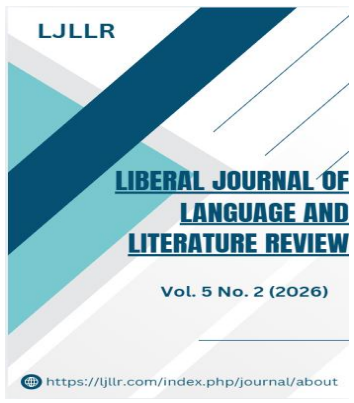


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THE IMPACT OF FOCUSED INDIRECT WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK ON ESL LEARNERS' WRITING SKILLS AT THE INTERMEDIATE LEVEL: A QUASI-EXPERIMENTAL STUDY

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Abstract

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) has been a topic of discussion for a long time regarding its impact on L2 writing. There is an increasing amount of research which has looked at the effectiveness of different forms of WCF in the development of writing skills in English as an L2 or L3. This article focuses primarily on examining the effect of Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (FIWCF) on the writing abilities of ESL undergraduate students in a quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test control group design. The participants of the study included 40 ESL learners studying in intermediate classes who were randomly allocated to experimental (n = 20) and control groups (n = 20). The specialised indirect WCF used for the experimental group contained metalinguistic codes for errors in verb tense (VB), article (ART), prepositions (PREP) and subject-verb agreement (SVA). Data analysis was carried out by descriptive statistics, independent samples t-test and ANCOVA using SPSS Version 26 Statistical Software. Data analysis shows that there is a significant difference between the experimental group and the control group after controlling for pre-test differences. The study concluded that focused indirect corrective feedback has positive effects on improving ESL learners' writing skills at the intermediate level, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of its role in second language writing development.

Keywords: *Written Corrective Feedback, ESL, L2 Writing, Quasi-Experimental Design.*

1. Introduction

Writing has generally been considered the most challenging skill to master among the four English skills. As we live in a fast-paced and competitive information age, mastery of writing skills is recognized as a basic necessity (Hyland, 2015; Nunan, 2015). Writing is not simply the ability to produce grammatically correct sentences; it involves generating new ideas, structuring them into meaningful forms, arranging them with suitable vocabulary and register, and anticipating a hypothetical reader's expectations (Zhang, 2013).

Hayes and Flower (1981) presented a cognitive theory and proposed three stages of writing: planning, drafting and revising. Feedback plays a significant, distinct role at each stage. During the planning stage, feedback helps writers get clear on their purpose, audience, and approach before they start drafting. Once drafting starts, most writers do better with minimal feedback, since interrupting them can break their flow and disrupt their thinking and writing process. Feedback matters most during the revision stage, addressing everything from organising words to crafting individual, meaningful sentences (Xu and Zhang 2023).

Particularly in an L2 context, teacher feedback has been regarded as the most vital source of guidance throughout the entire writing process. In this regard, the teacher offers feedback concerning the content, grammar, structure and vocabulary, which helps students refine their arguments while improving both the accuracy and fluency of their writing (Lee 2020; Ye et al. 2025). As highlighted by Ellis (2008), feedback enables learners to revise their errors. It connects a student's performance with the learning goals. Research shows that written corrective feedback (WCF) has attracted the most attention from researchers and teachers as a primary pedagogical technique to support students' L2 writing development. Several studies have been conducted to explore the effectiveness of WCF in general and its various forms in minimizing the errors made by L2 learners (Ekiert & Di Gennaro, 2019; Kang & Han, 2015), but there is still some controversy regarding the best types of feedback to give L2 learners (Frear & Chiu, 2015). Although much research has examined written corrective feedback (WCF), little is known about the effectiveness of Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback for developing writing skills in a classroom with intermediate-level ESL learners. The present study aims to fill this gap. The design of the study is a quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test control group design to find out how focused indirect written corrective feedback affects the writing skills of ESL learners. The following sections include a review of the literature, a description of the methodology, findings, and implications for writing instruction for ESL students. In light of the preceding discussion, the study is guided by the following research question.

