



## EFL Postgraduate Students' Perspectives towards Teachers' Feedback on L2 Writing

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### Abstract

The effectiveness of written corrective feedback in improving students' writing proficiency has been widely studied recently. However, the students' perspectives towards the feedback they receive have been considered by only few studies. Therefore, the perspectives towards the coded corrective feedback were explored in the current study. The study adopted a qualitative approach employing semi-structured interviews with ten postgraduate students studying Intensive English Course at Universiti Utara Malaysia. The students were selected purposefully and were divided based on their proficiency levels. They received two types of feedback as Direct and Indirect Coded Feedback on two writing tasks. After that, they were interviewed individually. The data were analysed manually by making thematic analyses using open and axial coding techniques. The findings revealed that all the participants need Corrective Feedback on a regular basis. They stated that the direct feedback is clear and an easy way of providing feedback and shows their teachers' interest in correcting their mistakes. On the other hand, they illustrated that the direct corrective feedback might have negative psychological effects on them. As for the indirect coded feedback, the participants stated that it increases their self-confidence as independent learners. In addition, they revealed that it is both time and effort-consuming for the learners. These findings could have pedagogical implications by helping teachers realize the most effective type of corrective feedback.

**Keywords:** L2 Writing, EFL Students, Corrective Feedback, Qualitative Approach

## Lisansüstü EFL Öğrencilerinin İkinci Dilde Yazma Üzerine Öğretmenler Tarafından Verilen Geribildirim Yönelik Bakış Açılı

### Öz

Yazılı düzeltme geribildirimlerinin öğrencilerin yazma yetkinliğini geliştirmedeki verimliliği son zamanlarda geniş ölçüde tartışılmıştır. Ancak, oldukça az sayıda çalışma öğrencilerin edineği geribildirimlere dair bakış açılarını ele almıştır. Dolayısıyla, bu çalışmada kodlamalı düzeltme geribildirimlerine dair bakış açıları incelenmiştir. Araştırma Universiti Utara Malaysia'da hızlandırılmış İngilizce kursunda okuyan lisansüstü öğrencilerle yapılan yarı-yapılandırılmış görüşmeler vasıtasıyla nitel bir yaklaşım sergilemektedir. Öğrenciler bu amaca yönelik seçilmiş ve yeterlilik seviyelerine göre gruplandırılmıştır. Bu öğrenciler iki yazı ödevine dair doğrudan ve dolaylı kodlamalı olmak üzere iki türlü geribildirim almıştır. Daha sonra, öğrenciler ayrı ayrı mülakata alınmıştır. Edinilen veri, açık ve eksensel kodlama teknikleri kullanarak tematik çözümlemelerde bulunmak üzere şahsen-manüel bir şekilde incelenmiştir. Bulgular göstermektedir ki tüm katılımcılar düzenli aralıklarla yapılan düzeltme geribildirimlerine ihtiyaç duymaktadır. Katılımcılar doğrudan geri dönütün açık ve kolay bir geribildirimde bulunma yöntemi olduğunu ve hatalarının düzeltilmesinde öğretmenler tarafından ortaya konan

*ilgiyi gösterdiğini dile getirmektedir. Diğer yandan, doğrudan yapılan düzeltme geri dönütlerinin kendi üzerlerinde olumsuz psikolojik etkilere neden olabileceğini göstermişlerdir. Dolaylı kodlamalı geribildirimde ise katılımcılar bu türün bağımsız öğrenciler olarak kendi öz güvenlerini artırdığını belirtmişlerdir. İlâveten, bunun öğrenciler için hem zaman hem de güç sarf ettirici olduğunu yansıtmışlardır. Mevzubahis bulgular, en etkili düzeltme geribildirim türünü saptamada öğretmenlere yardımcı olarak eğitimsel bir işlev kazanabilir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** İkinci Dilde Yazma, İngilizceyi Yabancı Dil olarak kullanan (EFL) Öğrenciler, Düzeltme Geribildirimi, Nitel Araştırma Yöntemi

