

## Saudi EFL Private Institute Students' Perceptions of the Effects of Written Corrective Feedback on EFL Writing Progression

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### Abstract

The literature reviews have delved deeper into the types of written feedback (Sun and Qi, 2022), students' viewpoints towards written corrective feedback (Cooperman and Berenato, 2014), and teachers' perceptions of the effective type of feedback (Alkhatib and Mansoor, 2022). Almost all studies on feedback were conducted at public universities. However, this article explores the EFL private institute students' impressions of receiving written corrective feedback on their writing. The participants received metalinguistic written feedback on their first writing drafts over a two-month course. They submitted eight descriptive writing tasks throughout the intervention. Focus group discussions and semi-structured interviews were conducted at the end of the intervention. The findings showed that although the students had some difficulties in writing, good development was observed in the use of grammar and punctuation. The findings of this current paper encourage private institute instructors to use metalinguistic written feedback for assessing students' writing tasks. This study demonstrates the need for conducting more research on using different types of written feedback in writing courses at private institutes. Pedagogically, this study's findings may serve as a kind of reference for EFL Arab private institute teachers about the positives of utilizing written feedback for enhancing EFL students' writing.

**Keywords:** Private Institute Students, Written Corrective Feedback (WCF), EFL Students, Descriptive Essays

### Introduction

This research paper intends to explore the responses of private institute students towards providing pen and paper based traditional strategy of written corrective feedback. Students at public schools, institutes and universities have the opportunity to receive their teachers' written corrective feedback regardless of the strategy or type used for providing it. This contributes to their enhanced abilities to come up with multiple writing tasks completions with better writing skill development.

EFL researchers have endeavored to investigate strategies that EFL teachers can use in EFL classroom for providing effective written corrective feedback. Mahfoodh (2022) highlights EFL teachers' need for familiarizing themselves with the factors that may affect the procedures of providing effective feedback. Mahfoodh (2022) proposes that students' emotional response of their teacher's feedback has an important role in this context. Supporting Mahfoodh's (2022) perspective of emotional responses towards feedback, Chen (2022) points out that students' real interaction with their teacher's written corrective feedback is highly related to teachers' readiness of contemplating their knowledge and experience. In addition, explicitness of the provided written corrective feedback has been emphasized as an important factor (Mahfoodh, 2022; Hyland and Hyland, 2006).

Ellis (2009) classifies the strategies of providing written corrective feedback into direct, indirect, metalinguistic, electronic feedback and reformulation. According to Ellis (2009), the focus in each of these strategies is on a different point. In direct feedback, teachers provide their corrections for students' errors, but in indirect feedback teachers do not provide corrections for the errors though the errors are indicated by teachers. In metalinguistic corrective feedback teachers use error codes that familiarize students with the nature of the error pointed in the text.

Researchers are of different views about which strategy is effective and helpful for improving EFL students' writing. However, the strategy of reflecting on students' writing in form of written feedback has been attended to as a crucial technique that undermines students' passion to practice more EFL writing. In this current research article, the metalinguistic strategy was used as an attempt to find out if it may have any impact on private institute students' writing development.

The EFL research has emphasized the benefits of providing written corrective feedback on EFL students' writing in all stages of learning. Hyland (2003) stresses that WCF in the EFL classroom is a pivotal strategy and teachers are responsible for giving enough space for this practice. As documented by Pinter (2006) students should be given the opportunity to reflect on their perceptions of their teacher WCF. In turn, Sun and Qi (2022) assure that the type of WCF considerably affects students' writing accuracy. In the Saudi context, limited research has prioritized students' preference of the strategy of the WCF and the type of written corrective feedback. Salami and Khadawardi (2022) indicated that Saudi undergraduates preferred using online WCF. All the studies mentioned above in the introduction and the background were conducted in public institutions. To the knowledge of the researchers of this article, there has been no limited research about private institute students' perceptions on using metalinguistic WCF in EFL classrooms. Therefore, the two researchers of this present study aimed to investigate if private institute students may improve their writing when they respond to teachers' metalinguistic written corrective feedback.

### **Literature View**

Studies have focused on public university students' perceptions of written corrective feedback and the findings of these studies have highlighted the benefits of researching students' beliefs of the effect of teacher written corrective feedback. Regardless of the type of feedback adopted and preferred in past written feedback literature, EFL researchers such as Yamashita (2021); Hamano-Bunce (2022); Sun (2022); Khaki and Tabrizi (2021) have been

conclusive to ascertain that exploring providing feedback has been instrumental in improving EFL students' writing performance.

