

The Impact of Focused Vs Comprehensive Written Corrective Feedback on ESL Writing Accuracy, Writing Quality and Writing Motivation

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Abstract

The study aims to compare the impact of comprehensive versus focused Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) on the ESL writing accuracy and quality of Pakistani school students. The data were collected from 25 secondary school learners comprising two intact groups of 12 and 13 students each who were studying English as a second language for the Ordinary Level examination conducted by Cambridge Assessment International Education in Karachi, Pakistan. The data were analyzed using an independent sample t-test, which revealed no significant difference in ESL writing accuracy, quality, and motivation. Following the pre-test stage, one group of students received focused WCF, while the other group received comprehensive WCF for six weeks, with one 80-minute session per week. Both groups wrote six argumentative and narrative essays during the treatment phase. The results of the independent sample t-test revealed that the focused WCF group outperformed the comprehensive WCF group in terms of ESL writing accuracy and quality. The study has found that focused WCF is significantly more effective in improving ESL school learners' writing accuracy and quality. The present study confirms that learners cannot notice WCF in a quality manner when it is presented in large amounts, accompanied by numerous writing errors. It is recommended that ESL school teachers should provide focused WCF to their students in the ESL classrooms to help them improve their ESL essay writing skills.

Keywords: Focused WCF; Comprehensive WCF; Meta-linguistic WCF.

Introduction

Students appreciate feedback on their writing tasks, just as teachers are fond of giving it to them to help them improve (LALANDE, 1982; Ferris, 1997). However, this can be frustrating when students make little to no progress and repeatedly make the same mistakes. Direct feedback in this regard is taken as one of the first approaches to correcting students' errors. Researchers believe it is a passive approach and therefore doubt its efficacy. Likewise, the indirect WCF method, which identifies errors and engages students to rectify their mistakes, remained in vogue in 1980. Studies remained inconclusive and lacked ecological validity; therefore, further research was required in the area.

Truscott (1996) argued in favor of abandoning grammar correction. He viewed it as extra time-consuming and doubted its role in developing students' writing. He further maintained that instructors found it difficult to identify errors, while for students, making out the written feedback

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was another uphill task, making it ineffective. Van Beuningen (2008) and Tchener (2010) focus on. Still, the usefulness of Direct and Indirect WCF for long-term and short-term gain respectively. The dearth of comprehensive research regarding the effect of comprehensive and focused WCF on writing accuracy, quality, motivation, engagement, and attitude opens the door for further research to uncover the truth about which approach is more effective and result-oriented. The study conducted by Rahim (2019) on the comparison of comprehensive and focused WCF was the only study done on the issue; however, it cannot be taken as conclusive, and it should not be relied upon to reach a final decision. His study was limited to an intermediate context; the findings cannot be applied to a secondary level. Therefore, researchers are divided on WCF. Moreover, Truscott and Hsu (2008) indicate the inefficacy of WCF. However, recent studies conducted on WCF have not only demonstrated its effectiveness but also recommended it (Bitchener & Knoch, 2009a, 2009b; Bitchener & Storch, 2016; Sheen, 2010, 2016; Van Beuningen, De Jong, & Kuiken, 2012). This study aims to investigate the effect of focused and comprehensive written corrective feedback on students' writing quality, accuracy, motivation, engagement, and attitude. The study will employ a quasi-experimental design with a pre-test and post-test component, involving 25 students from a Cambridge system school in Karachi.

Learners' writing skills and performances are directly linked to their motivation level throughout their studies. Those with higher motivational levels have been reported to score higher grades than those who lag. Waller and Papi (2017) investigated it and found a positive role of motivation in learners' writing development. Another important aspect is the connection with the motivation level and the type of treatment rendered during the process. Several researchers have indicated an upbeat connection between higher-level motivation. This is when the instructor focuses specifically on a limited number of errors that have been critically picked up. Another aspect regarding feedback and learners' growth in writing is linked to writing accuracy. In this regard, research supports the detection of specific errors in learners, highlighting that only recurring errors are then addressed to improve writing (Lee, 2021).

