset of them in a targeted or selective way. In other words, one crucial choice a writing instructor must make is whether to identify only some particular error types in a concentrated approach (selective WCF) or to label errors of every kind in an unfocused manner (comprehensive WCF).<sup>15</sup>

Another decision EFL writing teachers have to make is which error(s) to focus on. There has been much discussion regarding how much emphasis L2 writing instructors should place on local errors vs global ones. According to Ellis,<sup>16</sup> errors with a broad impact on the structure of a sentence are called global errors. Among these are syntactic overgeneralizations, incorrect word placement, and missing or misplaced sentence connectors. Local errors, such as morphological or grammatical functor errors, are errors that only impact one element in a sentence. Besides, local errors pertain to the use of language, whereas global errors relate to the organization and content. In the majority of studies,<sup>17,18</sup> content, organization, and language form were defined by researchers as the details the writers offer, the

way these concepts are organized, and the proper application of mechanics.

Researchers as well as language teachers have focused a great deal of attention on the topic of how writing EFL teachers provide error feedback and how effective they are at doing so. According to Ellis,<sup>19</sup> teachers' replies to student mistakes can be divided into six categories based on the fundamental techniques for offering written remedial comments, namely, direct WCF, indirect WCF, metalinguistic WCF, focused versus unfocused WCF, electronic feedback, and reformulation.

Direct WCF, according to Bitchener and Ferris,<sup>20</sup> is a correction that the correct language form is directly provided to the students. Indirect corrective feedback (CF) entails pointing out a student's mistake without actually fixing it. In the sense that they do not offer the proper forms, indirect feedback recommends two strategic methods: locating and coding. In the case of indirect feedback, teachers merely identify errors by underlining, circling, or highlighting them in the student's written work.<sup>17</sup> Giving students a clear comment on the type of mistakes they have made is a key component of metalinguistic CF. With electronic feedback, the instructor points out a mistake and offers a link to a conformance file with proper usage examples. Reformulation involves the completely rewriting students' writing text to preserve the original's meaning while using language that sounds as natural as possible. To sum up, teachers can employ a range of WCF strategies, but not all of them may be utilized in every circumstance; some of them are regularly employed, while others are not. Of six WCF types according to Ellis, the first four types, however, have been the focus of the majority of research and methodology, hence only these are covered in this part because they are the most pertinent to the current study.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The current study's design was based on a mixed-method approach to achieve the aims of the

study. More specifically, it was conducted based on qualitative and quantitative analysis with two instruments questionnaire and semi-structured interview. The qualitative and quantitative data sets were combined for data analysis in order to capture the various aspects of the participants' perceptions and their influences on them.<sup>21</sup>

#### 3.1. Participants and research setting

65 high school EFL teachers whose ages range from 25 to 56 and who are from provinces in the central region and Central Highlands provinces of Vietnam such as Gia Lai, Quang Nam, Binh Dinh, Khanh Hoa, etc. voluntarily took part in the survey. The large majority of the respondents hold a BA or MA qualification, comprising 70.8% and 26.2% respectively. It is appreciable that as up to 87.7% of the participants have more than 10 years of teaching experience. Additionally, the participants truthfully say that they are adopting a theme-based curriculum approved by MOET with three or four periods of 45 minutes per week for a class. To sum up, the researcher can obtain trustworthy data for the study with the support of a significant number of teachers.

#### 3.2. Data collection instruments

Two research tools were used in this study to collect data: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The items for the questionnaire were created by the researcher using a comparable questionnaire that other researchers had used in earlier studies.<sup>19,22</sup> The questionnaire consisted of two main parts and several items were changed to focus on the concerns examined in this study. The first part concerned the participants' demographic information including gender, age, schools where they teach, teaching experience, teaching periods per week as well as qualifications, each of which contributes to their knowledge and beliefs. The second was comprised of various types of questions including open-ended, multiple-choice, Likert scale, and frequency response. Specifically, multiple-choice questions were employed to

discover the main purpose of providing WCF, teachers’ self-evaluation of their existing error feedback practices and self-description of their current error feedback practices. Another type of question format employed is the Likert scale, which provides four responses to 9 statements (strongly disagree, disagree, agree, strongly agree) to discover EFL teachers’ perceptions of WCF and their reported practices. The other question format is the frequency response one, providing three frequency responses (never or rarely, sometimes, always or often) to rate the frequency with which EFL teachers use each of the following error feedback techniques.