### **Arab EFL Writing Difficulties**

The literature review of Arab EFL writing difficulties faced by undergraduates documented several writing difficulties that Arab EFL learners commonly encounter. In the Saudi context as reported by Kassem (2018); Qasem and Zayid (2019); Alghammas and Alhuwaydi (2020), the main reason for Arab EFL students' poor writing is the lack of practice. Students do not usually have daily writing assignments and practicing writing is limited because they write little in the classroom (Alghammas and Alhuwaydi, 2020).

In the United Arab Emirates, Ibrahim (2021) defined and listed the main reasons that make Arab EFL writing poor such as the influence of L1, and lesser practicing. Ibrahim (2021) suggested that conducting a survey about students' common mistakes at the start of every writing course may enable teachers to propose methodology for EFL students' writing problems.

In the Syrian context, Al-Mukdad (2019) looked into the difficulties that EFL students challenge when they are involved in the writing process. Al-Mukdad (2019) contended that students need to differentiate between the two kinds of writing: academic writing and general writing. Her study (2019) was based on students' opinions about possible ways of solving these writing problems.

### **Written Corrective Feedback in EFL Writing**

EFL writing research has permanently experimented which type of feedback to use in EFL writing courses. Overall, researchers confess that there is no one preferable feedback strategy and that the preferable type is always correlated to list of factors including the context where feedback is targeted. However, EFL research has documented that EFL students employ their teachers' feedback as part and parcel of the cycle of their writing performance. According to Flower and Hayes (1981), writers tend to go through the written tasks in the reviewing stage which involves the sub-process of revising. This sub-process may be referred to as an individual feedback which students do before receiving their instructor's notes.

Supporting the writing process theory, Murray (1968) asserts that writing is permanent and students are leaders in the writing process. They go through numerous stages when they practice writing. Murray (1968) states that teachers' focus should not be on tracing students' writing mistakes when providing feedback. Instead, teachers need to give opportunities to students to revise their drafts emphasizing that revising the written work is a significant factor in practicing writing.

Hyland (2003) demonstrates that teachers have had a permanent role in EFL writing. The teachers' role has been to provide written corrective feedback on students' writing with the aim of improving students' writing learning. Nevertheless, the strategy of providing written corrective feedback is affected by a few practices that teachers tend to use, the writing assignments that teachers prepare for their students and the goal they want to achieve. In this regard, Hyland (2003) stresses teachers' responsibility to take into account students' expectations and needs when providing corrective feedback.

Ekanayaka & Ellis (2020) advocate Murray's approach (1968) of the significance of revision in the writing process. Ekanayaka & Ellis (2020) highlight the impact of revision in the writing process and they point out that revision has a positive pedagogical effect because researchers generally agree that the revising strategy is indispensable. As emphasized by Ekanayaka and

Ellis (2020), providing WCF has been proven to be impactful if students are given the opportunity to revise their written work and this helps students to attend to their teacher's WCF.

### **Corrective Feedback as an Engagement Factor**

Zhang and Hyland (2022) relate students' interest in incorporating with their teacher's corrective feedback to the engagement factor. As concluded by Zhang and Hyland (2022), providing feedback pedagogically impacted learners' engagement and they actively tended to respond to the written corrective feedback provided on their numerous drafts. In order to facilitate this factor of engagement, Zhang and Hyland (2022) used various types of written corrective feedback so that they could attend to learners' needs and ambitions.

In the Saudi context, the study of Saeed and Alharbi (2023) revealed that students' engagement with their teachers' feedback was grounded on the technology factor. Saeed and Alharbi (2023) pointed out that the teachers' use of technology encouraged participants to get involved in the process of learning writing and to incorporate positively with their teachers' corrective feedback.

Alied et al (2022) researched the impact of using blogs at private secondary school. The core of the study of Alied et al (2022) was to find out whether or not the peers' feedback interaction could reveal any significant results in improving learners' writing. The findings of their study (2022) were based on the participants' perceptions of the effectiveness of blogs as a strategy for encouraging EFL students to take part in the process of developing their writing.

### **EFL Students' Preferences of Corrective Feedback**

Elfiyanto and Fukazawa (2021) explored the potential of providing WCF on students' writing essays and to what extent this strategy could affect students' writing development. In order to identify students' most preferable strategy for receiving WCF, Elfiyanto and Fukazawa (2021) used three types of WCF. The participants in the study of Elfiyanto and Fukazawa (2021) were exposed to three different types of feedback. The Indonesian participants were for receiving feedback from their peers, while the Japanese participants preferred teachers' written corrective feedback to the other two types of feedback. Although the two groups of participants had different opinions about the best type of WCF, the study of Elfiyanto and Fukazawa (2021) indicated that WCF was fundamental for boosting learners' writing skills in the two countries included and selected in the intervention of their study.

