



Thai EFL Learners' Preferences and Justifications on Teacher Written Corrective Feedback: A Mixed-Methods Investigation

ความชื่นชอบและเหตุผลประกอบของผู้เรียนภาษาอังกฤษ
ในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ ต่อการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับ
เพื่อแก้ไขงานเขียนโดยครู: การวิจัยแบบผสมผสาน

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บทคัดย่อ

งานวิจัยฉบับนี้มีวัตถุประสงค์เพื่อสำรวจความชื่นชอบและเหตุผลประกอบของผู้เรียนชาวไทยในฐานะภาษาต่างประเทศ (EFL) ต่อรูปแบบการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับเพื่อแก้ไขงานเขียนโดยครู (WCF) ที่หลากหลาย รวมถึงวิเคราะห์ความสัมพันธ์กับระดับความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษของผู้เรียน กลุ่มตัวอย่างคือนักศึกษาชั้นปีที่ 3 วิชาเอกภาษาอังกฤษจำนวน 57 คน ในมหาวิทยาลัยแห่งหนึ่งทางภาคเหนือของประเทศไทย เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการวิจัยคือแบบสอบถามสองภาษาที่ประกอบด้วยมาตราปรมาณค่าแบบลิเคิร์ต (Likert-scale) และคำถามปลายเปิด ผลการวิจัยพบว่า ผู้เรียนมีความชื่นชอบสูงสุดหากไม่มีการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับ และการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับด้านเนื้อหาเท่านั้น รองลงมาคือ การให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับแบบทางตรงรวมกับการให้คำอธิบายทางภาษา (Metalinguistic comment) ซึ่งสะท้อนให้เห็นว่าผู้เรียนให้ความสำคัญทั้งต่อการแก้ไขที่ชัดเจนและการทำความเข้าใจเชิงโมโนทัศน์ ในด้านขอบเขตการแก้ไข ผู้เรียนระบุว่าคำศัพท์และไวยากรณ์เป็นประเด็นที่ควรให้ความสำคัญมากที่สุด ในขณะที่เครื่องหมายวรรคตอนมีความสำคัญน้อยที่สุด นอกจากนี้ ผลการวิเคราะห์ทางสถิติไม่พบความสัมพันธ์ที่มีนัยสำคัญระหว่างคะแนนระดับความสามารถทางภาษา (CEPT) กับความชื่นชอบในการรับข้อมูลป้อนกลับ ซึ่งชี้ให้เห็นว่าความเชื่อและประสบการณ์ทางการศึกษาในอดีตของผู้เรียนอาจมีอิทธิพลมากกว่าระดับทักษะภาษา จากการวิเคราะห์เชิงธีม (thematic analysis) ของข้อมูลเชิงคุณภาพพบว่า ความชัดเจน ประโยชน์ต่อการปรับแก้งานเขียน และการสนับสนุนทางด้านอารมณ์เป็นปัจจัยหลักที่ส่งผลต่อความชื่นชอบของผู้เรียน ในขณะที่ข้อมูลป้อนกลับที่คลุมเครือหรือไม่มีข้อมูลป้อนกลับมักก่อให้เกิดความสับสน ความหงุดหงิด และบั่นทอนแรงจูงใจ ผลการวิจัยนี้เน้นย้ำถึงความสำคัญของการปรับวิธีการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับให้สอดคล้องกับความคาดหวังของผู้เรียน ควบคู่ไปกับการส่งเสริมความฉลาดรู้ด้านข้อมูลป้อนกลับ (Feedback Literacy) เพื่อเพิ่มขีดความสามารถของผู้เรียนในการตีความและนำคำแนะนำไปใช้ได้อย่างมี

ประสิทธิภาพ ทั้งนี้ งานวิจัยนี้ยังมีส่วนช่วยให้ข้อเสนอแนะเชิงศาสตร์เกี่ยวกับการให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับเพื่อแก้ไขงานเขียนและนำเสนอข้อเสนอแนะเชิงการสอนเพื่อพัฒนาการสอนการเขียนภาษาอังกฤษในบริบทที่ผู้สอนเป็นศูนย์กลาง