1.1 Research Question

Does focused indirect written corrective feedback have a substantial impact on the writing skills of intermediate-level ESL learners in Bahawalpur?

2. Literature Review

Writing is a complex productive skill that requires accuracy in grammar, vocabulary, organisation, and coherence. ESL learners often struggle with written accuracy, making feedback an essential component of writing instruction (Nawaz et al., 2022; Nadeem et al., 2024). To improve the writing skills of ESL learners, Written Corrective Feedback is one of the most widely used instructional strategies in English as a Second Language (ESL) writing classrooms (Rasool et al., 2023). It enables teachers to detect the learners' language errors and to direct them toward more accurate and effective written texts. Bitchener and Ferris (2012) emphasise that WCF is popular because it enables instructors to monitor students' writing

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development and improve their grammatical accuracy over time. Although WCF has been widely implemented in language classrooms, the effectiveness of WCF has still been debated among second language researchers.

The literature on Written Corrective Feedback is characterised by two opposing perspectives. One set of researchers suggests that corrective feedback has limited long-term benefits and requires a lot of time and effort on the part of teachers. They argue that while feedback may help students revise a particular piece of writing, it does not necessarily contribute to long-term language development (Cohen & Cavalcanti, 1990; Panova & Lyster, 2002; Truscott, 2007). On the other hand, another group strongly supports the use of corrective feedback, stating that it allows learners to identify their errors, develop grammatical accuracy, and gradually improve their writing proficiency (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ferris, 2010). These researchers also emphasise that learners respond differently to feedback because of individual differences in cognitive ability, learning style, motivation, beliefs, and attitudes toward language learning (Bitchener & Knoch, 2008; Hartshorn et al.,2010).

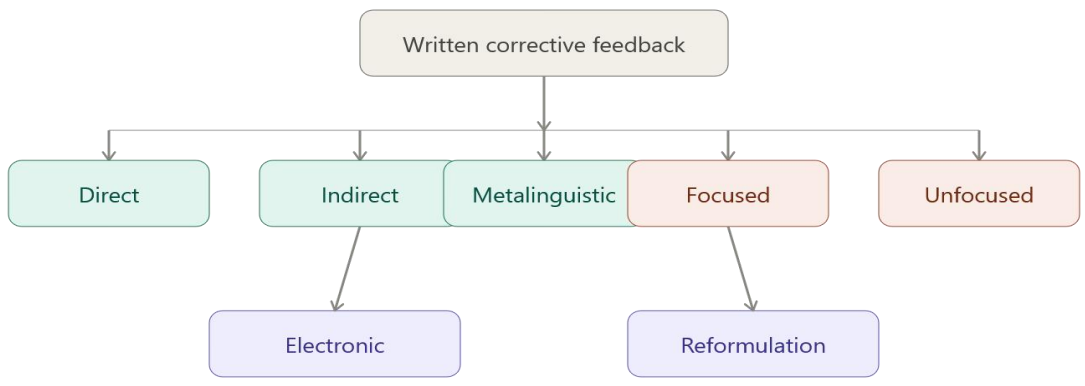


Figure 1

Typology of Written Corrective Feedback

Note. Adapted from "A Typology of Written Corrective Feedback Types," by R. Ellis, 2008, *ELT Journal,* 63(2), pp. 97–107 (https://doi.org/10.1093/elt/ccn023).

2.1 Direct and Indirect Written Corrective Feedback

Written corrective feedback is usually classified as either direct or indirect feedback. Direct corrective feedback is where the teacher indicates an error and provides the correct form of language. For instance, if the learner makes a mistake in verb tense, the teacher will correct the error. This kind of feedback is especially useful for learners with low language proficiency, as they may not have enough grammatical knowledge to identify and correct their own errors (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Students can make accurate corrections in the moment as they receive feedback, thus minimising confusion about the correct language form. Others, however, believe that placing too much emphasis on the direct correction approach can result in the inhibition of learners' willingness to engage in problem-solving and self-study, thereby reducing the ability to learn a language deeply. (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010; Ellis, 2009; Ferris, 2003).