### **Written Corrective Feedback and Affecting Factors**

According to Purnomo and Pahlevi (2021), providing written corrective feedback on EFL students' writing is significant for enhancing their writing development. However, Mahfoodh (2022) highlighted that the strategy of giving effective feedback is associated with teachers' awareness of numerous important factors that enable teachers to achieve their desired goals of feedback. Supporting Mahfoodh's perspective, Chen (2022) demonstrated that the teachers' role is to draw on their teaching experience and strategies so that they could develop their practice of providing feedback and motivate their students to interact seriously with the received feedback.

### **Noticing Hypothesis and Written Corrective Feedback**

This current study is based on Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990) and it brings into light the lack of feedback literature in the context of EFL private institute students. This study explores how private institute students' writing practice and development could be enhanced when they respond and attend to their teacher's feedback by understanding and observing their writing errors in the given feedback. That was a fundamental stage in the intervention of this particular research in order to judge how far this type was prosperous and operational for the students' writing. This judgement would be reliant on the participants' interactions with their teacher's metalinguistic and on their writing achievements revealed in their drafts.

### **Output Hypothesis Scaffolds Corrective Feedback**

Swain (2005) highlights that learners' output is affected by their trial to produce the two skills; speaking and writing. Noticing is prioritized as the main process in this hypothesis where learners take part to produce their output. This output of learners is expected to develop as a result of their efforts in the noticing stage and to improve their output in the later stage. In this present study, the participants worked on their first output due to noticing their writing errors after receiving their teacher's metalinguistic coded feedback. All the participants had the opportunity to amend their first drafts after their output was evaluated by their teacher and noticed by them. As demonstrated by Swain (2005), feedback is needed in order to help learners to uncover their wrong output so that they reflect on their written task and amend it when submitting another written output

### **Significance of the Study**

This study was conducted with the aim of exploring the effects of providing written corrective feedback on the writing tasks of EFL private institute students. This study also explored students' opinions and teachers' thoughts towards receiving metalinguistic written corrective feedback. Although there is a need for more research about the impact of using other several strategies of providing feedback on the writing of private institute students, the findings of this current research may be valuable to EFL private institute teachers. It may be significant for the administrators of the private institutes who are responsible to draft institute plans for providing regular workshops and webinars to teachers about strategies and importance of providing written corrective feedback.

This study may also energize students' motivation to participate in shaping EFL Arab student-centred writing environment. This study proposes that allowing students to reevaluate and set up rules for their writing classrooms scaffolds their passion to learn and to get involved.

### **Methodology**

#### **Research Design**

Addressing Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990); Hyland's (2003) thought of teachers' duty for providing written corrective feedback in the writing classroom and Mahfoodh's perspective (2022) of the need for looking into probable written corrective feedback factors, this present study was undertaken with the aim of investigating the effectiveness of using the strategy of metalinguistic corrective feedback as a factor for encouraging private institute participants to interact and to correct their errors after noticing them.

This study is qualitative in the sense that it is a case study. Purposively, the two researchers used a mixed- methods research basing their findings on quantitative and qualitative data

presented through the writing scores, the focus group interview and the semi-structured interview. The aim of using this methodology was to find out if providing metalinguistic written feedback has any impact on EFL private institute students' writing performance and to explore students' and teachers' perceptions of receiving this type of feedback. As for this study's population, level 102 was selected because the participants were available and reachable in the evening classes.

### **Participants**

Creswell (2002) elucidates that it is advantageous to conduct interviews when participants cannot be observed directly by the researcher and the typical number of interviewees can be four to six. The guidelines that Creswell (2002) provides for conducting qualitative research imply that an individual and a separate site can be selected for a study and the number of participants can be varied from one to thirty or forty. Eight students taking an English course at a private institute were purposely recruited as participants in this study. They were all Arabs learning English as a foreign language as a need for their work because they did not complete their school life and career. The writing tasks that the participants wrote and submitted throughout the intervention formed the quantitative data. They provided the qualitative data through the focus group interview that took place at the end of the intervention of this study. The researchers of this present study prepared ten questions and encouraged the participants to take part in providing their viewpoints and relevant information on type of feedback they used to incorporate throughout the intervention of this study.