คำสำคัญ: การให้ข้อมูลป้อนกลับงานเขียน, ความชื่นชอบ, ความสามารถทางภาษาอังกฤษ, ผู้เรียนไทย EFL, การเขียน

Abstract

This study explores Thai EFL learners' preferences and justifications regarding various types of teacher written corrective feedback (WCF) and investigates their relationship with English proficiency. A bilingual questionnaire incorporating Likert-scale items and open-ended questions was administered to 57 third-year English majors at a northern Thai university. The results indicate the strongest preference for no feedback and content only, followed by direct feedback supplemented by metalinguistic comment, suggesting that students value not only explicit correction but also conceptual understanding. Vocabulary and grammar were identified as the most significant areas requiring attention, whereas punctuation was assigned to be the lowest priority. Statistical analysis revealed no significant correlation between CEPT scores and feedback preferences, implying that learner beliefs and prior educational experiences exert a stronger influence than proficiency level. Thematic analysis of qualitative responses highlighted clarity, usefulness for revision, and emotional reassurance as central considerations shaping students' preferences. In contrast, vague or absent feedback was frequently

associated with confusion, frustration, and diminished motivation. These findings underscore the necessity of aligning feedback practices with learner expectations while promoting feedback literacy to enhance students' capacity to interpret and apply corrections effectively. Overall, the study contributes to ongoing discussions on WCF and offers pedagogical implications for improving EFL writing instruction within teacher-centered educational contexts.

Keywords: Written corrective feedback, preferences, English proficiency, Thai EFL learners, writing

Introduction

In second language acquisition (SLA), writing remains a persistent challenge, particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context. Writing requires idea generation, organization, and accuracy (Torrance, 2007). Among pedagogical practices, Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) defined as teachers' written responses to learner errors—has become central in both research and classroom practice. It can take direct, indirect, or metalinguistic forms (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ellis, 2009). While WCF is widely seen as beneficial, its effectiveness has been the subject of longstanding debate and the role of learner proficiency, beliefs, and context (Ferris, 2010; Kang & Han, 2015). Some researchers argue that WCF facilitates language development by promoting noticing and accuracy (Bitchener & Knoch, 2010), whereas others question its long-term effectiveness and caution against potential negative impacts of excessive

correction (Shao, 2015; Truscott, 1996). This ongoing tension highlights a central issue in WCF research: whether corrective feedback consistently leads to sustainable language development, and under what conditions it is most effective.

Over the past decade, WCF has been at the center of debates concerning its role in enhancing accuracy and encouraging learner engagement with linguistic form. While numerous studies confirm its potential to improve language development, findings remain inconclusive regarding the superiority of particular feedback types. Focused and comprehensive WCF, for example, have demonstrated differing effects on learners' writing accuracy, with outcomes often mediated by error type and proficiency level (Khattak & Saad, 2024). Emerging research further emphasizes the need for personalization in instruction, as evidenced by web-based interventions (Indrakusuma et al., 2024) and context-aware feedback systems (Abu-Rasheed et al., 2023), both of which highlight the value of aligning pedagogical strategies with individual learner needs. However, despite these advances, feedback practices are often designed from a teacher-centered perspective, with limited attention to how learners perceive and utilize different types of feedback. Taken together, these insights underscore the necessity of a nuanced approach to WCF that considers both the characteristics of the feedback itself and the contextual variables shaping its reception.

The effectiveness of WCF has also been shown to depend on learner-related variables such as proficiency, task type, and the broader educational setting (Kang & Han, 2015). Yet, despite extensive research, relatively little is known about learners' own preferences and justifications for particular types of WCF, especially across different proficiency levels. This gap is significant because learner perceptions often mediate the extent to which feedback is noticed, accepted, and acted upon (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). At the same time, critical voices caution against overemphasizing grammatical accuracy, arguing that excessive corrective focus may inhibit broader language development and constrain creativity in writing (Shao, 2015). These competing perspectives point to the ongoing need for research that examines how learners value and rationalize feedback in relation to their linguistic development.