However, Ellis (2009) found that indirect corrective feedback asks the learners to detect and self-correct their mistakes. The teacher does not provide the correct answer but marks the error to show where it lies, but neither corrects the error nor offers a solution. Bitchener (2008) also states that indirect feedback can be provided by just showing the location of an error or by using error codes to show the type of grammatical error. Feedback that is coded (for example, “VT” for verb tense or “ART” for article error) gives hints to learners about the errors, but learners still must think critically about the correction. This process promotes learner autonomy and active involvement in error correction and, thus, is an effective way to achieve long-term language development. (Jamalinesari, 2015; Westmacott, 2017).

2.2 Focused and Unfocused Written Corrective Feedback

There is also a significant distinction between “focused” and “unfocused” Written Corrective Feedback in the literature. The feedback is focused on a limited number of specific grammatical errors to allow the learners to focus on the correction of selected language features. According to Bitchener (2012), focused feedback is especially beneficial for low-level language learners since it decreases cognitive load and facilitates their understanding of particular grammatical rules more explicitly. Similarly, Ferris (2002) argues that targeted feedback is easier for students to process as it focuses on rule-governed grammatical structures rather than correcting every error in a text. Mollestam and Hu (2016) also argue that focused feedback is appropriate for less proficient learners but that more capable learners might benefit from more general types of correction.

These types of corrections show you a lot of errors in the whole work without focusing on just a few grammar structures. This means that instead of focusing on only partner tenses, for example, the teacher tries to correct all or most of the learners' mistakes. Initially, such comprehensive corrective feedback may cause some students, in particular those with low self-confidence, to feel overwhelmed. But, the long exposure to various errors will help students recognise and understand a whole spectrum of language problems beyond increasing their writing accuracy (Fazilatfar et al. 2014). But, Aseeri (2019) found that teachers and students often opt for unfocused feedback because it offers more comprehensive support and enables learners to work on several different aspects of their writing at the same time.

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2.3 Metalinguistic Written Corrective Feedback

Metalinguistic Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) basically articulates the learners' mistakes at the metalinguistic level rather than solely correcting them. As per Ellis (2009), this WCF type may be accompanied by grammatical explanations, symbols, abbreviations, or error codes, which can be helpful for learners in figuring out why a given language form is wrong. Instead of directly giving the correct answer, the teacher elicits the students to think about the grammar rule and then make amendments in their writing because of this. Bitchener and Cameron (2005) have identified two variants of metalinguistic feedback. One is the use of grammatical error codes that merely point out the error type, whereas the other is that of providing short written explanations of the grammatical rule broken. In some teaching contexts, instructors not only write comments but also engage in brief talks with students to deepen their knowledge of the mistakes made (Bitchener, 2008; Bitchener & Ferris, 2005). By way of this, learners gain a better understanding of grammatical rules and become capable of using them in their writing later on. And, the benefits offered by metalinguistic feedback do not end here but extend to the facilitation of comprehension and enjoyment of the revision process, mainly when teachers clarify the grammatical issues in the learners' mother tongue. It is because learners are then able to identify their errors more accurately and even contribute to the revision process to a greater extent (Aseeri, 2019). As a result, not only does metalinguistic feedback influence grammatical correctness, but it also fosters understanding, reflection, and language progression over time.

Electronic WCF provides feedback by using digital tools like tracked changes, comment boxes, and hyperlinked grammar resources. This format is a popular option for learners as it is immediate and has been associated with the durability of the accuracy results, especially those involving digital indirect feedback (Al-Bakri, 2016; Cunningham, 2019). Lastly, Reformulation is the process in which the teacher restates all the words in the original student text in the native language while maintaining the original meaning. Learners are then requested to make comparisons and observe any differences between the two versions. There is research evidence that reformulation is more effective when it is coupled with other strategies, and that it is only moderately effective when used alone, in the short term (Storch & Wigglesworth, 2010).