### **Instructors**

After getting the administrators' approval of undertaking this study at this private institute, the volunteering instructor was met to explain to him the main aims of this research. This instructor has been a teacher of English since 2013 and he has been teaching at this private institute for more than four years. He got his bachelor degree from Sanaa University. He volunteered to undertake the intervention of this current study and he was assured that all what he might provide in this study would be of top confidentiality.

### **Research Procedures**

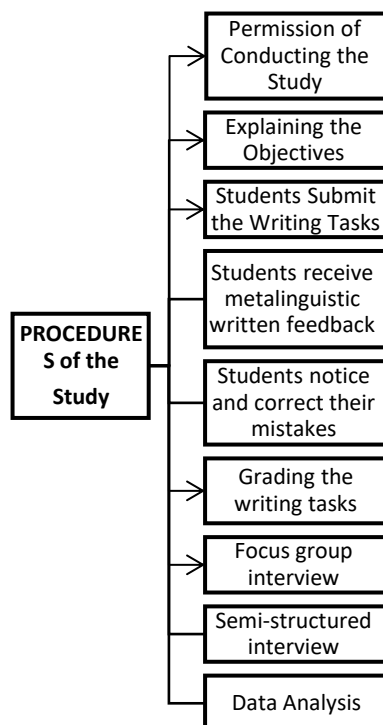
After students showed their willingness to take part in this study and signed the consent form, the instructor doing the intervention explained to them the main objectives of the study. In the first session of the intervention, he explained the error codes that his written corrective feedback would target.

The written feedback was returned manually to the participants following the traditional way of using pen and paper. The participants had to revise each writing draft only once before rewriting and submitting it on the other day in class. This step was essential for identifying whether or not the participants could notice and understand the error codes provided by their teacher on their writing task sheets.

This study's intervention lasted for two months where participants were required to write and submit eight writing tasks. The writing tasks were descriptive and they were similar to what students study in their textbook. The second procedure of this intervention was the focus group interview. The participants were interviewed to provide their own perceptions of using

metalinguistic corrective feedback. The third procedure was the semi-structured interview with the volunteering instructor. Table 1 presents the stages of the current study.

Table 1

*Stages of the current study***The Instruments of the Study****Weekly Writing Tests**

Participants of this study were requested to write and submit writing tasks using pen and paper. Each week, participants had to write and submit one descriptive writing task. The volunteering instructor who did this intervention graded all the participants' writing tasks using a rubric that focuses on content, grammar and sentence structure and spelling and punctuation. The scores of the writing tasks were analyzed in order to identify whether or not participants' writing improved throughout the intervention. In order to check validity of the grades, the writing tasks sheets were given to another instructor so that he could do the cross check and reflect on the reliability of the grades given to each task.

**Focus Group Interviews**

According to Kunnath and Mathew (2019), the strategy of focus group discussions is a good method for defining a problem because participants can share their own perceptions and viewpoints freely. The participants were eight and they were asked to express their opinions about the metalinguistic WCF they received for all the writing tasks and to take part in the process of evaluating if it was effective for improving their writing. The focus group discussion questions were ten. As Yousif (2021) states, learners should be involved in evaluating the strategy that teachers use in their teaching. The ten questions of the focus group discussions were designed purposively in order to enable the participants to provide clear answers.

The focus group discussion data provided by the participants gave the researchers of this paper a good insight into what EFL private institute students believe towards providing written corrective feedback. The meeting with the participants took place at the end of the intervention and it served as an instrument for getting the qualitative data for this research paper. Top Developed Institute for Training was the venue for the focus group discussion meeting. All the participants were informed that the data would be completely confidential. A consent form was shared with the participants so that they express their readiness to collect the data they provided.

### **Semi-structured interview**

Pinter (2015) identifies interviews as substantial procedure of investigation. In order to keep track of improvement, the instructor who undertook the intervention of this study was interviewed after he finished the course. He presented his thoughts and shared them with the two researchers of this study in the interview that happened at the end of this intervention. All his answers were recorded and transcribed with the aim of using them as a qualitative data for this case study.

### **Data Collection**

In terms of ethical consideration, the instructor who did this intervention illustrated the main goals of this study to the practitioners at the start of this intervention. Also, he stated that the data would be entirely confidential and would be used for EFL academic purposes.

Eight writing tasks and focus group discussion meeting were utilized in order to gain information about learners' perspectives on the efficacy of the metalinguistic feedback carried out in this study. The quantitative and qualitative data of this present study was collected at the end of the intervention. The two researchers analyzed the quantitative data of the writing tasks using a graph, while the qualitative data of the focus group discussions was thematically analyzed by highlighting the words and themes repeated by the participants in the discussion meeting.