Although written feedback is firmly established as a cornerstone of classroom practice, learners from diverse educational and cultural backgrounds may interpret its usefulness in markedly different ways. In particular, sociocultural and educational factors play a significant role in shaping learners' expectations and responses to feedback (Hyland & Hyland, 2006). In the Thai EFL context, where writing proficiency remains both a high-stakes skill and a recurrent weakness, this issue is particularly salient. However, empirical research examining how Thai learners evaluate and justify different types of WCF remains limited. Accordingly, the present study investigates Thai university students' preferences and justifications for WCF in relation to their English proficiency. By exploring how learners

at varying proficiency levels evaluate and rationalize different forms of corrective feedback, the study aims to advance more learner-centered and proficiency-sensitive feedback practices. In doing so, it contributes to ongoing debates in SLA regarding the pedagogical role of WCF, while also offering practical implications for feedback design in EFL contexts where writing development is both urgent and underdeveloped. This study therefore responds to the need for context-sensitive WCF research that integrates learner perspectives with proficiency-related variables in underexplored EFL settings such as Thailand.

Objectives

This study aims to:

1. examine third-year Thai EFL English majors' preferences for different types of written corrective feedback (WCF).
2. identify the types of language errors that students perceive as most important for receiving written corrective feedback.
3. investigate the relationship between students' English proficiency levels, as measured by Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT) scores, and their WCF preferences.
4. examine students' justifications for their preferences for different types of written corrective feedback.

Research Framework

This study adopts a conceptual framework that illustrates the relationships among key variables. Specifically, different types of written corrective feedback (WCF) are treated as the independent variable, learners' English proficiency levels, as measured by the Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT), are considered a moderating variable, and learners' preferences and justifications for WCF are treated as dependent variables. The framework proposes that different WCF types are expected to influence learners' preferences and justifications, while learners' proficiency levels may shape how they perceive and respond to feedback. Figure 1 presents the conceptual framework used in this study.

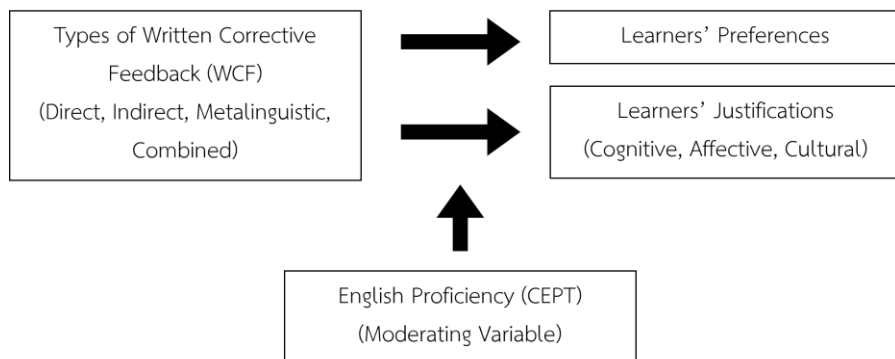


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

1. Definition of the Cambridge English Placement Test

The Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT) is a fast, flexible, international, fee-based online assessment designed to accurately determine learners' English language proficiency by mapping test performance directly to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR), ranging from Pre-A1 to C2. Developed by Cambridge University Press and Assessment, the CEPT uses adaptive testing technology, whereby the difficulty of test items adjusts in real time according to the test-taker's responses. This adaptive approach ensures an efficient and precise evaluation of reading and listening skills. Widely used by educational institutions and language centers worldwide, the CEPT functions as a diagnostic benchmark to place learners in appropriate courses, monitor progress, and assess readiness for higher-level Cambridge English Qualifications.