As for the interview, ten questions were designed to ask the participants about their opinions on WCF and cover their reported actual WCF practices. When possible, the participants were asked to expound on their remarks and their opinions. The information obtained from the interview helped to confirm the results of the questionnaire.

3.3. Data analysis

To achieve the goals of the research, both quantitative and qualitative analyses were carried out on the data for this study, including the

Table 1. Teachers’ perceptions of main purposes of WCF.

		Responses		Percent of Cases
		N	Per cent	
Purposes <sup>a</sup>	1. To help students notice their errors	38	21.6%	58.5%
	2. To help students reflect on their writing	28	15.9%	43.1%
	3. To help students improve their overall writing performance	55	31.3%	84.6%
	4. To prepare students for higher levels of academic writing	27	15.3%	41.5%
	5. To help students meet the Ministry of Education’s standards	28	15.9%	43.1%
Total		176	100.0%	270.8%

As can be noticed from Table 1, the EFL teachers viewed WCF as having multiple purposes. Most of them (84.6%) believe that WCF fits into the objective of teaching writing which is to improve their overall writing

quantitative outcomes of the teachers' completed questionnaires and the qualitative findings from the semi-structured interviews. As regards the questionnaire analysis, with the aid of SPSS software 22, descriptive statistics were employed to examine the teachers' perceptions of various components of WCF. In order to analyze the data statistically, frequency, Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD), and percentages were computed using such SPSS methods. In terms of analyzing the interview data, all of the teacher interviews were recorded, transcribed and sent for member-checking. Those transcripts were read numerous times to enable the author to familiarise herself with the key content. Next, the author categorised words and phrases into theme groups based on their comparable meanings. The themes were presented and discussed including WCF main purpose, WCF efficacy, WCF strategy practices, and WCF techniques.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Teachers’ perceptions of the main purpose of WCF

The questionnaire data analysis of the EFL teachers' perceptions of the main purposes of WCF are summarized in Table 1.

performance. The majority of the respondents who were invited to the interviews showed their total agreement with the main purpose of WCF. For example, T3 emphasized that “*It is obvious that WCF aids students in raising their*



general writing efficiency... English is a foreign language. If we do not give feedback, they hardly learn what is right, so it is vital for their writing improvement.” T2 also confirmed that “I have been teaching English for more than 15 years, and in almost all of my writing periods I give feedback at the end of the class. I find out that my students’ writing competence has been considerably improved.” Noticeably, 58.5% of the respondents found WCF useful for the short-term goal, that is, to help students recognize their errors so that they can avoid them when writing next time. In the interview session, T9 further expressed her view that “Students may see their mistakes or what they should improve in their writing in the written format.” Purposes 2, 4 and 5 are related to the long-term effects of WCF. The teachers believed that WCF aims to help students reflect on their writing, prepare students for higher levels of academic writing and help them meet the Ministry of Education’s standards, accounting for 43.1%, 41.5%, and 43.1% respectively. It can be concluded that all

teacher participants realized the value in WCF and thought it had several purposes. Some of these reasons are connected to other long-term aims, even though the majority of these reasons support the immediate/ short-term objectives of writing teaching. This outcome conflicts with the findings made by Truscott<sup>23</sup> who argued against the benefits of WCF for L2 development. However, many earlier researches support this finding, attesting to the significance of offering WCF on students' papers and the crucial part it plays in enhancing their writing performance.<sup>24</sup> This result is not unexpected given that WCF is primarily intended to improve students' ability for error identification and analysis, which will enable them to learn from their mistakes.<sup>25</sup>

4.2. Teachers’ evaluation of efficacy of their WCF practices on their students’ writing

The next item of the questionnaire related to how the teachers felt about their current error feedback practices, is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Teachers’ self-evaluation of effectiveness of their WCF practices on their students’ writing.