While corrective feedback in writing has received extensive study, there are certain gaps in the research on it. Previous studies have examined the effects of direct and indirect feedback, with little research focusing on the effectiveness of focused indirect written corrective feedback. Furthermore, most of the previous studies have been conducted in an EFL context, which restricts the use of the studies in an ESL classroom. Except for intermediate-level learners, research on this group is also limited, as they still need to improve their writing accuracy. To address these gaps, the present study investigates the impact of focused indirect written corrective feedback on the writing skills of intermediate-level ESL students in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. To address these gaps, this study uses a quasi-experimental design to examine the impact of this feedback strategy in an ESL context.

3. Research Methodology

The study was conducted on two groups of students, one of which was the experimental group and the other was the control group. Before the treatment, both groups were administered a pre-test writing task to measure their writing ability at the beginning. After treatment time, both groups were given a post-test writing task under the same conditions. The effect of the treatment was measured by the difference between the pre-test and post-test scores. The research design is chosen because it enables the researcher to compare the writing performance of two groups before and after the intervention and to evaluate the impact of Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback.

The ESL learners who participated in the study were 40 male intermediate students studying at a private college in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. Students were selected if they were studying English as a Second Language and were from similar educational backgrounds. Participants were randomly assigned to 2 groups (20 participants each). In this study, the treatment group was provided with Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback, while the control group received only general feedback on their writing. Identical writing tasks were completed by both groups in an experiment.

3.1.1 Instruments

The main research instrument, which served as a pre-test and post-test, was a 250-word essay-writing test. Students were asked to write argumentative and descriptive essays on given topics. The analytic scoring rubric method was used to evaluate students' written tasks. The analytic scoring rubric consisted of four parts: Grammar (25 marks), Vocabulary (25 marks), Organisation (25 marks), and Content and Coherence (25 marks), totalling 100 marks. Both tests were scored using the same rubric to ensure a consistent and fair evaluation.

The experimental group received Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (FIWCF) using metalinguistic codes based on Ellis's (2009) model. The feedback centred on four common types of grammatical errors, such as Verb Tense (VT), Articles (ART), Prepositions (PREP) and Subject-Verb Agreement (SVA). Instead of providing the correct answers to the students, the teacher underlined the errors and used metalinguistic codes in the margin to indicate the type of mistake. Students then went through a revision process where they could identify and correct their own errors. This technique encouraged students to think about their mistakes and improve their grammatical accuracy. The control group, on the other hand, was given only general comments on content and organisation, and no grammatical corrections.

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Type of Error	Code
Verb Tense	VT
Article	ART
Preposition	PREP
Subject-Verb Agreement	SVA

3.1.2 Procedure

This quasi-experimental study was conducted over six weeks.

Weeks	Activities	Experimental group	Control group
1.	Pre-test writing tasks	Completed	Completed
2.	Writing assignments.1	Received focused indirect WCF with metalinguistic codes (VT, ART, PREP, SVA); revised and resubmitted essay	Received general comments on content and organization; no grammatical corrections
3.	Writing assignments.2	Received focused indirect WCF with metalinguistic codes (VT, ART, PREP, SVA); revised and resubmitted essay	Received general comments on content and organization; no grammatical corrections
4.	Writing assignments.3	Received focused indirect WCF with metalinguistic codes (VT, ART, PREP, SVA); revised and resubmitted essay	Received general comments on content and organization; no grammatical corrections
5.	Writing assignments.4	Received focused indirect WCF with metalinguistic codes (VT, ART, PREP, SVA); revised and resubmitted essay	Received general comments on content and organisation; no grammatical corrections
6.	Post-test Writing Tasks	Completed post-test under the same conditions as the pre-test	Completed post-test under the same conditions as the pre-test
7.	Assessment of Essays	Pre-test and post-test essays scored independently by two trained raters	Pre-test and post-test essays scored independently by two trained raters