2. Theoretical Foundations of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF)

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is rooted in several foundational theories in second language acquisition. Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis emphasizes that learners must consciously notice language errors and corrections for acquisition to occur. DeKeyser's (2007) Skill Acquisition Theory supports the idea that explicit corrective feedback contributes to proceduralization through practice. Additionally, sociocultural theory (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006; Vygotsky, 1978) argues that learning occurs through interaction and mediation, with teacher feedback functioning as scaffolding within the learner's Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD). These theoretical perspectives collectively suggest

that corrective feedback, when appropriately aligned with learners' cognitive and developmental readiness, can significantly enhance writing competence and linguistic accuracy.

3. Definitions and Types of WCF

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) refers to the written input provided by teachers to help students recognize, understand, and revise their language errors in L2 writing (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012; Ellis, 2009). Its primary goal is to enhance learners' grammatical accuracy, raise awareness of interlanguage errors, and facilitate language development. WCF has also been found to positively influence students' self-efficacy and reduce writing apprehension (Razmjoo & Hoomanfar, 2012), exerting benefits both within and beyond the classroom (Zulkepli & Hussin, 2021). Nevertheless, its effectiveness is not uniform; outcomes vary according to the feedback type, learner proficiency, and instructional context. WCF has been classified into multiple types depending on nature, explicitness, and instructional intention of the feedback. WCF may take several forms—direct (Rastgou, 2024), indirect, or focused versus unfocused (Chingchit, 2024)—and is designed to foster linguistic accuracy, heighten metalinguistic awareness, and ultimately support long-term writing development. Beyond accuracy, WCF has been found to positively influence students' self-efficacy and reduce writing apprehension (Razmjoo & Hoomanfar, 2012), exerting benefits both within and beyond the classroom (Zulkepli & Hussin, 2021). Nevertheless, its effectiveness is not uniform; outcomes vary according to the feedback type, learner proficiency, and instructional context, suggesting that a tailored

approach is critical. Direct WCF involves the teacher supplying the correct form of the error. This method is considered particularly useful for beginner learners as it provides clarity and reduces ambiguity. Indirect WCF, by contrast, indicates the presence of an error (e.g., underlining or margin symbols) without offering the correction, thus encouraging learner self-repair. Metalinguistic WCF includes grammatical codes or brief explanations, prompting reflection and rule-based processing.

Feedback can also vary by focus. Focused WCF targets specific linguistic features, such as verb tense or article use, whereas unfocused WCF addresses a broad array of errors. Some teachers employ reformulation, where a learner's original sentence is rephrased more natively, preserving meaning while improving structure. Moreover, combined WCF incorporates two or more feedback types, such as combining direct correction with metalinguistic explanation. The selection of WCF types depends on learners' proficiency levels, task complexity, and pedagogical goals. Research has shown that different WCF types have varying impacts on learners' revision quality, long-term retention, and willingness to engage with feedback (Kang & Han, 2015; Sheen, 2011). Matching WCF type to learner needs is essential for optimizing the feedback process.

4. Previous research on written corrective feedback (WCF) has examined learners' preferences and perceptions, the influence of proficiency levels, and the reasons underlying these preferences, while also highlighting a research gap concerning the relationship between Thai

EFL learners' proficiency and their WCF preferences and justifications, as outlined below.

4.1 Learners' Preferences and Perceptions Toward WCF

Learners generally perceive WCF as beneficial for improving writing accuracy, yet preferences vary widely depending on cultural background, learning style, and previous educational experience (Ferris, 2010; Han & Hyland, 2015). Many learners prefer direct feedback for its clarity and ease of use during revision, while others find indirect or metalinguistic feedback more empowering as it promotes independent learning and problem-solving (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). In EFL contexts such as Thailand, hierarchical classroom norms and deference to authority influence learner preferences, often resulting in a favoring of teacher-led, explicit correction (Srichanyachon, 2011). However, studies also reveal mismatches between teacher practices and student expectations, potentially limiting the effectiveness of WCF (Zhang & Hyland, 2018).