My students are making		Frequency	Per cent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	good progress	26	40.0	40.0	40.0
	some progress	34	52.3	52.3	92.3
	little progress	5	7.7	7.7	100.0
	Total	65	100.0	100.0	

Table 2 shows that up to 40% and 52.3% of respondents respectively stated that their students were making "good progress" and "some progress" as a result of their current WCF practices, while just 7.7% of the participants chose the option “little progress”. These facts and figures were completely consistent with what was found in the interviews. In response to the question “How would you assess the effectiveness of your feedback practices? Are you satisfied with your feedback practices?”, the following comments are representative of the instructors’ views. “Through my students’ good

performance in the writing period, I confidently say that my WCF procedure is quite reasonable and effective..., so I say yes, I am contented with it,” T7 said. T8 when asked the above question affirmed that “without written feedback, what has been taught in terms of theory would not be clearly understood. So, in each of my writing classes, I spend fifteen minutes giving error feedback. I am completely satisfied with my feedback practices.” However, only one out of ten interviewees (T6) expressed her dissatisfaction with her current feedback practices. She said, “I myself find the way I give feedback workable,

but, in my class,..eh... my students are often distracted from the learning activity, eh... or it is such a large class that I can not manage or attract all their attention..., so just some students who actively concentrate on the feedback activity make progress.” That is to say, if the students are not committed to improving their writing skills, they will not improve, no matter what kind of feedback is provided. However, teachers continue offering WCF because they hold a strong belief that at least some students would gain benefits from it. In a nutshell, almost all of the participants recognised WCF as an integral part of the process of teaching writing and its benefits to the student’s language learning. They had positive evaluations of their currently used feedback procedures implemented in the writing

classes. Therefore, it is essential for the author to keep on exploring what the teachers’ techniques are involved in the WCF process. The results of this study are consistent with those of prior research on how lecturers perceive feedback.<sup>26,27</sup> For example, according to the study,<sup>27</sup> lecturers believed WCF was intended to assist pupils in advance and needed to be phrased favourably.

4.3. Teachers’ perceptions of WCF strategy practices

The following section of the questionnaire nine items ask EFL teachers about their opinions on their need to provide feedback on students writing, the responsibility for error corrections and the use of error codes. The quantitative data for this question is presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Teachers’ perceptions of their WCF strategies.

No.	Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	It is necessary for teachers to provide feedback on student errors in writing	65	3.00	4.00	3.54	0.502
2	Teachers should provide feedback on student errors selectively	65	1.00	4.00	3.06	0.659
3	It is the teacher’s job to locate errors and provide corrections for students.	65	1.00	4.00	3.29	0.723
4	Teachers should vary their error feedback techniques according to the type of error.	65	1.00	4.00	3.06	0.768
5	Coding errors with the help of a marking code is a useful means of helping students correct errors for themselves.	65	1.00	4.00	2.99	0.599
6	Marking codes should be easy for students to follow and understand.	65	1.00	4.00	3.12	0.600
7	Students should learn to locate their own errors.	65	1.00	4.00	3.05	0.623
8	Students should learn to locate and correct their own errors.	65	1.00	4.00	3.09	0.478
9	Students should learn to analyse their own errors.	65	1.00	4.00	3.09	0.491
Valid N (listwise)		65				

In general, it can be seen from Table 3 that the mean values of this set of items range from 2.99 to 3.54. This suggests that the majority of participants agreed with the WCF's statements. More specifically, regarding item No.1, the participants' response was quite obvious because every single participant agreed or strongly agreed that they should give feedback to students on their writing mistakes (No.1,  $M = 3.54$ ,  $SD = 0.502$ ). The mean score of the respondents' perspective on the necessity of feedback provision was 3.54 with a standard deviation of 0.502.

This finding is supported by the other findings from the interview sessions. All of the teachers who joined the interview agree that providing WCF is *"the most crucial task for writing teachers"*. Without it, students will *"continue to make the same mistakes in their writing"* and *"fail to make any progress."* T3 stated that *"when the teachers don't take WCF stage in a writing class, their lesson plan is obviously considered incomplete."* Besides, the results of the questionnaire addressing responsibility for error corrections (No.3, No.7, No.8 and No.9) expressed contradictions from the teachers' perspectives. When asked whether teachers' job is to locate errors and give corrections to students, a vast majority of them show their agreement (No.3,  $M = 3.29$ ,  $SD = 0.723$ ). These perspectives of the teachers can be primarily attributed to WCF's effects on the accuracy of students' writing and the progress made in their writing classes. This result is in line with those of related research that has been conducted.<sup>14,28</sup> For instance, Evans, et al.<sup>28</sup> report that WCF is frequently used by experienced SLA teachers because they see its value, and the researchers claim that this perspective is valid for pedagogical reasons. However, in relation to the question if students should locate their errors, most of the respondents believed that students should do so (No.7,  $M = 3.05$ ,  $SD = 0.623$ ).