Furthermore, researchers believe that focused feedback is easier to process compared to comprehensive written corrective feedback. Learners' writing performance is also linked with the growth of writing quality. This includes varied sentence structures, appropriate and precise verbs, tense consistency, wide and precise vocabulary, accuracy in the use of punctuation, and flawless spelling. Countless research studies have found a positive relationship between written corrective feedback and writing quality.

Ferris (2010) argues that the results of earlier studies, especially those conducted in SLA, may not be entirely applicable due to their controlled designs compared to natural second language writing classes. Finally, some say focused WCF is useful, while others argue that comprehensive WCF is more important. Therefore, there is a need to study this phenomenon in more detail.

Review of the Related Literature

Focused WCF

Focused is the term used for a response to the learner's linguistic error, specially selected by the learner's needs (Ferris, 2011, p.30). According to Lee (2020), it is a type of feedback in which researchers provide feedback only on a limited number of errors, i.e., one or two. This is why it is called highly focused. Fearer and Chiu (2015) argue that, as far as focused WCF is concerned, it is a technique in which instructors select the errors in advance to be addressed while ignoring the rest. Ferris (2013) is of the view that, in focused WCF, it is the researcher's choice whether to select target errors before correction or select them at the time of feedback provision. Another

submission regarding focused WCF is that it also involves focused feedback when a teacher encounters a specific recurring error type and chooses to respond to it.

Although researchers do not address all errors using a focused feedback approach, it has been identified as beneficial in reducing grammatical errors in writing. Researchers found the utility of this approach to be mainly due to its targeting of only those errors that occur regularly.

Comprehensive WCF

Among several terms employed by the instructors, one of them is comprehensive WCF. Ellis (2008) terms comprehensive written corrective feedback as the type of feedback wherein the instructor marks all the errors or at least several errors in students' writing tasks. It is deemed highly unfocused and unambiguous, as it focuses on virtually every single error made by the learner.

Comprehensive WCF is a traditional approach to responding to learners' writing errors. The term that is related to comprehensive is unfocused. Using this approach, the researcher does not leave any errors untreated. Students are reported to have been in favor of comprehensive WCF. They prefer a teacher to correct all the errors.

Van Beuningen et al. (2012) assert that comprehensive written corrective feedback is the term given to marking every error in a learner's writing. Ellis, Sheen, Murakami, and Takashima (2008) believe the act of correcting virtually all the errors in a learner's composition, or at least five to six grammatical errors, is known as unfocused written corrective feedback.

The Role of Feedback in Developing Writing Skills

Mao (2019) states that, at present, it has become the norm for instructors to provide students with written corrective feedback on their writing. They do this to enhance the writing skills of L2 (second language) writers. The role of WCF in developing students' writing skills is crucial (Yu, 2020). It is through effective feedback that students understand the reason behind errors in their writing, leading to a reduction in the number of errors over time. Additionally, the effect of written corrective feedback in bringing about positive long-term change is consequential (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). In this context, Ferris (2006) found that indirect WCF provides students with a strong and practical learning experience because they strive to understand the errors made and rectify them afterward; hence, they learn more effectively.

As writing skills require active participation, they can be enhanced only when learners actively engage in the process. This can be done by involving students in identifying the errors and effectively rectifying them. Knoch (2009) suggests that WCF can be beneficial and positively affect second language writing.

Metalinguistic Error Correction Technique

Learners commit errors during the process and require feedback on their writing to proceed with confidence. In this domain, various types of comments are in vogue. Metalinguistic written corrective feedback is a type of feedback in which learners are supplied with codes pointing out error types, unlike direct correction of the error. It is in contrast to recast, which aims at reformulating fragments of incorrect words or phrases to express the accurate form; however, the examiner avoids providing explicit details.

Metalinguistic WCF instead invites the learner to respond to the errors committed by implicitly providing the error type. This type of feedback can be efficient and beneficial if learners are aware of the understanding of the codes supplied to them, along with underlining the error. Research has proved the utility of metalinguistic feedback over other types. One study examining explicit and

implicit knowledge of the past indefinite tense found that students who received metalinguistic feedback outperformed those who received recasts (Ellis, 2009).