### **Research Objectives and Research Questions**

Written corrective feedback research has extensively probed the reaction of EFL students studying at public schools and universities. Nevertheless, the two researchers of this study incline to scrutinize the standpoint of private institute students and teachers of anticipating error codes when dealing with writing tasks. The first objective was to identify how the use of metalinguistic feedback could help EFL private institute students to develop their EFL writing. The second objective was to look into private institute students' perceptions of utilizing error codes on their writing tasks. The third is to identify the reasons that teachers provide for employing metalinguistic feedback in private institute writing sessions. Our study concluded that this type of feedback partially impacted students' writing practice and overall it led to minimal writing improvement.

This current study intended to identify answers for these following research questions:

1. What is the impact of using metalinguistic WCF on private institute students' writing development?
2. What are the private institute students' perceptions of utilizing metalinguistic written corrective feedback?



3. To what extent teachers' employment of metalinguistic WCF can be considered as a preferable mode in EFL context in private institutes in Saudi Arabia?

## Results

### The Writing Tests: RQ 1 (What is the impact of using metalinguistic WCF on private institute students' writing development?)

This current study lasted for two months. The instructor who did this study explained to the participants the metalinguistic type of written corrective feedback and the error codes that would be used when providing his feedback. After conducting an orientation session about the objectives of the study and explaining what students had to do in every writing class, the instructor shared the error codes with the participants. Each week, the participants had to write and submit one descriptive writing task. All the writing tasks were graded according to a rubric prepared by the curriculum and testing unit at a public language institute. The total mark for each writing task was 15 and this total mark covered content, sentence structure and grammar and spelling and punctuation. Each category of the rubric is 5 marks. Table 2 presents the grades of the participants and as it is shown the participants took eight writing tasks. For confidential reasons when analyzing the grades of the writing tasks, each participant in this study was given a number rating from one to eight, which could help the grader to provide reliable data.

Table 2

#### *Grades of Participants' Writing Tasks*

Students	Task 1	Task 2	Task 3	Task 4	Task 5	Task 6	Task 7	Task 8	Average
Student 1	8	10	11	11	10	12	12	13	10.33
Student 2	6	7	12	5	3	13	3	9	7.67
Student 3	4	8	12	7	9	8	11	10	8.00
Student 4	9	10	8	6	8	11	8	10	8.67
Student 5	9	11	8	9	8	6	13	10	8.50
Student 6	6	8	7	6	10	7	9	9	7.33
Student 7	7	7	6	7	7	10	9	8	7.33
Student 8	8	8	9	10	9	11	11	9	9.17

The scores of the writing tasks addressed the first objective of this current research. As Figure 1 shows, the participants' writing performance slightly developed because it was variable. While the progress for few participants proved to develop, it showed a sudden decrease for the others. The writing tasks scores of this research were the first instrument and they provided an important source of data to identify whether or not the use of metalinguistic type of written corrective feedback was helpful and effective for developing students' writing performance. The overall writing progress has been found as minimal. As participants developed in delivering their later writing tasks, they seemed to have a better grasp of writing mechanism such as the use of capitalization, punctuation and subject verb agreement. Possibly, as for the Writing Task Five, Six and Seven, the grades of few participants went down due to the difficulty of the writing task. The participants might have faced a big challenge and change from the initial writing tasks. This might be attributed to the difficulty of writing descriptive writing tasks about challenging topics. The data of those scores revealed that some of the writing tasks were behind the participants' writing abilities.