Similarly, they also agreed that students should learn to locate and correct their own errors (No.8,  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.478$ ), and students should learn to analyse their own errors (No.9,  $M = 3.09$ ,  $SD = 0.491$ ). Therefore, it appears that teachers are in conflict with one another. Although they understand how important it is to give students the duty of error location and correction, in practice teachers themselves perform students' work.

The interviewees were questioned about the opinions stated in the questionnaire and asked to provide further details. The majority of them indicated that they must assist students in finding and fixing errors because they are unable to do so on their own. 2 out of 10 interviewees (T2 and T10) shared the same idea that they hoped that their students could *"locate and correct the errors by themselves"*, but in fact, they failed to do this, because the students *"lack of language form and structures."* As a result, they almost do this part of the job; that is *"locating and correcting errors"* for their students." This finding can be explained by Lee,<sup>14</sup> who states that teachers may be motivated by the daily and pressing demands of students, parents, panel chairs, principals, etc. to shoulder the responsibility of error location and correction, despite the fact that they are aware of the significance of asking students to take on this responsibility. Lee notices that the thought of enabling pupils to identify and fix mistakes may only be at the back of teachers' minds.

From the teachers' agreement on both considering WCF as their job and suggesting students' locating, correcting and analysing errors themselves, it can be inferred that teachers place significant emphasis on students' active participation in the WCF process in order to foster students' autonomy. Similarly to this, earlier studies<sup>22,29</sup> claim that teachers respect student autonomy since these students are more



likely to be adept at self-correction, which aids in the retention of mistakes.

In statement No.2 relating to the amount of WCF, it is clear that most of the participants approved the idea that “Teachers should provide feedback on student errors selectively” (No.2,  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.659$ ). This finding was consistent with those in the interview session. When asked which was their favourite error feedback strategy, seven out of ten teachers interviewed revealed to be in favour of feedback on specific students’ errors. As believed by most of the interviewees, selective CF would be more effective in the long run compared to the comprehensive one. For example, T5 explained why she preferred selective feedback by mentioning that her students can “*focus on one specific area*”, particularly “*on target grammar*.” Similarly, T8 expressed her preference for selective feedback because she recognized that her students would *be unhappy if they got their writing papers full of red marks*”, and emphasized that comprehensive marking is “*difficult for some students to handle*”; for instance, it might be “*discouraging and burdensome*” for pupils who “*consistently make mistakes in their work*.” Moreover, teachers’ preference for selective feedback was also discovered to be related to the amount of time they had to spend on it. As stated by T6, she could not give corrections to all errors in the students’ writing for 10 or 15 minutes. Therefore, selective CF helps them “*save time*” and “*spend more time on teaching and lesson preparation*.” Three participants in the interviews (T2, T4 and T7) favoured the provision of comprehensive CF. According to T2, she tended to give feedback to “*all errors in students’ assignments*” because was interested in “*evaluating students’ overall performance*.” A similar reason was revealed by T4, “*I provided CF comprehensively just because the assessment of students’ overall performance is important to me and other writing teachers for sure*.”

T7 consented to the way that “*comprehensive marking is preferred by her hard-working students versus selective marking*.” Most of the interviewees stated that they primarily focused on language form errors including grammatical, spelling, or punctuation issues.

Regarding the usage of various feedback strategies, it can be noted that most of the teachers agreed that “Teachers should vary their error feedback techniques according to the types of errors” (No.4,  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.768$ ). They believed that doing so was beneficial for assisting students in improving their writing. T5 reasoned that “*there must be a combination of different WCF techniques to achieve long-term mastery of grammar*.” T6 noted in the interview session that if her students made too many mistakes, she would “*select some serious ones in accordance with the learning content to give corrections*” because her students might “*be discouraged by a writing paper with a lot of red marking*”. However, T2’s interview presented a different picture when she was certain that the student’s proficiency level and writing performance should serve as the guiding principles for her views toward providing feedback. She typically modified her feedback techniques in response to the level of student writing as follows: “*I feel that the students will determine how I employ feedback strategies. For high-level students, I just mark a code beside an error and let them correct it. But for those who are still at a low level, I correct the error directly*.”