4.2. WCF and Proficiency Level

Proficiency level plays a significant role in determining how learners perceive and respond to WCF. Beginner students often lack the metalinguistic awareness needed to benefit from indirect or coded feedback, making direct correction more effective (Bitchener, 2008; Sheen, 2007). Intermediate and advanced learners, in contrast, are better able to interpret and apply indirect or metalinguistic feedback. Research using Common European Framework of References for Languages (CEFR) benchmarks (Wondim, Bishaw, & Zeleke, 2023) has shown that learners'

proficiency levels are associated with not only writing performance outcomes but also feedback preferences. Higher-level learners often report greater satisfaction with complex forms of feedback that require deeper engagement, whereas lower-level learners express anxiety or confusion when faced with less explicit correction.

4.3 Learners' Justifications for WCF Preferences

Understanding why learners prefer certain types of feedback is essential for effective pedagogy. Justifications often fall into three categories: cognitive, affective, and cultural. Cognitively, learners value feedback that helps them revise accurately and independently. Affectively, feedback that builds confidence and reduces anxiety is often preferred (Han & Hyland, 2015). Culturally, learners in high-context societies such as Thailand may view overt correction as a sign of teacher care, while indirect feedback may be interpreted as ambiguous or even discouraging (Rasool et al., 2023). These justifications are important in designing feedback practices that are not only effective but also culturally appropriate and emotionally supportive.

4.4 Research Gap in WCF Studies

Despite extensive research into WCF, relatively few studies have explored the relationship between learners' English proficiency levels—especially as measured by standardized instruments like CEPT—and their preferences and justifications for specific WCF types. While studies in Western, Chinese, and Middle Eastern contexts have examined feedback preferences, the Thai EFL context remains underexplored. Existing Thai-based research tends to focus on general perceptions without

linking these to actual proficiency levels or examining the reasons behind learners' preferences. Furthermore, many studies use either quantitative or qualitative methods exclusively, limiting a holistic understanding of the phenomenon. This study addresses this gap by employing a mixed-methods approach to investigate the relationship between Thai EFL learners' CEPT scores, their WCF preferences, and the justifications behind those preferences. The findings are expected to contribute to the development of level-sensitive and learner-centered feedback strategies in Thai EFL writing instruction.

Method

The research methodology of the current study consisted of four components: 1) Participants, 2) Instrumentation, 3) Data Collection, and 4) Data Analysis.

1. Participants

The study involved 57 third-year English-major students (16 from the Faculty of Education and 41 from the Faculty of Humanities) at a university in northern Thailand, of whom 22 were male and 35 were female, aged between 19 and 22 years. Their Cambridge English Placement Test (CEPT) scores ranged from 16 to 50 (Mean = 29.19, SD = 6.35). The study was conducted in the first semester of the 2025 academic year. Participants were selected using purposive sampling, as they had previously enrolled in an essay writing course during the second semester of the 2024 academic year.

In the essay writing course, students were required to produce five types of essays: narrative, descriptive, cause-and-effect, and comparison-and-contrast. After submitting the first draft of each essay, they received written corrective feedback (WCF) from the instructor. Consequently, all participants had prior experience with WCF, making them suitable for inclusion in the present study.

2. Research instrument

The questionnaire was adapted from the WCF preference framework proposed by Black and Nanni (2016) to ensure alignment with the objectives of the present study. Several classifications and questionnaire items were modified to suit the context and purposes of the current research. It was developed in a bilingual format (English and Thai) and incorporated both closed- and open-ended items. The closed-ended items employed five-point Likert scales to facilitate quantitative analysis, whereas the open-ended items elicited qualitative explanations to provide deeper insight into learners' preferences and underlying rationales. The final instrument was organized into three principal sections: (1) demographic and proficiency information, including CEPT scores; (2) preferences for different types of written corrective feedback (WCF); and (3) preferences regarding feedback on specific error categories. WCF Types refer to how the teacher gives the feedback (Directly, Indirectly, Metalinguistically), while Error Types (this list) refer to what the teacher is looking at (Spelling, Grammar, Organization). The WCF types included in

the questionnaire comprised seven distinct forms illustrated with examples, using the same student sentence for consistency in Table 1.