ESL Writing Motivation

Motivation plays a pivotal role in a learner's writing development. Students who are motivated tend to perform better than those who are not. Motivated learners attend to the feedback rendered on their writing more than those who are not. Waller and Papi (2017) investigated how learners' attitude towards WCF directly impacted their writing motivation. Furthermore, research conducted on motivation shows a correlation between students' inclination for written corrective feedback and writing motivation. Educational psychologists have discovered that pessimistic feedback leads to a decline in writing motivation, while positive feedback has the opposite effect. In this connection, Truscott (1996) suggests that corrective feedback can activate anxiety, which consequently discourages and demotivates learners from persevering and putting effort, stopping them from enhancing their writing skills. He was opposed by Afshin, Reza, and Mohammad (2011) in their studies, which proposed differing findings. According to them, learners not only desire to have their composition marked, but they also believe it helps them improve their writing and stay motivated. Apart from this, WCF helps learners reduce the number of mistakes they commit, provided they are given regular feedback. Similarly, Hamidun et al. (2012) found that despite having a hollow understanding and lower proficiency in second language writing, students consider corrective feedback as one of the significant factors in strengthening their motivation to write.

Controversy on Written Corrective Feedback

Feedback has always played a crucial role in uplifting pupils' writing skills. Truscott (1996) argued that feedback on the accuracy of grammar does not produce a positive outcome and is harmful, and should be abandoned forthwith, sparking a relentless debate on the L2 writing forum. His persuasive tone and argument, coupled with pieces of evidence, ushered in a never-ceasing war of words that is still part of L2 writing discussions. Later on, Erris (1999) responded to Truscott, maintaining that the rationale for the usefulness of feedback is to eradicate errors in students' writing. However, shortly after in the same year, Truscott (1999) came up with a rebuttal to Ferris, marking the beginning of research on other possibilities by several thinkers, which is still ongoing. It is consequent to provide WCF feedback to students to help them progress to the next level of their educational career (Cambridge University Press ELT, 2014, Dec 10Dec 10). Direct and indirect teacher-written corrected feedback, metalinguistic WCF, and other methods are used to examine L2 writing tasks in the strict classroom environment in Pakistan, aiming to develop students' writing skills.

Research Questions

1. Is there a significant difference in ESL writing accuracy of students who received Focused WCF and those who received Comprehensive WCF?
2. Is there a significant difference in the ESL writing quality of students who received Focused WCF and those who received Comprehensive WCF?
3. Is there a significant difference in the ESL writing motivation of students who received Focused WCF and those who received Comprehensive WCF?

Research Methodology

This study assumes that the results were neither deemed objective nor unquestionably specific. In addition, the survey was longitudinal, as it observed the participants over a period of two months (Creswell, 2018).

Additionally, being quasi-experimental, the study used a non-random method to assign subjects to groups. It did not have any control over the treatment and, hence, studied the already existing groups for different treatments. The study did not require a control group.

The current study took place in the natural ambiance of the O-level L2 writing classes in Karachi, Pakistan. The students in this study produced material across multiple genres, namely argumentative and narrative. At the same time, teachers corrected them and provided students with written feedback, much like what happens in a natural context.

Population and Sample

Target Population

The target population of this study consisted of ESL students enrolled in the O-level section of a private Cambridge system school in Karachi. The researcher himself is a Cambridge-trained evaluator who chose this school, given that the current study was conducted during the pandemic, and schools opened only for a limited period. Secondly, uncertainty regarding exams prompted other schools not to allow the researcher to undertake the present study, except at his institution.

Sampling Technique

A non-probability sampling technique was utilized to select samples for this study. This sampling method is known as purposive or judgmental sampling. In this method, the researcher must rely on their selection ability to find suitable participants who fit well.

Sampling Size

Being a natural study, it was conducted in a natural-level environment. Moreover, the sample consisted of 25 students from Grade XI, sections A and B. Only those who fulfilled the criteria were invited to participate.

From the total of 14 students in XI group A, 8 were girls, while 6 were boys. The number of girls in XI B was six, while the number of boys participating in the study was five.