In terms of marking codes, the vast majority of the teachers concurred that using a marking code to classify mistakes is an effective strategy for assisting pupils in self-correcting their mistakes (No.5,  $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 0.599$ ). As for the employment of codes, more than two-thirds of instructors were in agreement with the statement that “codes used should be simple for students to follow and understand” (No.6,

M = 3.12, SD = 0.600). It was understood that the writing teachers believed that using codes to mark learners’ written errors was beneficial. The qualitative data from the interviews were delved into to have a more profound understanding of the mainsprings underlying teachers’ support for using codes in CF. Sharing the same opinion of the benefits of using codes in CF, T3 commented that *“code using makes it possible for both the teacher and the student to determine the type and frequency of the mistakes the student is making.”* This thus encourages the students’ self-correction.

On the other hand, some intriguing remarks regarding the employment of marking codes were made during the follow-up interviews. T5 believed that *“codes are only helpful for high-level learners”* because *“low-level learners struggle to understand the codes”* and *“are unable to fix their mistakes because of their poor language.”* T9 furthered this idea by stating, *“In my experience, a minority of high-level learners can understand the error codes, but low-level ones don't benefit from them....in reality, almost all of my students are at low-level, so I don't use marking codes.”* T7 confided that *“Students come to me one-to-one with questions when they don't understand the codes. I don't want everyone to come to me and beg for the fixes, so I'd rather do it for them.”*

These findings suggested that although using codes in giving error feedback was considered useful, it could be problematic for both teachers and students. The results were congruent with the outcome obtained in other studies in the same field.<sup>14,30</sup> Lee’s study suggested that most teachers used the codes in marking students’ assignments and revealed that employing codes to provide mistake feedback was thought to be helpful but might pose challenges for both teachers and students. Specifically, it took up a lot of teachers' time and could frustrate students, especially when numerous codes had to be considered. According to Hong,<sup>31</sup> teachers were worried about how well their students would be able to decipher codes and amend their errors and amend their errors in light of these codes. Besides, it was suggested that codes be taught in classes and the level of pupils and the aim of the writing piece be taken into account.

4.4. Teachers’ perceptions of WCF techniques

Teachers’ self-description of their existing error feedback practices

The descriptive statistics of frequency were run to figure out the teachers’ self-description of their current error feedback practices in a detailed valid percentage. The results are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Teachers’ description of their existing feedback practices.

	Statements	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	I DON'T MARK students' errors in writing	2	3.1	3.1	3.1
	I mark ALL students' errors	16	24.6	24.6	27.7
	I mark students' errors SELECTIVELY	47	72.3	72.3	100.0
	Total	65	100.0	100.0	

It was important to highlight the fact from Table 4 that up to 72.3% of the respondents opted for marking students' errors selectively while 24.6% of those marked all students' errors and only 3.1% didn't mark students' errors in writing. These findings are consistent with the outcome of Statement No.2 of the questionnaire (Table 3). The majority of the teachers surveyed agreed that they "should provide feedback on student errors selectively" (No.2,  $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 0.659$ ). The results from the interviews were partially in line with the quantitative findings. Half of the interviewees held a belief that *"expecting students to deal with textual error correction that encompasses a variety of linguistic elements at once may cause cognitive overload preventing the students from digesting the feedback they receive"*. Additionally, T1 shared her story saying that *"I recognize that my students have made much progress in using the present simple tense when I just give them correction on this target language form"*. Also, T5's and T10's interview confirmed the aforementioned findings. They both noted that they could only mark significant errors due to time constraints and workload. T5 said, *"I teach six classes now, so I hardly mark all errors. Then my strategy is that I locate and correct serious errors only"*. T10 thought that teachers should function as a facilitator who helps their students develop autonomy in their learning, as seeing all the mistakes may deter learners from producing written language. He added, *"that all the errors are marked can make students unmotivated. They may think they are too bad at this"*. On the contrary, T9 responding to the interview was in favour of comprehensive WCF (i.e., marking all students' errors) and she reported that *"I correct all errors because I don't want my students to make the same ones"*. That is to say, selective WCF might assist teachers and students in staying focused on the most critical writing errors made by students thereby fostering students' confidence in their writing. By the same token, Soleimani &