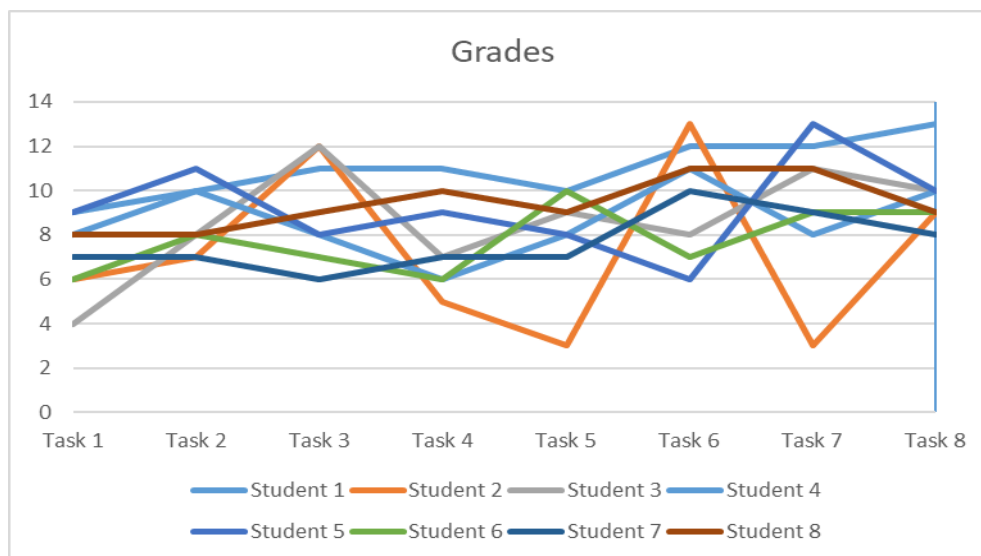


Figure 1 Scores received by each student for each of the writing tasks

### Focus Group Interviews: RQ 2 (What are the private institute students' perceptions of utilizing metalinguistic written corrective feedback?)

Due to the small number of the students in the class that was selected for this intervention, a meeting was held with all the participants of the study. The participants provided their perceptions of the use of metalinguistic written corrective feedback in the writing classroom. The participants were labeled by giving each participant a separate nickname for confidential purposes. The focus group meeting lasted for half an hour and the interview was audio recorded so that the two researchers could obtain the qualitative data and analyze it in order to identify the main points raised and emphasized by participants. This instrument was used so that teachers could adjust and develop the strategy of providing WCF depending on learners' needs and preferences emphasized in such meetings.

The qualitative data of the intervention of this study was interpreted by adopting Creswell's (2002) perspective of analyzing interviews which is to form themes. A thematic analysis approach was followed and the two researchers examined the data of the interview focusing on the key words and the themes that the participants repeated in the meeting. The transcripts were printed out and a visual analysis was done in order to scrutinize the most important notes and themes that were relevant to the second research question of this study. The two researchers went through the written form of the interview and looked for the themes emerging from the students' speech. The core of reading through the participants' answers was on the themes and sentiments that seemed to be relevant to the participants' viewpoints of receiving metalinguistic feedback on their descriptive writing tasks. This enabled these two researchers to scrutinize the relevant themes that reoccurred in the interview. The themes were: motivation, preference of teacher feedback, explicitness of metalinguistic feedback and emotional reactions towards noticing mistakes. Figure 2 identifies the themes of the focus group interview.

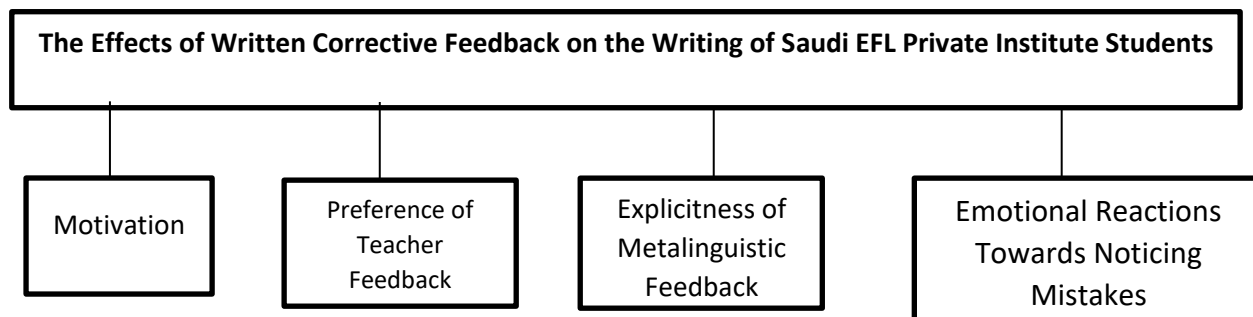


Figure 2 Themes of the focus group interviews

### Motivation

Three students asserted that the use of metalinguistic feedback motivated them to practice writing even outside the class. They argued that while they were practicing writing, they could remember their mistakes and they tried to avoid making similar mistakes. According to these three participants, they became more enthusiastic to see that they developed their writing regardless of the number of the errors they had in each writing task.