## 1. Introduction

One of the essential roles of teachers is to provide students with effective feedback. In this regard, error correction is probably one of the most important used methods for responding to students' writing. According to Ferris (2003), error correction may be the most significant aspect that contributes to students' success in writing. In addition, error correction helps teachers assess their students' level of proficiency, and it is important for students to identify the correct forms to avoid making the errors in their future writing. Hendrickson (1978) states that making errors seems to be necessary and an essential part of language learning. Therefore, learners' errors and the feedback on these errors imply significant interests for both language teachers and researchers. Consequently, feedback is important for developing the writing skill for all students during the different stages. According to Wiggins (2004), feedback is a part of an educational assessment system that provides information about what was accomplished in the light of specific goals, whereby the assessment requires a known set of measurable goals, standards and criteria that make the goals real and specific. In addition, the formative assessment is specifically intended to provide feedback on the performance to improve and accelerate learning (Sadler, 1989). Therefore, it can be said that the appropriate feedback is essential in the learning-teaching process because it simply enables students to compare their work with the objectives of the task given to them. On the other hand, lack of introducing useful feedback influences students' writing performance negatively. However, the effectiveness of error correction in improving students' writing proficiency has become a debatable issue, thus attracting the interest of several researchers to explore which type of correction is more effective (Chandler, 2003; Ferris, 1999, 2010; Truscott, 1996; Truscott & Hsu, 2008). Some researchers consider that providing feedback has an important role in enhancing the quality of students' writing performance (Brown, 2007; Ferris, 1999, 2003, 2004; Hedgcok and Lefkowitz, 1994; Hyland and Hyland, 2006; Lee, 2004, 2008; Rahimi, 2009). On the other hand, it has been claimed in previous studies that written corrective feedback (WCFB) is ineffective and constitutes an obstacle for the improvement of students' writing skill (Kepner, 1991; Semke, 1984; Sheppard, 1992; Truscott, 1996, 1999, 2007).

Studies have been conducted to investigate not only the effectiveness of WCFB but also the impact of various types of corrective feedback, such as direct and indirect corrections on students' performance in writing (e.g. Bitchener and Knoch, 2009; Bitchener, 2008; Chandler, 2003; Ellis et al., 2008). In Lee's (2005) study, for instance,

It was found that giving implicit corrective feedback has a positive effect on students' writing accuracy. On the other hand, it was found in other studies (e.g. Ellis et al., 2006; Varnosfadrani and Basturkmen, 2009) that the explicit corrective feedback improves students' writing skill more than implicit feedback. Other studies conducted on the effectiveness of corrective feedback in terms of students and teachers' perspectives (e.g. Lasagabaster and Sierra, 2005; Schulz, 2001; Yoshida, 2008) resulted in varied conflicting conclusions. According to Brown (2007), the ways we assess our students' performance and provide them with feedback can really make a difference to how students learn. For example, teachers' feedback on students' writing performance influences both students and teachers positively. In this regard, Othman (2006) emphasizes that the feedback helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses to improve their learning and help teachers in the teaching process.

In spite of the increasing number of studies on corrective feedback, teachers are often not aware of the results of these studies. In this regard, Hyland and Hyland (2006) illustrate that the findings of the published research could probably fail to find their ways to the teachers. In the Malaysian context, teachers usually face a difficulty in providing their students with proper feedback to improve their writing level due to time constrain and the big number of students in classes (Razali and Jupri, 2014). Other studies (Cohen and Cavalcanti, 1990) argue that there may be a mismatch between the provided written corrective feedback and the preferred feedback by learners. Similarly, Schulz (2001) argues that students may have multiple perspectives towards their errors and how they should be corrected. For instance, when students receive undesired feedback, which does not meet their expectations and needs, this feedback can be a barrier to their learning process. In other words, inappropriate feedback may be a cause of confusion for those students. Therefore, Dornyei (2003) and Sakui and Gaies (1999) revealed that the difference in teachers and students' beliefs can demotivate and frustrate students. Similarly, Krashen (1982) in his Affective Filter Hypothesis argues that when L2 learners are stressed, frustrated, bored and demotivated, they may not receive the desired comprehensible input. Therefore, it is important for teachers to realize their students' perception about the written corrective feedback. In other words, providing students' with their preferred feedback can facilitate their language learning and motivate them to learn and improve their writing performance and accuracy. For Russell and Spada (2006), students' perception towards their learning process can be a mediating factor in the choice of the best teaching style to effectively help them in the classroom. In this context, several studies (e.g., Lee, 2004; Schulz, 2001) explored students' preferences towards the different types of received feedback and found that students' learning experience determines their perceptions and suppositions about the best teaching style. However, few studies have considered the students' perspectives (Lee, 2008) and preferences (Kagimoto and Rodgers, 2008; Renko, 2012) towards the feedback they receive, specifically in the context of EFL Arab postgraduates in Malaysia. Hence, the present study explores the perspectives of students regarding the written corrective feedback they receive.

## **2. Research Methodolog**

### **2.1. Research Design**

A qualitative research methodology was adopted in the present study. According to Creswell (2012), in exploring a central phenomenon, a qualitative research involves interviewing the participants and asking them broad and general questions to obtain rich information based on their experience. The qualitative research design involves collecting the data from a small number of individuals to obtain the participant's views about a certain phenomenon. In this study, the phenomenon of the corrective feedback provided by the teachers on their students' writing tasks was explored and analysed.

### **2.2. Data Collection**

In case studies, researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time. In the present study, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, employing two types of corrective written feedback on two written tasks by EFL postgraduates to elicit the participants' perspectives. The first feedback was indirect coded corrective feedback, whereas the second one was direct corrective feedback on two written essays.