Rahimi<sup>32</sup> reported that most of the teachers opted for selective WCF because according to them, focusing on a small number of mistakes makes learning more efficient, reduces cognitive load, and improves learning. The results are somehow congruent with those of Nguyen et al.,<sup>33</sup> who indicated that "correct common mistakes" is the WCF technique that VLU lecturers employ most frequently. When asked about factors impacting their feedback, most participants responded that they chose the best WCF technique based on the time allotted.

When it comes to an explanation for such a preference, Lee<sup>34</sup> after examining comprehensive WCF and focused WCF (i.e., selective WCF) from a variety of perspectives, offered theoretical support for selective WCF and made the case that teachers can accomplish more with less time spent on writing feedback for students, such as "more balanced written feedback" that encourages students to develop their writing, more timely and thus important WCF for students, and more opportunities for teachers to engage in collaborative professional learning as they innovate WCF. As for students, the less teacher WCF means the more space for students to take risks and improve their confidence, "more balanced feedback" to support their writing development, and more active participation (e.g., more use of self/peer editing and/ or online learning resources by students to supplement teacher WCF). Focused/ selective WCF is undoubtedly the way to go when less teacher WCF is more for both teachers and students.

### ***Teachers' self-reported WCF techniques***

Writing teachers were asked to rate the frequency of various techniques of feedback provision in the fifth questionnaire item. This section of the survey primarily seeks to learn more about the techniques used by teachers to indicate, categorize, and/or correct errors in student work, as shown in Table 5.

Table 5. Frequency of WCF techniques provided by teachers.

No.	Statements	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I indicate (underline/circle) errors and correct them, e.g., has <u>went</u> --> gone	65	1.00	3.00	2.43	0.637
2	I indicate (underline/circle) errors, correct them and categorize them (with the help of a marking code), e.g., has <u>went</u> --> gone (verb form).	65	1.00	3.00	2.26	0.668
3	I indicate (underline/circle) errors, but I don't correct them, e.g., has <u>went</u> .	65	1.00	3.00	2.18	0.659
4	I indicate (underline/circle) errors and categorize them (with the help of a marking code), but I don't correct them, e.g., has <u>went</u> (verb form)	65	1.00	3.00	2.09	0.631
5	I hint at the location of errors, e.g., by putting a mark in the margin to indicate an error on a specific line.	65	1.00	2.00	1.38	0.490
6	I hint at the location of errors and categorize them (with the help of a marking code),e.g., by writing 'Prep' in the margin to indicate a preposition error on a specific line.	65	1.00	2.00	1.29	0.458
Valid N (listwise)		65				

As can be noticed from Table 5, according to the mean scores, the items are ranked from highest to lowest. The overall mean scores of the two first items are 2.43 and 2.26 out of 3 (1 = “never or rarely”, 2 = “sometimes”, 3 = “always or often”), which means that the teachers tend to correct the errors directly according to frequency rates (No.1 and No.2). Turning to the details, most of the participants approved of giving feedback directly by indicating errors and correcting them (No.1, M = 2.43, SD = 0.637). This item accounted for the mean score of 2.43, showing the highest compared to other items. Besides, the item “I indicate (underline/circle) errors, correct them and categorize them (with the help of a marking code)” ranks second with the highest mean (No.2, M = 2.26, SD = 0.668). The third and fourth highest mean values were connected to indirect WCF, namely, “indicating errors but not correcting them”, and “indicating,

categorising but not correcting them”. The two lowest mean scores, on the other hand, denoted a moderate amount of practice of the techniques of “hinting at the location of errors” and “hinting at the location of errors and categorising them” (No.3, M = 2.18, SD = 0.659; No.4, M = 2.09, SD = 0.631 respectively).