This research was conducted for 6 weeks using a quasi-experimental research design, specifically a pre-test and post-test control group design. Week 1: All participants completed a pre-test writing task in the same testing conditions. To find out the students' ability in writing before the treatment and to check the comparability of the experimental and control groups in writing proficiency, a pre-test was given. To ensure consistency, all essays were scored using the same analytic scoring rubric. Students had one writing assignment per week during Weeks 2–5. The experimental group received Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback with metalinguistic codes on four types of grammatical errors, namely Verb Tense (VT), Articles (ART), Prepositions (PREP), and Subject–Verb Agreement (SVA) (Ellis, 2009).

The teacher used metalinguistic codes to correct the errors, underlining the errors and not providing the correct answers. Students rewrote their essays based on the feedback and resubmitted them. The control group, however, was given only general comments about content and organisation, such as "*Great idea*," "*Elaborate this point*," "*Provide more examples*," but no corrections of grammar. By Week 6, both groups had completed the post-test writing task, which was administered to both groups under conditions identical to the pre-test. The post-test was administered to measure students' improvement in writing after the treatment. Two trained raters independently scored the pre-test and post-test essays using the same analytic rubric throughout to ensure scoring reliability. The collected data were analysed using descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-test and Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) to determine the effect of Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback on the writing skills of ESL undergraduate students.

3.2 Data Analysis

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of pre-test scores of experimental and control groups before the implementation of Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (FIWCF). The experimental group (n = 20) had a mean score of 61.35 with a standard deviation of 6.10, while the control group (n

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= 20) had a mean score of 60.90 with a standard deviation of 6.25; these mean scores reflect each group's average writing performance. It indicates that both groups are at a similar level of writing proficiency at the beginning of the study. The small difference between the mean scores (just 0.45 points) shows that no significant difference between the two groups existed before the treatment. Moreover, the values of the standard deviation show the variation of students' scores around the mean. The standard deviation was 6.10 for the experimental group and 6.25 for the control group, showing similar dispersion of scores and comparable variability in writing performance across both groups.

These results show that both groups had relatively the same level of proficiency at the pre-test stage, providing a solid, fair basis for comparing the impact of Written Corrective Feedback during the intervention period. This equivalence in initial writing ability enhances the internal validity of the study because any substantial post-test differences can be more confidently attributed to the treatment rather than to pre-existing differences between the two groups.

Table 1: Pre-test scores

Group	N	Mean	Standard deviation (SD)
Experimental	20	61.35	6.10
Control group	20	60.90	6.25

Table 2 shows the post-test results for both experimental and control groups after the intervention. The experimental group (20 students) scored an average of 80.25, with a standard deviation of 5.40. The control group (20 students) scored an average of 67.10, with a standard deviation of 6.30. These averages reflect students' writing performance after treatment. Subsequently, the experimental group's mean score was much higher compared to the students who only received general comments, which shows that students who got Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (FIWCF) with metalinguistic codes improved their writing skills. So, the 13.15-point difference between the two groups indicates that the feedback intervention had a strong and positive impact on students' writing performance. Furthermore, the standard deviation values help indicate how much scores varied within each group. The experimental group's standard deviation of 5.40 shows that scores were fairly close to the mean, suggesting students improved consistently. The control group's standard deviation of 6.30, on the other hand, shows a wider spread of scores, suggesting more variability in their writing performance. The results of the post-test in comparison with the pre-test scores showed that the experimental group improved from a mean of 61.35 to 80.25, a gain of 18.90 points, while the control group improved from 60.90 to 67.10, a gain of only 6.20 points. This significant difference in the improvement further shows the effectiveness of Written Corrective Feedback in enhancing ESL students' writing skills, especially in grammatical accuracy and overall quality of writing. The post-test results therefore offer strong preliminary evidence that the intervention had an important role in students' writing development and suggest that further inferential statistical analyses such as the independent samples t-test and ANCOVA are needed to determine whether these differences are statistically significant.