### **2.3. Participants**

This study was conducted on international students who attended Intensive English course at Universiti Utara Malaysia. These students failed to meet the English language requirements Band 6 in International English Language Testing System (IELTS) or 550 in Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) paper-based exam as an admission condition. New international students who cannot achieve the required score in IELTS or TOEFL exams are required to sit for English Language Placement Test (ELPT) at the beginning of each semester. If the students could not achieve the required score in ELPT exam, they have to attend a compulsory Intensive English course for a period of one semester at Universiti Utara Malaysia. During the Intensive English course, students study general English skills (reading, listening, speaking and writing with a focus on other skills and language aspects). One of the classrooms of the Intensive English program included 21 postgraduate international students coming from different cultural backgrounds; the majority of the students in this class (19 students) were Arabic native speakers.

### **2.4. Sampling**

This qualitative study employed a purposeful sampling in choosing the participants. According to Wilmot (2005), a purposeful sampling is a technique used in qualitative studies, whereby the criteria of the selection is more important than the number of the participants interviewed. Ten EFL Arab postgraduates showed their interest to participate in this study which formed 47.5 percent of the total number of the students (21 students). All the participants are Arabic native speakers coming from Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, and Algeria.

The researcher was provided with a record that contains the students' scores on their writing placement test by the students' instructor who has 25 years of experience in teaching ESL. The students' performances in writing skill were evaluated based on IELTS band score scale from (0-9) which is used widely in evaluating non-native English speakers' language and writing abilities.

The teacher's record was used to divide the sample of this study into three main groups based on the proficiency levels of the population. The students' records showed that the lowest score was 2 and 5, whereas the highest score was 8 in writing skill only. Therefore, the participants were classified into three groups based on their proficiency as follows. Four students (S1, S2, S3, and S4) who scored between (2.5-4) were considered a novice proficiency level in writing. Second, four students (S5, S6, S7 and S8) who scored between (4.5-6) were considered an intermediate proficiency level in writing, whereas only two students (S9 and S10) who scored between (6.5-8) were considered an advanced proficiency level in writing.

### **2.5. Instrumentation**

This qualitative study used a semi-structured interview as a tool of data collection. To introduce the participants to the corrective feedback in this study, it was necessary to provide them with two types of corrective feedback on their written essays tasks to elicit their perspectives towards the given two types of error correction.

### **2.6. Students' Writing Tasks**

The participants of this study were asked to write two essays; both essays belong to the problem-solving genre. The technique of writing this type of essays was instructed throughout the Intensive English semester as part of the English writing course syllabus. In the first written task (*How can technology reduce stress among people?*), the participants were asked to write a problem-solving essay during the English class period which is 50 minutes. Two weeks after writing the first essay, the participants were asked to write another problem-solving essay (*Climate changes cause several problems, discuss some of these problems and suggest solutions to reduce the bad effects of this problems*) during the period of 50 minutes.

### **2.7. Feedback Procedure**

The focus of this study was on some of the most frequent grammatical errors in English writing based on Ferris'(2000) list. The study targeted eight types of ESL students' errors to be corrected, including a) The wrong choice of words, b) Using the wrong tense, c) Using wrong subject-verb agreement, d) Using a wrong syntactic structure, e) Using an incorrect spelling in writing words, f) Missing word errors, g) Extra items or words, and h) the wrong use of punctuation. The instructor of the participants provided two types of error corrective feedback on the eight types of the grammatical errors.

## 2.8. First Task Correction

On the first written essay, the participants received indirect coded corrective feedback on the errors which they made. The errors were underlined to guide the students to the location of their errors and a code was provided for each error to indicate the type of the errors. According to Ellis (2009), error correction with codes involves providing some metalinguistic clues by giving the students' error codes to indicate the nature of these errors. In this type of correction, it was the students' responsibility to look for the correct form for the errors which they committed. Alongside the corrected written essays, the students received a piece of paper which showed the targeted error type, the used code in correction and an example on each error they made to help them in revising and correcting their errors.

Figure 1 shows an example of the indirect coded corrective feedback which was provided on one of the students' written tasks.