Furthermore, out of the 14 respondents who participated in the study of XI group A, 6 male respondents were aged between 16 and 17 years, while the remaining 8 female participants were also aged between 16 and 17 years. In Group B, 2 out of 5 male respondents were aged between 18 and 19, while the remaining three male participants were aged between 16 and 17 years. All the females of XI group B were aged between 16 and 17 years.

In addition, the percentage of male respondents in XI group A was 47%, while the rest, 53%, were female. In Group 1, 4.5% of the respondents were males, and in Group B, all participants were females.

Data Collection Method

Procedure

The researcher conducted a pre-test before participants were given treatment, both in the focused WCF and the comprehensive WCF. The respondents were asked to write an essay between 350 and 600 words in length. The topics of narrative and argumentative essays are mentioned in Appendix A. Additionally, they were asked to fill out the writing motivation questionnaires.

Having filled them, they were required to appear in a total of 6 weeks' worth of treatment classes. The researcher asked the respondents to write three narrative essays together with the same number of argumentative essays. Furthermore, the instructor was asked to provide meta-linguistics written corrective feedback to participants. XI group A was rendered comprehensive WCF on their total write-ups, while XI group B was provided with focused WCF on their essays.

For writing accuracy, the respondents in XI Group A received comprehensive WCF on all their errors and were asked to understand it with the help of the instructor. In contrast, Group B was provided with focused WCF and asked to understand it in the same way. After that, the instructor explained the meaning of meta-linguistic codes to respondents so that they could work out the solutions to the errors identified in the essays. For writing quality, the researcher provided participants with a scoring rubric based on the Cambridge 1123 English essay guidelines and marked them accordingly four times before the post-test during the research.

Finally, participants were asked to appear in the post-test. Respondents wrote narrative essays, while the instructor marked them using a comprehensive WCF for XI group A and a focused WCF for XI group B. Having done that, their essays were marked by an authorized, trained Cambridge evaluator by the Cambridge English 1123 scoring rubric.

Validity of the Research

A quasi-experimental approach, however, permits the researcher to utilize existing groups in an educational setting, similar to a controlled study, highlighting issues that researchers need to address in the absence of an experimental study design (Creswell, 2005, p. 298). To ensure the study achieves high reliability and generalizability, the investigator endeavored to address the issues of internal and external validity.

Internal Validity

The quasi-experimental study presents a substantial amount of problems for internal validity, as the respondents are not in randomly assigned groups. Creswell (2005, p. 298) suggests that there is a likelihood of maturation, selection, and mortality, as well as the interaction of selection with other problems. Additionally, in the pre-test–post-test study approach, issues such as history, testing, instrumentation, and regression may also arise. Maturation was not probable effect of the treatment method applied, as the participants were adolescents in both the intact groups with an average age of seventeen years, while the duration of experimental focused and comprehensive WCF treatment lasted for only six weeks. In order that the study could obtain differential selection, the investigator divided the respondents in the focused and comprehensive group by the level of their writing accuracy and quality before the inception of the experiments (high or moderate). The English as a compulsory second language course for the Ordinary Level examination, conducted by Cambridge Assessment International Education, made it possible for the researcher to ensure that experimental mortality is controlled. The respondents who enrolled in this subject are required to complete this course. The effect of history could also be controlled for, as the respondents who participated in the study had already passed the two prerequisite English language courses prior to the experimental treatment. The participants in the present study were required to enroll in only one English course; therefore, the possibility of their being influenced by any other treatment was controlled. To reduce the testing and instrumentation effects, participants were asked to appear in the English essay writing test (constructed by Cambridge Assessment International Education). It is for this reason that the score obtained reflected only the effects of the experimental treatment on the students' essay writing performance. It is also a general tendency that students at the start of

their X grade come with an average low level of English language competence. Therefore, the respondents could not achieve extreme scores at the beginning of the study. That is, the mean writing quality pre-test score gained by both focused and comprehensive groups was 14.54 and 14.73, respectively, which are considered lower than 50% of the total score. At the same time, the mean writing accuracy pre-test scores gained by the focused and comprehensive groups were 28.32 and 27.53, respectively. This was quite a big help in solving the regression problem. As part of the pre-emptive approach, the researchers separated the comprehensive group from the focused group. They barred them from communicating with one another regarding the type of treatment rendered to each group. This resulted in the minimization of the diffusion or imitation of the treatment.