Table 2: Post-Test Scores

Group	N	Mean	Standard Deviation (SD)
Experimental Group	20	80.25	5.40
Control group	20	67.10	6.30

3.2.1 Independent Samples t-Test (Post-Test)

Table 3 contains the results of the independent samples t-test conducted to compare the post-test writing scores of the experimental and control groups. The obtained t-value was 7.12 with 38 degrees of freedom (df), and the p-value was .000, which is lower than the significance level of .05. This result indicates a statistically significant difference between the writing performances of the two groups after the intervention. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it can be concluded that students who received Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (FIWCF) performed significantly better than those who received only general comments, demonstrating the effectiveness of the treatment in improving ESL writing skills.

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Table 3: Group Comparison

Variable	T	df	p-value
Writing Scores	7.12	38	.000

3.2.2 ANCOVA Analysis

The ANCOVA results indicated that the pre-test scores (covariate) were statistically significant predictors of students' post-test writing performance, $F(1, 37) = 8.05$, $p = .007$. This means that the students' initial writing ability was an important factor in their final writing scores. Thus, a positive correlation between pre- and post-test scores was found for the learners. More importantly, the treatment effect (Group) remained highly significant after statistically controlling for these initial differences, $F(1, 37) = 44.10$, $p < .001$. This finding suggests that the improved writing performance of the students was due to the instructional intervention and not to differences in students' initial levels of proficiency.

The high F-value of 44.10 and the very low p-value indicate that the treatment has a significant effect. Thus, the students who received Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (FIWCF) in the form of metalinguistic codes performed significantly better than those who received only general comments. The Error Mean Square (MS = 13.61) represents the variation in students' post-test scores that is not accounted for by the covariate and the treatment. Since this value was quite small relative to the treatment mean square (615.80), it suggests that the treatment accounted for a large amount of variance in students' writing achievement. In general, the results of the ANCOVA provide strong evidence of statistically significant positive effects of Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback with metalinguistic codes on the writing performance of ESL undergraduate students.

Table 4: ANCOVA Results

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Pre-Test	112.40	1	112.40	8.05	.007
Group (treatment)	615.80	1	615.80	44.10	.000
Error	503.60	37	13.61		
Total	1231.80	39			

4. Discussion

The findings of the study reveal that the use of Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (FIWCF) along with metalinguistic codes has resulted in considerable improvement in the writing proficiency of ESL learners at the intermediate level. The experimental and control groups were initially writing at a similar level. But the scores of the experimental group improved a lot after the intervention. The independent-samples t-test and ANCOVA, along with other statistical tests, made it clear that the improvement was due to the feedback and not because one group started better. As such, written corrective feedback helps students become aware of their grammatical errors and write more accurately. These findings are consistent with those of Chandler (2003), Ferris (2006) and Bitchener and Knoch (2009), who reported that systematic written corrective feedback has positive effects on learners' grammatical accuracy and writing quality. Hartshorn et al. (2010) also found that continuous corrective feedback leads to greater writing accuracy because it enables students to revise and reflect on their writing. The findings are theoretically consistent with Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (Schmidt & Frota, 1986), which argues that language learning is more effective when learners consciously notice the gap between their own language production and the target language.

The analysis of the data also confirms that the positive effects found in this study were because of written corrective feedback. The experimental group received focused indirect feedback along with metalinguistic codes and was required to identify, analyse and correct their own errors, in contrast to direct correction. This process likely enabled deeper cognitive engagement with the grammar rules and encouraged active learning rather than passive acceptance of teacher corrections. The results are consistent with those of Ellis (2009), who found that indirect feedback and metalinguistic explanations promote greater autonomy and longer-term language development. Also, Jamalinesari et al. (2015) and Westmacott (2017) reported that coded indirect feedback encouraged learners' critical thinking about language forms and enhanced self-editing skills. The analysis of the findings also validates the results obtained by Mujtaba et al. (2020), which revealed that indirect coded corrective feedback had a significant impact on improving the writing ability of the Pakistani undergraduate students and gave a boost to their motivation through teacher comments. Moreover, the findings are also in line with DeKeyser's (2007) Skill Acquisition Theory, which states that with repeated practice and explicit feedback, declarative grammatical knowledge will be transferred into procedural grammar knowledge, which facilitates the automatic production of accurate language.