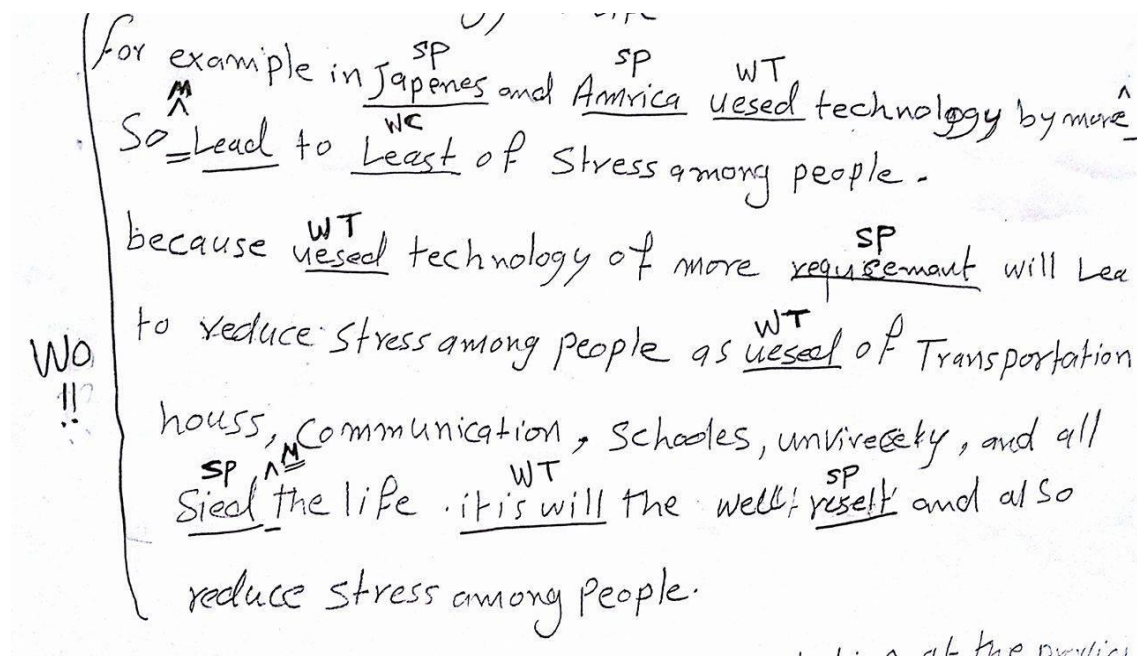


Figure 1: A Sample of the Indirect Coded Corrective Feedback

## 2.9. Second Task Correction

Regarding the errors which were in the second writing essay task, the participants received direct corrective feedback on the same kind of grammatical errors which were corrected using the indirect feedback in the first written essay. In the direct corrective feedback, the participants' second essay involved writing the correct form of the wrong words or sentences above the students' errors. According to Ellis (2009), the direct corrective feedback involves providing the students with the correct forms of their errors. Figure 2 below is an example of the direct correction.

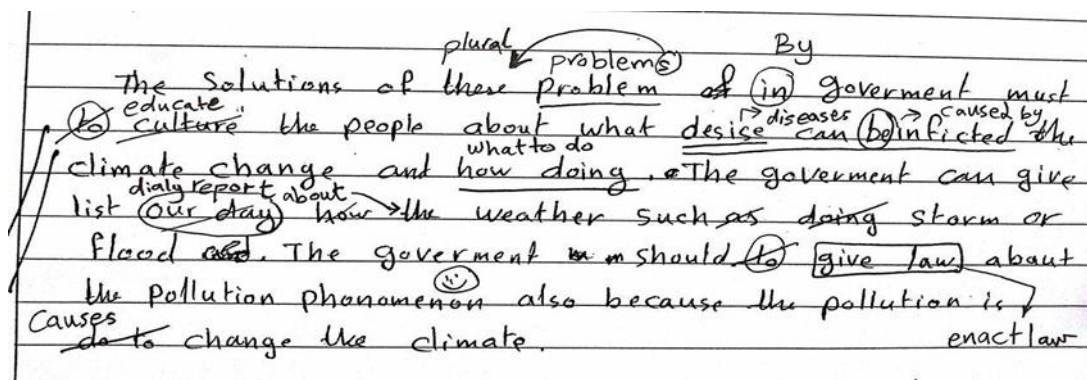


Figure 2: A Sample of the Direct Corrective Feedback

### 2.10. Interview

To elicit the students' perspectives on the direct and indirect corrective feedback, this qualitative study adopted a semi-structured face-to-face interview with the participants in one of the rooms at Sultanah Bahiyah Library at UUM. According to Creswell (2005), a semi-structured interview is an instrument used to elicit in-depth and meaningful information from the participants of the study by asking them open-ended questions and recording their responses to these questions. An adapted version of Ferris' (2007) interview was used to formulate the interview questions in the present study. All the semi-instructed interviews were audio-recorded after obtaining the consent of the participants. Then, they were transcribed and analyzed.

### 2.11. Data Analysis

The interviews were analysed manually using open and axial coding techniques. This technique involved reading through the data several times in a close examination to identify the data which can help in answering the research questions. After that, the data were divided into smaller segmented labeled categories. According to Punch (2005), the process of open coding involves breaking down, examining, comparing, conceptualizing, and categorizing the data. Then, an axial coding technique was used in analysing the data of this study. After coding and labeling some themes through an open coding technique, these codes were examined closely to identify connections and find possible relationships among them. According to Strauss and Corbin (1998), axial coding involves putting the data back together in new ways taking into consideration the conditions, context and consequences of the data. Therefore, the data were analysed by making connections between the open codes or the themes identified from the participants' interviews and the sub-themes or the axial coding in relation to the research questions.