External Validity

To mitigate the compensatory rivalry effect and aggrieved demoralization, the investigator informed both treatment groups of the study's goal. They were informed that although the approaches employed for them are different, the common aim of the study is to improve their ESL writing skills. Finally, for transparency, both groups were assigned identical tasks.

Population Validity

The results of the current research were derived from the participants in the two intact classes, rather than the entire population or all subjects enrolled in the course.

Ecological Validity

Generalizing the results obtained from the present study, where this experiment was conducted, to another setting, or from one level in an educational setting to another, may not be possible. Additionally, the research findings could not be generalized because they do not share identical traits.

Interaction of History and Treatment

It is essential to consider that any study conducted at different times may yield varying results. Moreover, the research was conducted from February 2021 to March 2021; therefore, the results cannot be generalized to other perioperative procedures—analysis Procedure.

Data collected through a quantitative approach in the course of the study were analyzed using SPSS, a statistical package for the social sciences. This software is specifically designed to analyze complex data. First, the obtained data was cleaned of outliers. After that, because this study comprised multiple groups, the researcher conducted descriptive statistics tests and multiple group comparison tests, known as the Paired Samples T-Test, to compare the means of the participants. Finally, an independent sample T-Test was run to obtain data on the comparative impact of focused and comprehensive WCF on writing motivation, engagement, attitude, accuracy, and quality.

Data Analysis

Findings

Findings of Research Question: 01

Is there a significant difference in ESL writing accuracy between students who received Focused WCF and those who received Comprehensive WCF?

To answer this research question, an independent sample t-test was run to compare the pre-test focused ESL Writing accuracy data with the pre-test comprehensive ESL writing accuracy data.

Table 1: A comparison of the comprehensive vs. focused WCF on writing accuracy

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Pre-test focused	14	29.22	8.71	0.431	.590
Pre-test comprehensive	11	28.63	7.32		

Table 1 shows the result, which reports ($t = 0.431$, $p > 0.05$) no significant difference in the ESL writing accuracy levels at the pre-test stage in the independent samples –test.

Table 2: A comparison of the comprehensive vs. focused WCF on writing accuracy

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Post focused	14	17.32	12.71	2.831	.009
Post comprehensive	11	25.94	4.32		

Table 2 shows the t-test result, which reports ($t = 2.831$, $p < 0.05$) a significant difference in the ESL writing accuracy levels at the post-test stage in favor of the focused WCF group. Participants given focused WCF greatly reduced their global errors and improved accuracy in their composition. It was noted that most of the recurring errors disappeared at the post-test stage in the study. Respondents were at ease sorting out their mistakes because of the nature of focused WCF. On the other hand, the group that received comprehensive WCF continued committing recurring errors in their essays. Many respondents remained confused about errors even after the instructor clarified them multiple times.

Findings of Research Question: 02

- 1) Is there a significant difference in ESL writing quality of students who received Focused WCF and those who received Comprehensive WCF?

To answer this research question independent sample t-test was run to compare the pre-test focused ESL Writing quality score with pre-test comprehensive ESL writing quality score.

Table 3: A comparison of the comprehensive vs. focused WCF on writing quality

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Pre-test focused	14	14.73	4.98	-.237	.209
Pre-test comprehensive	11	14.27	4.22	-	

Table 3 shows the result, which reports ($t = -0.237$, $p > 0.05$) no significant difference in the ESL writing quality at the pre-test stage in the independent samples –test.

Table 4: A comparison of comprehensive vs. focused WCF on writing quality

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Post focused	14	21.54	.080	3.043	.002
Post comprehensive	11	17.50	3.15	-	

Table 4 shows the t-test result, which reports ($t = 3.043$, $p < 0.05$) a significant difference in the ESL writing quality levels at the post-test stage in favor of both focused WCF groups. The quality of writing was seen as an upward trend in the focused WCF group. Respondents started using

precise lexical items at the end of the study. Accuracy in spelling increased satisfactorily. Paragraphs constructed enhanced unity, and an appropriate link was observed as they progressed. Participants corrected their mistakes in the verb forms as well. Overall, focused WCF proved to help improve respondents' writing quality.