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The findings also add to the existing literature on Written Corrective Feedback in the Pakistani ESL context. Most previous studies in Pakistan have mainly focused on learners' and teachers' perceptions of written corrective feedback rather than experimentally investigating the effectiveness and impact of different forms of Written Corrective Feedback. For instance, Rasool et al. (2023) observed that Pakistani students favoured direct and metalinguistic feedback because it made them better aware of their grammatical errors. Nawaz et al. (2023) found that teachers' corrective feedback practices largely matched students' preferences for comprehensive and focused feedback. The present study contributes to these findings by providing empirical evidence that focused indirect written corrective feedback with metalinguistic codes not only aligns with established pedagogical recommendations but also results in measurable improvements in undergraduate students' writing performance. The present findings are somewhat different from those of Gebremariam (2024), who found that corrective feedback improved the learners' immediate grammatical accuracy, but the effects tend to diminish in delayed post-tests. The present study only measured immediate post-test performance and therefore cannot determine whether the observed gains would be maintained over time. Future longitudinal studies should look into the long-term effectiveness of focused indirect written corrective feedback on Pakistani ESL learners. Despite this limitation, the present findings provide strong evidence that carefully designed, focused indirect written corrective feedback is an effective instructional strategy for enhancing grammatical accuracy and overall writing quality among ESL undergraduate students.

6. Conclusion

This study examined the impact of Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback (FIWCF) with metalinguistic codes on the writing skills of ESL intermediate students within a quasi-experimental pre-test, post-test control group design. This study, after the analysis of the data, confirms that written corrective feedback has positive effects on improving students' written skills. Students receiving WCF significantly outperformed those receiving general comments. The findings showed that students receiving focused indirect feedback improved their writing performance significantly more than those who received only general comments on content and organisation. Statistical analyses (independent-samples t-test and ANCOVA) indicated that the improvement was due to the feedback intervention rather than the differences in students' initial writing proficiency. The results revealed that the use of structured written corrective feedback is an effective teaching method to improve the grammatical accuracy and overall writing quality of ESL undergraduate students.

Moreover, the study reveals that the promotion of active learning and increased engagement with the writing process by encouraging learners to identify and self-correct their own grammatical errors by means of metalinguistic codes. Focused indirect feedback allows students to reflect on their errors, apply their grammatical knowledge and develop greater independence in revising their written work, rather than just providing them with correct answers. The results thus support the use of learner-centred approaches to writing instruction that highlight the fact that corrective feedback should be regarded as an integral part of the writing process and not simply a means of error correction. Similarly, it also promotes significant growth in writing by encouraging cognitive engagement and self-editing skills. This finding highlights the pedagogical importance of incorporating focused, systematic and meaningful feedback into ESL writing classrooms to ensure improvement in learners' language accuracy.

While the findings from this study and the cited literature provide strong evidence that Focused Indirect Written Corrective Feedback is effective, there are some limitations, including a relatively small sample size, a short intervention period, and a focus on intermediate-level ESL learners. Consequently, the results must be interpreted within these contextual limits. Future research should include larger and more diverse samples, increase the duration of the intervention, and explore long-term retention of grammatical accuracy (via delayed post-tests) should be included for future research. Studies comparing different types of written corrective feedback (e.g., direct vs. indirect, focused vs. unfocused) would also provide further insight into their relative efficacy. Despite the noted drawbacks, the present study is another contribution to the body of literature on Written Corrective Feedback in the ESL context in Pakistan and gathers empirical data to support the use of Focused Indirect Feedback with metalinguistic codes to enhance intermediate language learners' writing proficiency.

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