## 3. Findings and Discussions

This section presents the findings related to the perspectives of the EFL participants towards the feedback they receive on their written assignments.

### 3.1. Corrective Feedback

Regarding the participants' perception towards the corrective feedback, three themes were identified. The first theme shows the areas of writing which requires the teacher's feedback. The second theme is related to the amount of correction which the students expect to receive on their written tasks, whereas the third theme is related to the importance of corrective feedback.

**Table 1.** Identified Themes in Relation to the Corrective Feedback

NO	Major Themes
1	Students' Need for Corrective Feedback
2	Selective or Comprehensive Feedback
3	The Importance of Corrective Feedback

#### 3.1.1. Students' Need for Corrective Feedback

Students were asked about the areas and linguistic aspects which they like to receive more corrective feedback. Grammar, spelling and vocabulary were the most common problematic areas for them. Table 2 illustrates the students' perspectives in three proficiency levels.

**Table 2.** Students' Need for Corrective Feedback

Participants' Responses	Students' Need for Corrective Feedback
Novice Level Students	Grammar, spelling and vocabulary
Intermediate Level Students	Grammar, spelling, vocabulary and organization of ideas.
Advanced Level Students	Grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and the organization of the ideas in paragraphs.

#### Novice Level Students (Participants)

The novice participants stated that they face problems in three main areas while writing and they expressed their tendency to receive more corrective feedback on these areas. All the participants asserted that they face problems in grammar, whereas two participants (S2, S3) claimed that they face problems in spelling. In addition, S1 and S2 revealed that they lack sufficient vocabulary or have a difficulty in finding the suitable words to express their thoughts during writing.

Extract1: *I have a big problem in my grammar, and I do not know the meaning when I want to write. I think mostly I need correction on grammar.* (S1)

Extract 2: *Yeah, problems in my grammar and meaning of the words and spelling.* (S2)

#### Intermediate Level Students (Participants)

Intermediate level participants affirmed that they face problems, mainly in grammar, spelling, vocabulary and organizing their ideas while writing. Three



participants (S6, S7, and S8) added spelling as another problem in their writing. In addition, participant (S5) found that the organization of ideas and lack of enough vocabulary is an obstacle to write appropriately and correctly.

Extract 3: *I need my teacher to give me corrections on the area of organization and structures of my paragraphs and the sentences grammar.* (S5)

Extract4: *Actually in writing, because I am not a native speaker, so I feel difficulties in some writing, the vocabulary I use, and the organization of my words, and also grammar is a problem.* (S7)

Extract 5: *I like to receive more corrections; sometimes I need feedback on the grammar, tenses and punctuation and everything.* (S6)

Extract 6: *I need more feedback on grammar and on spelling.* (S8)

### **Advanced Level Students (Participants)**

The advanced level participants face problems in many linguistic aspects and areas; their answers to the interview questions showed that they face problems in grammar, spelling, vocabulary and organizing their ideas. S9 claimed that he faces problems in grammar, particularly in advanced grammatical structures and vocabulary.

Extract 7: *I have some problems in advanced grammatical structure and vocabulary. I need more corrections, particularly on grammar and spelling of some words and vocabulary.* (S9)

For S10, the difference in organizing the ideas and paragraphs between Arabic language (his mother tongue) and English language is a real problem for him; consequently, he needs more efforts to improve his English writing.

Extract 8: *Well, I need more corrections on grammar, spelling, vocabulary and also on organization, on everything because of the way of organizing ideas and writing. Arabic writing is different, so it is hard for me to write in English.* (S10)

Based on these discussions, it seems that all the participants in the different proficiency levels need to have more corrections on three main areas, mainly grammar, spelling and vocabulary, whereas intermediate and advanced level participants need more corrections on ideas and paragraph organization. This result is in line with the findings of several researchers. For example, Rabab`ah (2003) found that students' lack of necessary vocabulary prevents them from expressing their ideas freely and accurately in writing for authentic communicative purposes. Similarly, Al-Khasawneh (2010) found that business postgraduate students at Universiti Utara Malaysia faced problems related to vocabulary register, organization of ideas, grammar and spelling. In this regard, Abdulkareem (2013) and Jomaa and Bidin (2017) revealed that Arab postgraduate students in Malaysia face problems in academic writing, especially in sentence structure, vocabulary, and expressing ideas.

### 3.1.2. Selective/Comprehensive Corrective Feedback

The participants in the current study were asked whether they like to receive comprehensive corrective feedback by correcting all their errors or they like their teacher to focus on certain types of errors while correcting their writing. The findings revealed that the majority of the participants prefer to receive comprehensive corrective feedback on their errors. For novice level participants, they need their errors to be corrected comprehensively. They think that comprehensive correction can help them more than selective correction in improving their writing skills.