Findings of Research Question: 03

2) Is there a significant difference in ESL writing motivation of students who received Focused WCF and those who received Comprehensive WCF?

To answer this research question independent sample t-test was run to compare the means of pre-test focused ESL Writing motivation questionnaire mean with the pre-test comprehensive ESL writing motivation questionnaire mean.

Table 5: A comparison of the comprehensive vs. focused WCF on writing motivation

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Pre-test focused	14	3.35	.65	.995	.425
Pre-test comprehensive	11	3.22	.54		

Table 6 shows the result, which reports ($t = 0.995$, $p > 0.05$) no significant difference in the ESL writing motivational levels at the pre-test stage in the independent samples t-test.

Table 6: A comparison of comprehensive vs. focused WCF on writing motivation

	N	Mean	Standard Deviation	t-value	p-value
Post focused	14	4.10	.175	2.675	.025
Post comprehensive	11	3.49	.136		

Table 6 presents the test result reports ($t = 2.675$, $p < 0.05$), indicating a significant difference in ESL writing motivational levels at the post-test stage in favor of the focused WCF group. Respondents who were focused on WCF were seen as agreeing to work on English writing to improve their academic performance.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Discussion of key findings

The impetus for the study emerged from the gap highlighted by Mao and Lee (2020). Being a quasi-experimental comparative study, it had two groups, comprehensive and focused, both intact. The study began with a questionnaire on writing motivation. Learners having filled it, constructed three narratives and three argumentative essays over a period of six weeks. The researcher marked and corrected all the essays using the comprehensive WCF for Group 1 and the focused WCF for Group 2.

Comparative Impact of Focused and Comprehensive WCF on the ESL Writing Accuracy. Remove headings in this section.

Learners undertook a total of ten weeks of research sessions and learned to write about narrative and argumentative essays. Six weeks were dedicated to treatment sessions with focused and comprehensive written corrective feedback. The participant constructed an essay which was checked using a focused and comprehensive WCF. One group received focused WCF, and the

other received comprehensive WCF. To assess the impact of focused versus comprehensive WCF, the researcher calculated the errors of T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, and T6 compositions for both comprehensive and focused groups, applying the methods suggested by Biber, Conrad, Conrad, and Reppen (1998). According to this, the analyst divided the total number of mistakes by the total number of words and multiplied by the standard number (500) representing the average number of words. The obtained numbers were compared using the independent samples t-test. The results of both comprehensive post-instructional and focused post-instructional scores suggested significant differences after the treatment. Learners' errors reduced significantly compared to T1 and T6 with comprehensive WCF. The result of the independent sample t-test manifests that learners improved their writing accuracy. The number of errors in participants' essays was far less than those noted at the beginning of the study. Focused WCF worked as a catalyst for learners to address their linguistic errors. The research also identified some positive roles in reducing errors, but it was coupled with anxiety and burnout. Lastly, focused metalinguistic WCF surpassed comprehensive metalinguistic WCF in reducing students' errors.

The outcome of the present research confirms that of Ferris et al. (2013) and Shintani et al. (2014) regarding the usefulness of focused WCF. It was found in both studies that the focused WCF impact was more efficacious than that of comprehensive WCF, assisting learners in decreasing target errors. Additionally, focused WCF helps students maintain the treatment's long-term effects (Shintani et al., 2014). Schmidt (1990) attempted to resolve the question regarding the higher potency of focused WCF over comprehensive. Students' attention could be improved, along with their noticing of the error, which is the primary phase in which a learner processes WCF cognitively (Bitchener & Storch, 2016).