*"It motivated me. When I write outside class, I remember my mistakes and this helped me."* [Interview 1, Q 7, Hani]

*"When I see my mistakes, I will learn more. It motivates me."* [Interview 1, Q 7, Obada]

### Preference of Teacher Feedback

Partially, participants had counterpart arguments about their preference of the strategy of feedback. Few participants ascertained that they prefer their teacher's feedback to other kinds of feedback such as peer feedback because they think that teachers know better. However, though all participants highlighted the merits of receiving written feedback, one participant claimed that receiving feedback from his peers would be successful as they worked as pairs.

*"I prefer receiving feedback from my teacher because he knows better."*

[Interview 1, Q 10, Ali]

*"From my peer because we can improve our writing together."*

[Interview 1, Q 10, Muhammad]

### Explicitness of Metalinguistic Feedback

As stated by the interviewees, this type of metalinguistic feedback was not difficult. Instead, they pointed out that it was explicit and easy because their teacher explained the error codes that he would use when providing his feedback on their first drafts. They reflected positively on the simplicity and clarity of the error codes and ascertained that this type of written corrective feedback facilitated the revision process.

*"The error codes are very simple and clear."*

[Interview, Q 4, Ali]

*"I don't have any difficulties because it is clear and not difficult."*

[Interview, Q 4, Mahmoud]

### **Emotional Reactions towards the Noticing Mistakes**

"Feeling happy or bad" as an identified theme in the interview refers to the participants' emotional reactions when receiving and reading their teacher's written feedback. Amazingly, the participants stood on two extremes; while some demonstrated that they felt happy to notice and learn their mistakes, others stated that they felt bad about their writing mistakes they received in the feedback.

*"I felt happy because after I understood them, I could be better."*

*[Interview, Q 5, Taher]*

*"When I saw the first draft, I felt bad. However, when I saw my mistakes, I was able to correct them."*

*[Interview, Q 5, Hisham]*

### **Semi-Structured Interview: RQ 3 (To what extent teachers' employment of metalinguistic WCF can be considered as a preferable mode in EFL context in private institutes in Saudi Arabia?)**

Considering Creswell's instructions regarding the number of interviewees needed for an interview (2012) where he proposed that one individual could be interviewed, the researchers of this study planned for interviewing the teacher who conducted the intervention of this present study. Pinter (2015) emphasizes that progress of a certain group or a personage can be tracked with the aim of attaining useful insights when researching a particular case. Therefore, the private institute instructor who showed his interest in taking part in this research was interviewed at the end of this current study. He was interviewed to provide his thoughts on the metalinguistic feedback that he implemented while teaching the course. The interview concentrated on four main topics: EFL writing difficulties, pros of implementing metalinguistic feedback, feedback and students' stimulus, using the red pen for providing feedback. Considerably, different international research has tailored the topic of written feedback scenarios in public institutes. However, this study looked up to present novelty by researching private institute teachers' concept of adopting metalinguistic feedback on EFL students' writing.

The interviewee demonstrated that having an ideal small number of students in his class enabled him to provide timely metalinguistic feedback. He ascertained that implementing this type of feedback might be easier for teachers because he could provide the error codes and discuss them with his students. This the theme of class size was researched by Broadbent (2017) who emphasized that assessing the writing of a large class could be quite difficult and it could affect the quality of the assessment. Depending on his class observation and on the exam duties of assessing his students' writing, the interviewee indicated that Arab EFL students' major writing difficulties include sentence structure, verb tenses, spelling and capitalization. He attributed these difficulties to the lack of writing practice. This interviewee's opinion can be depicted in the study of Jashari and Fojkar (2019) where teachers highlighted similar difficulties and reasons. According to this interviewee, students were motivated and able to observe and uncover their writing mistakes and interact with his feedback by correcting them in the second drafts. This writing technique strengthens Schmidt's hypothesis (1990) which is based on the ability of identifying and uncovering writing errors.

### **Discussion**

The findings of this study assured that students positively incorporated metalinguistic feedback. To illustrate this proclivity, students ascertained in the interview that they preferred metalinguistic feedback to direct feedback because it enabled them to observe and correct their mistakes by themselves. This supports Schmidt's Noticing Hypothesis (1990) which indicates that learners are unable to absorb language grammatical rules if they do not notice them. This finding corroborates with Swain's perspective (2005) that asserts the importance of the step of observing the output by students. Unexpectedly, students in this current study asserted that the teacher's use of a red pen to underline their mistakes and to provide the error codes did not make them feel shy or bad about their writing. Instead, they pointed out that this encouraged them to observe and to rewrite the second drafts due to their eagerness to learn the language. This unforeseen theme might be a good example of what Creswell (2012) refers to as "unexpected theme".