Extract 9: *I like to have corrections on all the errors.* (S 2)

Extract 10: *I need more feedback on all my errors.* (S1)

Extract 11: *I like all my errors to be corrected that helps me realize my level.* (S3)

For intermediate level participants, 75% of them prefer to receive corrective feedback on all the errors they make.

Extract 12: *I like to receive corrections on all my errors.* (S6)

On the other hand, 25% of the intermediate level participants do not like to receive corrective feedback on all the errors. Rather, they prefer self-dependence in discovering and correcting their minor errors.

Extract 13: *Actually not all. The small errors I usually correct by myself, but I like to receive correction on the big errors because it is really a problem for me.* (S5)

As for the advanced level participants, they revealed their tendency to have their errors corrected or at least highlighted comprehensively because they are willing to achieve a high level of writing proficiency.

Extract 14: *Well, for sure all of them. I need to know where my mistakes are when I write.* (S10)

Extract 15: *Yeah, I like all of them to be corrected or at least to be underlined; I need the teacher to highlight them to help me write correct sentences.* (S9)

As a result, the participants' need to have all their errors corrected is in line with Schmidt's (1994) Noticing Hypothesis, which asserts that comprehensive correction helps L2 students become conscious to the mismatch between what they produce and what is the correct form in the target language. Therefore, it can be inferred that the comprehensive feedback can help students notice a wider range of errors when they obtain the correct forms on their writing. However, the findings in the present study contrast with Ellis, Loewen and Erlam's (2006) claim that a wide range of corrected linguistic features at the same time may lead to overload the students' cognitive abilities which might prevent them from processing the received feedback. Similarly, the participants' opinions in the present study are contrasting with Ellis (2009) who claimed that a selective error correction may be more effective compared to the comprehensive correction.

### 3.1.3. Importance of Corrective Feedback

Regarding the importance of corrective feedback for the participants in the different proficiency levels, the perspectives were both varied and similar in some aspects. For example, novice level participants value the teacher's corrective feedback on their written work. In addition, they express their constant need for the corrective feedback on regular basis because of its importance in improving their writing skill, discovering their errors, realizing their weakness areas in language, and its complementary role in the learning process, specifically when using language in writing.

Extract 16: *The small errors like (a, an) I can discover, but not much. I cannot know big errors like structure, tenses. My teacher's correction guides me. (S2)*

Extract 17: *I am not sure if I can correct by myself; I think I need my teacher's corrections to help me know my level. (S3)*

Extract 18: *For sure, it is important, because correction helps me know my problem and mistakes and identify my level in writing. (S4)*

Extract 19: *I need it all the time; it helps me be good in writing. It is very important because I am not American; I need a teacher to correct my errors. (S2)*

Extract 20: *I always need feedback that helps know how I write. (S3)*

Extract 21: *Mistake correction gives you the right sentence, words and grammar. (S1)*

Extract 22: *I take care of my writing now because teacher's feedback helped me; it makes me focus more. (S1)*

These findings show that all the participants in the different levels of writing proficiency need their teacher's feedback on regular basis similar to the findings of several previous studies (Ferris, 1995; Hedgcock & Lefkowitz, 1994; Leki, 1991). In this regard, Long (1991) argues that error correction plays a significant role in promoting students' linguistics abilities. However, Truscott (1996) claims that teachers should abandon correcting their students' written errors because of the negative impact of correction on students' writing performance and accuracy. In addition, Brown (2007) claims that students with a low English proficiency level may find it difficult to benefit from their teachers' feedback.

### 3.2. Perspectives on Direct Corrective Feedback

In term of answering the second research question of the current study related to the advantages and disadvantages of Direct Corrective Feedback based on their own claims and assumptions, Table 3 illustrates the participants' perspectives.

**Table 3.** Participants’ Perspectives on Direct Corrective Feedback

Participants’ Perspectives	Advantages of Direct Corrective Feedback	Shortcomings of Direct Corrective Feedback
Novice Level Participants	Easy and clear	-Decrease self-confidence -Demotivate learning
Intermediate Level Participants	Easy and clear	-Decrease self-confidence -Demotivate learning
Advanced Level Participants	Shows teacher’s care in their learning process.	Demotivate learning.

For novice and intermediate level participants, the direct corrective feedback has a main advantage being easy and clear in providing the correction for their errors. In other words, they have not faced any problem in understanding what their teacher wrote on their writing assignments as a feedback correction. On the other hand, the direct corrective feedback for the novice and intermediate level participants has a negative psychological effect since it reduces their confidence and results in dissatisfaction towards their performance because their assignments are full of corrected errors. As for the advanced level participants, the direct corrective feedback of their teachers on their written assignment is a positive indicator of their teachers’ care and interest in guiding them towards successful writing.