Qualitative information from semi-structured interviews also supports the findings presented above. Eight out of ten interviewees expressed their favour of direct feedback (i.e., errors were indicated and corrected). For example, T2 stated that “Students would not notice the inaccuracy if the right response is not given, so it must be given directly”. T5 appreciated direct error correction because “it is much less time-consuming. I do not need to correct each learner's written work again”. That is to say, the choice of error feedback techniques is thought to be significantly influenced by the amount of time available. In a similar vein, T9 expressed her



preferences for direct error correction because *“it met my students’ expectations”*. She explained that *“I used to use other strategies such as coded error correction or just indicating errors and let them correct on their own, but they either asked me what the codes mean or even responded quite straightforwardly that they didn’t know how to give correct forms..., therefore, to save time, I just give correction directly”*. One thing that all of the teachers interviewed share in common was that a large majority of their students were at a low level. They stated that after experimenting with a wider range of error feedback tactics, direct feedback was considered much more appropriate for low-level students than any other technique.

Such findings are observed in Jodaie and Farrokhi,<sup>35</sup> who found that direct feedback (i.e., indicating + correcting errors) was preferred as the best technique to give correction by a vast majority of the respondents in their study. A key contributor to the teachers’ choice of WCF techniques was the students’ English language proficiency level. There was a widespread consensus among the teachers in the present study that direct WCF was deemed more suitable for low-level students than any other method. This finding also correlated with the finding of Zhang et al.,<sup>36</sup> who reported that *“Less proficient learners need more explicit WCF guidance on less rule-governed, unique linguistic errors than more proficient learners.”* Moreover, in comparison with indirect WCF, direct strategy is preferable because it is more straightforward and enables pupils to recognize mistakes immediately. According to Tian and Zhou’s<sup>37</sup> research, this may satisfy the majority of EFL learners’ expectations for getting teachers’ WCF. Likewise, the teachers’ support for direct WCF was found to be influenced by workload and time constraints. Soleimani & Rahimi’s<sup>32</sup> study also claimed that while implicit WCF would increase learners’ self-assurance and capacity for learning, and foster their independence and curiosity, it was time-consuming and a burden to the teachers.

On the other hand, such results were inconsistent with those released by Zohra & Fatiha,<sup>38</sup> who discovered that teachers surveyed were in favour of indirect WCF, commending indirect feedback’s efficiency. Most of them emphasized the significance of ownership from the viewpoint of the students, which might be diminished if teachers revised the erroneous sections for students. *“Hinting at the location of errors and hinting at the location of errors + categorizing them”* were the error correction techniques that teachers indicated they rarely or never employed. Both include approaches for indirect error location and indirect feedback. These two strategies are more difficult for students to master since teachers only indirectly suggest where errors are located and students must do so themselves. This finding correlates with the finding of Lee,<sup>39</sup> who indicated that techniques like *“hinting at the location of errors”* and *“hinting at the location of errors and categorizing them”* were rarely or never used by teachers since they were thought to be too demanding for the students.

To sum up, the results from the quantitative analysis revealed the EFL teachers’ different viewpoints on EFL practices. The vast majority of the participants acknowledged the crucial role and efficacy of high school teachers’ WCF in improving students’ writing as it has multiple purposes comprising *“short-term and long-term goals”*. While EFL teachers perceived WCF as their responsibility, they sincerely want their students to actively participate in the WCF process and take greater responsibility for language learning. They highly appreciated the usefulness of error codes in helping students correct errors themselves. As for different WCF types, the EFL teachers preferred selective feedback to comprehensive feedback. In addition, they approved both direct and indirect feedback when giving error correction to the student’s writing. The qualitative outcomes also indicate that students’ proficiency level, time constraints, and workload were factors EFL teachers considered when they implemented their WCF practices.



## 5. CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that EFL teachers appreciate the value of WCF and they think it has several purposes such as helping students reflect on their writing, preparing students for higher levels of academic writing and helping them meet the Ministry of Education's standard. From the participants' view, WCF has beneficial effects on students' learning and improvement.

The findings also showed different perspectives of writing teachers on WCF strategy practices in terms of mistake coding, feedback types used and the main focus when teachers provide WCF. As for WCF techniques, the results demonstrate that direct WCF is highly approved because of its clarity and accessibility compared with indirect WCF.

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