With regard to students' feelings and responses towards teacher feedback, this study supports Mahfoodh's (2022) perspective of the importance of factors that affect feedback. Our study advocates that the emotional factor contributes to and affects students' willingness for the incorporation of their teacher's feedback. The use of metalinguistic feedback influenced students' reaction towards the feedback provided by their teacher. In the interview meeting, students maintained that the nature of the provided feedback helped them to respond happily and they were eager to practice more writing.

In addition, this current study proposed that learners' absorption of teacher feedback is associated with teachers' responsibility and ability to identify the demanding type of WCF. This finding is demonstrated by Hyland (2003); Ganapathy et al (2020) who argue that learners' voice has to be valued by teachers and that teachers are responsible for investigating and employing the appropriate type of WCF in their writing classroom. This implication is in consistence with Pinter's (2015) thought of the teacher's role in the teaching process which demonstrates that teachers need to be ready to implement teaching strategies that rival their learners' concerns.

### **Limitation of the Study**

Creswell (2012) points out it is possible to research an individual or even one site. With regard to this guideline presented by Creswell (2012) and due to the institute's administrative status, the number of the participants was small, so the researchers conducted it as a case study. Secondly, the allocated time for each writing class was only one session a week because the teacher who did the intervention had to cover all the course materials. Importantly, the limited number of the students in the class and that only one teacher conducted the intervention did not help these researchers of this study to use other research instruments such as questionnaires. This study was conducted in one private institute, but other Arab and world private institutes can be targeted and approached in order to do research that experiments other feedback types and involves EFL students from different settings. Lastly, this study could be referred to as an initiative for other EFL Arab researchers who seek to build appropriate perspectives that can help shape new feedback writing strategies for getting EFL students to respond practically.

### **Pedagogical Implications of the Study**

This study was conducted by the two researchers with aim of exploring private institute students' opinions about the effects of the strategy of metalinguistic feedback. Because EFL

students need to learn writing in English as an output, it is advisable that teachers at private institutes open the door for their students to practice writing and to utilize written corrective feedback as a teaching technique.

The finding that the two researchers of this study gained supports Mahfoodh's proposed theory of students' emotional responses as a main factor for encouraging EFL students to integrate with teacher written feedback. The independent variable which was the use of error codes as a metalinguistic strategy was manipulated to identify how students feel when they experience this type of written feedback.

Though this study has few limitations, EFL teachers are encouraged to reconsider the strategies they use for improving students' writing skills. It is also essential to take into consideration students' preferences and viewpoints of writing learning strategies. Importantly, the private institute administrators need to consider opening special writing courses where students practice writing so that teachers can utilize their written corrective feedback effectively and in a timely manner. These writing courses can be analogous to the writing curriculum provided at public institutes. Defining what students need and studying their writing weaknesses in action helps private institute instructors to adopt the type of feedback that can correspond to students' level. Like other EFL feedback research, this study determines to help teachers model a type of feedback that can direct EFL students towards better writing practice.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The two researchers of this article investigated the effects of written corrective feedback on the writing of EFL private institute students. Future studies can investigate the impact of using other types of written corrective feedback on the writing of private institute students in other contexts. Researchers can also explore the effects of using new technologies for providing written corrective feedback on the writing of EFL private institute students due to the spread of new technology in education and in the field of learning English language. This current study assumes that Arab EFL researchers should not limit their studies to public institutes. Rather, they can dedicate some of their EFL studies to private institutes in order to conduct comparative studies that target private and public sites where English is taught as a separate course. Consequently, private and public institute researchers may share EFL thoughts and plans that could stir EFL learners' motives towards feedback as a stimulus of practicing writing.

### **Conclusion**

This current paper highlighted the significance of providing written corrective feedback in private institute writing classes with the aim of giving enough space and time for students to interact with their teacher's metalinguistic corrective feedback. It undermines the need for developing classroom strategies and approaches that promote EFL writing in Arab context where the focus is on getting students involved in reflecting on the type of written corrective feedback they prefer. This current study revealed that EFL students' opinions should not be neglected in EFL writing classrooms. Students' integration with teacher's feedback should be prioritized as it increases their motivation for practicing writing. In addition, student voice needs to be supported and valued because students are the main target in the teaching process. This leads to an engaging writing classroom and students help to map the path of learning writing and teachers become supporters and their talk with EFL students enriches their procedures throughout their teaching journey. This study places emphasis upon

students as partners in setting up an EFL writing operational scenario that may prioritize written feedback as a sub-process for empowering EFL writing.

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