**Extracts from Novice Level Participants**

Extract 34: *if the teacher gives me direct correction, it is better for me; this makes me happy because it shows me my errors. Yes, if he gives me more corrections, this means I can write better.* (S1)

Extract 35: *I feel happy, because I see my error and I do not need to search a lot; it is easier than an indirect correction for me.* (S3)

Extract 36: *I feel bad, because I know I am a bad student with a lot of errors.* (S2)

Extract 37: *I do not like when my teacher gives me more corrections, because I feel I cannot write in a correct way when I see all my errors; that makes me sad.* (S4)

**Extracts from Intermediate Level Participants**

Extract 38: *It is an easy way; it does not need a lot of searching like indirect coded feedback.* (S6)

Extract 39: *Teacher gives me the correction of my errors directly; it is a clear correction.* (S8)

Extract 40: *Actually, I do not like it because this makes me sad and I lost my confidence in my ability to write well.* (S5)

Extract 41: *I feel ok, but not so much. I do not feel satisfied with my level.* (S6)

Extract 42: *I do not revise my errors when they are direct corrected. I feel that my teacher repeats the same information that he teaches us.* (S7)

Extract 43: *I feel stupid because I made some small errors. I wish not to see a lot of red correction and explanation again in the class. That really makes me sad because it tells me that my level is still bad.* (S8)

### Extracts from Advanced Level Participants

Extract 44: *Actually, I feel very happy, because I want to be professional in writing. Direct feedback shows me my mistakes and I learn more about English. It means that the teacher cares to help us in identifying the correct form of English language.* (S10)

Extract 45: *In general, I feel good and I am happy to learn new things and avoid making errors.* (S9)

Based on the quotations of the participants, the direct corrective feedback can be disadvantageous because it demotivates them to learn. Their perspectives reveal that they do not like the feeling of full dependency on their teacher in correcting their errors directly.

Extract 46: *I like challenging tasks but not ready answers. I prefer if my teacher gives me a chance to search and learn by myself, because I think the information that I search sticks in my mind forever.* (S9)

Extract 47: *I am a good student. I just need a hint to know my error. Sometimes, I forget and make errors, but that this does not mean I do not know the correct answer and rules.* (S10)

Although Lee (2008) found that students generally appreciate obtaining explicit corrective feedback on their written errors, it seems, based on the findings of the present study and the previous studies (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Corpuz, 2011), that the corrective feedback may cause embarrassment or confidence loss for students due to having a lot of corrections on their writing performance.

### 3.3. Perspectives on Indirect Coded Corrective Feedback

The participants in the present study received indirect coded corrective feedback on their first written task. Their written assignment contained the codes which were used in correcting their written works indirectly to help them identify and revise their errors.

**Table 4.** Participants' Perspectives on Indirect Coded Corrective Feedback

Participants' Perspectives	Advantages of indirect coded feedback	Shortcomings of indirect coded feedback
Novice Level Students (Participants)	-Increase self-confidence and satisfaction. -Encourage them to be self-dependent learners.	-Time consuming -Confusing
Intermediate Level Students (Participants)	-Increase self-confidence and satisfaction. -Encourage them to be self-dependent learners.	-Time consuming -Confusing
Advanced Level Students (Participants)	-Increase self-confidence and satisfaction. -Encourage them to be self-dependent learners.	-Time consuming -Confusing

The perspectives of the participants in the three different proficiency levels revealed a similarity in terms of their attitude towards the indirect coded feedback on their writing performance by their teachers. On one hand, the indirect coded feedback has a positive psychological influence on them because it helps them increase their self-confidence in the improvement of their writing performance in English as well as enhances their self-satisfaction towards their performance.

Extract 48: *To see less correction on my paper means that my level has improved; this makes me feel happy and satisfied with my level.* (S3)

Extract 49: *When I see (few) mistakes, I feel happy because that means I learn and improve my writing skill.* (S2)

According to the novice level participants, the indirect coded feedback affects them positively by encouraging them to study more using several sources of knowledge, such as the internet, social media, and friends to find the correct forms of their errors rather than depending on their teachers only.

Extract 50: *I go to google, and I have my friend; he is an English teacher.* (S1)

Extract 51: *If I donot understand it, I google it and maybe chat with my friend to know the correction.* (S2)

Extract 52: *I ask my American friend and I come to the internet.* (S3)

Extract 53: *I go search on the internet and ask my friends; they are good enough in English, and I also have friends on Facebook.* (S4)

In spite of the positive influences of the indirect coded feedback, the participants faced difficulties in dealing with the indirect coded feedback, thereby claiming that it is confusing and time-consuming.

Extract 54: *Indirect coded method is difficult because I need long time to find the correct answer.* (S1)

Extract 55: *Yes, the indirect one, they make me confused and it was not clear.* (S3)

Extract 56: *the indirect is hard to understand because it is the first time I see it, but the direct is clear and easy.* (S2)

Similar to the novice level participants, all the intermediate level participants believe that the indirect coded feedback is advantageous because of its positive psychological impact represented by increasing their self- satisfaction towards their learning process and enhancing the self-confidence in their ability to improve their writing performance skill.