Comparative Impact of Focused vs. Comprehensive WCF on the ESL Writing Quality

The participants wrote six essays in the course of the study and were checked using a focused and comprehensive WCF in the first place. Scoring rubrics of the O-level second language were employed to mark learners' essays. The results of the independent samples t-test showed that focused WCF enhanced the overall quality of learners' writing. Writing quality did enhance using comprehensive WCF; however, it could not solve the issue of managing a bulk amount of feedback Utilization. Ultimately, it was focused on WCF, which was more effective in improving writing. The present study confirms that learners cannot notice WCF in a quality manner when it is presented in a large amount, accompanied by numerous writing errors. Ellis et al. (2008) suggest that it becomes strenuous for the learner to encourage oneself to notice, assimilate, and appreciate the multitude of corrections aimed at various sets of the linguistic phenomenon. The results also corroborate Bitchener and Ferris (2012), suggesting that focused WCF assists learners a great deal when it comes to dealing with cognitively more complex linguistic forms, as attending to such errors might require more attention.

Comparative Impact of Focused vs. Comprehensive WCF on the ESL Writing Motivation

The present research was conducted to compare the impact of focused vs. comprehensive WCF on learners' writing motivation. They were required to complete the writing motivation questionnaire and participated in a 6-week treatment session. Afterwards, the writing motivation questionnaire was filled again to provide data for the study. The study's results indicate that learners' motivation was positively affected more through focused WCF, and learners were more motivated to write English assignments after being treated in a focused WCF environment. The results of the pre-test and post-test mean difference indicated that the learners enjoyed writing after receiving focused

WCF. The majority of learners strongly agreed to complete their assignment at T6 as a result of the focused WCF. A comparative analysis of comprehensive and focused WCF revealed that an increasing number of students were willing to invest a significant amount of effort into completing their assignments and were able to focus on what they were writing at T6. Participants strongly agreed that assignments should be revised before submission. Moreover, they were ready to compose essays even if they were not graded, which indicates the utility of focused WCF. In addition, the study revealed that after receiving focused WCF, participants would not mind if others read their writing more than those who received comprehensive feedback, and they strongly agreed that they would attempt writing assignments with multiple-choice questions. As for spelling and choosing the right word, learners strongly agreed to be at ease at T6 as opposed to before any treatment. Finally, at T6, all the participants desired to be recognized as writers and were entirely motivated to be in the writing class.

The results are similar to those of Payne (2012), which state an improvement in writing motivation. Learners experience an upward trend as a result of focused WCF treatment.

Discussion on the findings with theoretical justification

The superiority of focused (targeted, cue-based) feedback for accuracy aligns with Cognitive Load Theory (CLT) and the Noticing/Attention-to-Form perspective in SLA. By narrowing the range of feedback to specific error types, learners experience a lower extraneous cognitive load and can allocate their working memory to form-focused hypothesis testing (Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis). This makes it easier for learners to notice, internalize, and generalize rule-oriented corrections, particularly when their metalinguistic awareness is still developing. The effect is consistent with Vygotsky's zone of proximal development, where targeted scaffolding helps learners operate in their ZPD and internalize corrective strategies with less fatigue.

Implications, limitations, and future suggestions of the Study

The study has important implications for relevant stakeholders. Teachers stakeholders. Teachers need to provide focused feedback to their ESL students, as it is more effective than comprehensive feedback, improving writing accuracy, quality, motivation, engagement, and attitude. Teacher educators need to train ESL teachers to provide more effective, focused feedback to students in their classrooms. Teachers need to train students to effectively follow up on the focused feedback provided to them by the teachers. The current study has its limitations. One of its limitations is that only school-level learners of English as a second language participated in the study. The study could only treat students for ten weeks due to pandemic restrictions. Another limitation of the present study is that the researcher worked with intact groups, so only a quasi-experimental design was possible to adopt. One last but important limitation of the present study is that it could only include 25 students due to pandemic restrictions. Future studies could involve more respondents than the current number. The researcher would like to make the following suggestions for future research: Future researchers can investigate the impact of focused versus comprehensive WCF on Pakistani ESL college and university students. Future research can conduct an actual experimental study to randomize the participants in focus and comprehensive WCF groups. Future experimental studies on the same topic can lengthen the duration of the treatment to understand the effectiveness of WCF further. Future research can also investigate the effectiveness of direct versus indirect WCF in the ESL classrooms.

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