

A study on the application of written corrective feedback in senior high school students' English writing

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Abstract: This paper examines the use of written corrective feedback (WCF) in high school English writing, focusing on its impact, definition, classification, and effectiveness. WCF improves writing accuracy and complexity, but domestic research has limitations in scope and duration. The paper suggests expanding research, extending study durations, and exploring factors affecting WCF effectiveness to enhance teaching strategies and students' writing.

Key words: written corrective feedback; English writing; senior high school students

1 Introduction

English is crucial for international communication, and writing proficiency is key for academic success, especially in the college entrance exam. However, Chinese students often struggle with writing due to cultural differences, affecting their confidence and interest [1]. Teacher feedback is essential for improving writing skills as emphasized in the English Curriculum Standards. This paper reviews studies on the impact of written corrective feedback (WCF) on second language writing to provide insights for future research in China.

2 An overview of (basic theories or terms)

Written corrective feedback (WCF) has gained significant attention as an effective strategy to improve English writing. It helps second language learners become more aware of linguistic forms in their writing, enhancing language acquisition. This section will define and categorize WCF.

2.1 The definition of written corrective feedback

Corrective feedback (CF) addresses learners' mistakes, with written corrective feedback (WCF) commonly used in second language writing. WCF helps students identify and correct errors, improving writing accuracy and proficiency. While some studies suggest that WCF can enhance language skills, others, like Truscott (1996), argue that it may be ineffective. This paper defines WCF as timely feedback that aids students in correcting mistakes and improving writing [2].

2.2 The categorization of written corrective feedback

Ellis et al. (2008) categorized WCF into focused (selective) and unfocused (comprehensive) feedback [7]. Focused feedback addresses a specific error, while unfocused feedback highlights all errors. Ferris and Roberts (2001) identified seven types of WCF, including direct, indirect, metalinguistic, focused, unfocused, and feedback on local and global issues

[9].

2.3 The theoretical foundations of written corrective feedback

Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990) argues that learners must consciously notice linguistic input for it to be internalized. He emphasized that attention often focuses on surface features, making it harder to understand deeper structures. In second language teaching, feedback is ineffective if students do not notice it. Krashen's (1982) input hypothesis suggests that learners need "comprehensible input" slightly above their current level to promote acquisition. In English writing, WCF challenges students' abilities and maintains motivation, acting as effective input that aids writing improvement by helping students absorb language more efficiently.

3 Relevant studies at home and abroad

3.1 Relevant studies abroad

Truscott (1996) argued that grammatical corrections hinder language acquisition, while Ferris (2004) believed WCF benefits language learning. Studies on feedback modes show mixed results [8]. Coyle and de Larios (2013) found feedback type affects attention [3], while Semke (1984) and Ferris & Roberts (2002) found no significant difference between direct and indirect feedback [10]. Shintani and Ellis (2006) found direct feedback doesn't improve rule awareness, but other studies (Ferris, Chandler, Sheen) found it more accurate [4][6]. Lee, Luo, and Mak (2021) showed both focused and unfocused indirect feedback improve writing. Samaneh (2014) found that combining error correction with personal suggestions boosts performance and motivation. Many studies agree that corrective feedback is beneficial.

3.2 Relevant studies at home

WCF research in China is relatively late, with varied conclusions. Yu Shulin (2019) found that process-oriented feedback reduces motivation, while studies by Zhang (2008), Zeng (2017), and others confirm the benefits of WCF in improving explicit knowledge, accuracy, and writing complexity. Xiao (2021) found that both focused and unfocused direct feedback helps with prepositions, and Wu (2017) showed improvements in sentence complexity, although there was no significant difference in vocabulary. Tang (2019) demonstrated that WCF improves writing accuracy.

Chen Yaoyao (2012) found dynamic feedback more effective than traditional methods [5], while Hu Shuya (2020) showed that indirect feedback is more effective than direct feedback. Factors influencing WCF effectiveness include learners' thinking styles, proficiency, and cognitive factors, as well as their understanding of language use and learning goals.

4 Summary and comment based on the previous research and gap-finding

4.1 The scope of the research object is too small

As for the research subjects, most scholars in China have focused their studies on English majors and non-English majors in the first and second years of college. In contrast, relatively few studies have been conducted on the impact of written corrective feedback on the English writing ability of middle school and senior high school student groups. Therefore, we can conclude that the target of domestic research is too narrow.

4.2 Short research period

In terms of the duration of the study, most scholars focus on the short-term phase of the study. Although the research process is more complete with pre-test, immediate post-test and post-test, the whole research process is short and cannot well respond to the effect of written corrective feedback on students' English writing.

4.3 Lack of theoretical research

Domestic scholars tend to rely on foreign theories for their empirical studies, as theoretical research on corrective feedback is limited. This may stem from the belief that teachers are obligated to correct mistakes and provide feedback,

influencing scholars to conduct experiments that validate this view.

4.4 Limited research on the factors affecting WCF

There is limited research on the factors affecting written corrective feedback. Most studies focus on whether WCF improves academic performance, with few exploring factors like memory, attention, or individual differences beyond linguistic ability, anxiety, and learner attitude, which can affect written corrective feedback.

5 Suggestions for possible research in schools

5.1 Expand the scope and duration of research

Research should focus on senior high school students, a critical stage for improving writing skills. WCF can enhance writing accuracy, performance, and independent learning, which is particularly important for exams such as the college entrance examination. Long-term studies will also reveal its lasting effects on grammar, vocabulary, sentence complexity, and writing confidence, helping to optimize feedback strategies and improve students' English writing.

5.2 Increase theoretical research

Theoretical research on WCF will deepen understanding of its role in second language writing. Incorporating theories like skill acquisition and comprehensible input/output will guide empirical studies, improve feedback strategies, and enhance overall language learning.

5.3 Explore influencing factors

Research should examine factors affecting WCF, such as learners' individual differences, cognitive styles, motivation, and the teaching environment. Understanding these factors will help design more effective WCF strategies, leading to improved teaching outcomes.

6 Conclusion

In summary, compared to foreign research, domestic studies on corrective feedback mainly focus on its effectiveness, classification, and influencing factors, but they lack depth and comprehensiveness. The research scope is narrow, theoretical research is limited, and studies on influencing factors are insufficient. To foster innovation, future research should focus more on theoretical development, explore the multi-dimensional factors affecting feedback effectiveness, and extend the research scope and duration.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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