Extract 57: *Actually, I feel very happy, when I see my paper has little corrections. This really makes me happy and encourages me to improve my language.* (S5)

Extract 58: *I like only to see the difficult grammar, but the simple things I do not like to make more mistakes or errors, and I feel not satisfied to see simple errors.* (S6)

Extract 59: *If I do not understand, I ask my friends on Facebook or I use google to understand; there are many good websites in google.* (S5)

Extract 60: *I search on the internet. (S7)*

However, 75% of the intermediate level participants affirmed having difficulties in coping with the indirect coded feedback which they received on their first written task due to their unfamiliarity with the codes used in this method of correction and the long time they needed to correct their errors by themselves.

Extract 61: *I face problems in the indirect coded correction. For example, the code SS is a general code, I cannot know exactly which structure my teacher means. (S6)*

Extract 62: *Yes, I have a problem in the first writing correction; I could not understand the codes. I need more examples to understand. (S7)*

Extract 63: *I do not understand the code. I checked the paper of the codes first, then I needed a long time to find the correct answer, but I finally corrected all my errors. (S8)*

Extract 64: *I feel happy when I see few errors correction on my paper because I do not like to see a lot of red ink on my paper. (S9)*

Extract 65: *Well, I like the tough and strict feedback because it shows me even my little mistakes. This helps me achieve a high level of English writing. Indirect coded correction offers this strict correction without making me feel I did a lot of error like teacher's direct correction. (S10)*

Extract 66: *Usually, I use the internet or any social media to discuss the error with my friends. I have many friends who can help me. (S9)*

Extract 67: *I go online and search for it, and also I have chatting groups on (Whatsapp) and (Viber). My friends can help me; they are qualified because they are native speakers. (S10)*

Extract 68: *Not really, I understand most of my errors, but I needed to focus more on the indirect correction on the first task. (S9)*

Extract 69: *The indirect correction is confusing sometimes because you need to check the codes again and again. The examples help me, but after all, you need to go on your own and find the answer. (S10)*

In brief, the results of this study show that all the participants in the different proficiency levels agree that the indirect coded corrective feedback has two main advantages, represented mainly by increasing their self-confidence and self-satisfaction towards their performance and helping them be self-dependent learners in terms of finding the correct forms of their errors. These results are in line with the findings of Yoshida (2008) who concluded that students prefer written corrective feedback which allows them to self-correct their errors. On the other hand, based on the participants' perspectives, the indirect coded feedback is time-consuming which requires them to spend much time and effort to find the correct forms of their errors. Another point is that the codes used for the indirect correction are sometimes confusing; in other words, the participants are unfamiliar with this method of providing feedback. These results are in line with the findings of Bitchener and Ferris (2012), who argue that the indirect written corrective feedback may not be effective when the students cannot identify the correct form for the underlined errors. Similarly, Corpuz (2011) downplayed the

efficiency of using correction codes, claiming that they are limited and cannot address all students' errors in writing. In addition, Lee (2008) found that students could not understand completely their teacher's feedback on their writing performance.

#### 4. Conclusions, Discussion and Limitations

The results revealed that all the participants involved in the present study value and need corrective feedback on regular basis due to facing problems in grammar, spelling, vocabulary, and the organization of ideas while writing. In addition, all the participants believe that they need their errors to be corrected comprehensively because they believe that their teacher's corrective feedback plays a major role in enhancing their writing skill proficiency. Nevertheless, the results of this study show that providing direct corrective feedback on the participants' writing demotivates them to be self-dependent learners, thus negatively impacting them psychologically and leading to less self-confidence and dissatisfaction towards their writing performance. On the contrary, advanced students think that a lot of correction is an indicator that their teacher cares and spends efforts in improving the students' writing skill.

The results of this study imply that students with different proficiency levels are aware of their level in writing and their weakness areas in this skill. Therefore, it can be argued that teachers should take their students' perspectives into consideration. In addition, the teachers should pay attention to the individual differences related to the students' level in L2, specifically in writing proficiency. Moreover, corrective written feedback is considered an effective constituent in the teaching-learning process. Therefore, it can be argued that the teachers should stop viewing corrective feedback as a hard job. On the contrary, they should consider it as a mean of communication between them and their students through written corrective feedback on their writing.

The results of this study also imply that students can use other sources to correct their errors when receiving indirect corrective feedback. Consequently, it can be emphasized that teachers should encourage students' self-learning habits through providing them, gradually, with more well-designed, and clear indirect coded corrective feedback. Though the present study was limited to conducting interviews with ten EFL postgraduate Arab students in the Malaysian context, the findings could probably contribute to the field of English language acquisition/learning, particularly in the area of writing skill. Future studies can include a larger sample employing other methods of data collection in order to obtain rich information about students' perspectives on corrective feedback on their writing performance.

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