Table 1 Classification of WCF types for Student Preference Judgments

Student sentence: “*She go to the market yesterday.*”

WCT Type	Teacher’s Action	Example Feedback
1. Indirect with Study Suggestion	Indicates error + where to learn.	She go to the market yesterday. (<i>Review past tense in Unit 3</i>).
2. Indirect	Signals error only (no clues).	She [go] to the market yesterday.
3. Direct with Metalinguistic comment	Supplies the correction + a rule.	She went to the market yesterday. (<i>Past tense required for yesterday</i>).
4. Direct	Supplies the correct form.	She went to the market yesterday.
5. Indirect with Metalinguistic comment	Indicates error + grammatical clue.	She go to the market yesterday. (<i>Past tense verb needed</i>).
6. No Feedback	Total omission of correction.	She go to the market yesterday.
7. Content Only	Ignores grammar; focuses on meaning.	“Good example and clear situation!”

Although “Content Only” feedback and “No Feedback” do not constitute corrective feedback in the traditional sense, they were included to compare students’ preferences between language-focused feedback and meaning-focused or non-corrective responses. Additionally, the category “Indirect with Study Suggestion” was included as an adapted pedagogical feedback type commonly used in classroom contexts to encourage learner autonomy and self-study.

In addition to WCF types, the error types used for preference judgments comprised the following six types of errors, illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2 Classification of Error Types for Student Preference Judgments
 Student sentence: “*She go to the market yesterday.*”

Error Type	Definition / Focus	Illustrative Example (Feedback)
Organization	Paragraph structure	“This sentence should be moved to the beginning of the paragraph to introduce your story.”
Grammar	Word order, tense, & syntax	She went to the market yesterday. (<i>Correcting the verb tense</i>).
Content / Ideas	Clarity of the message	“It is clear she went to the market, but why? Adding a reason would make the idea more complete.”

Error Type	Definition / Focus	Illustrative Example (Feedback)
Punctuation	Use of commas, periods, etc.	She go to the market yesterday ^{**.*} <i>(Adding the missing period at the end).</i>
Spelling	Incorrect spelling of words	She go to the markit yesterday. → market
Vocabulary	Word choice or meaning	She visited the market yesterday. <i>(Replacing ‘go’ with a more precise verb).</i>

Prior to full administration, the questionnaire was first reviewed by peer experts for content validity and subsequently piloted with eight third-year English-major students who were not included in the main study but shared similar characteristics with the target population. The pilot aimed to assess item clarity, linguistic appropriateness, and interpretability in both English and Thai. Feedback from this stage informed minor wording revisions, which improved clarity and ensured consistency across both language versions. The pilot thereby enhanced the instrument’s face validity and confirmed its suitability for large-scale administration. The closed-ended Likert-scale items demonstrated excellent internal consistency (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .91$).

3. Data Collection

Following approval from the Institutional Review Board (IRB), the researchers collaborated with instructors responsible for teaching third-year English-major students in the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Humanities at a university in northern Thailand during the first semester of the 2025 academic year. These instructors were requested to distribute a link to the online questionnaire, which included a participant consent form and detailed instructions in Thai. The online questionnaire was administered through Google Forms.

4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistical methods. Descriptive statistics were employed to address Research Questions 1 and 2, focusing on students' preferences for different types of written corrective feedback (WCF) and the error categories they considered most important to receive feedback on. To address Research Question 3, Pearson's correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationship between students' English proficiency levels and their WCF preferences. Prior to analysis, assumptions of normality and linearity were examined to ensure the appropriateness of Pearson's correlation.

To address Research Question 4, a qualitative analysis was conducted using a thematic analysis approach. First, all open-ended responses were read multiple times to achieve data familiarization. Next, initial codes were generated inductively based on recurring patterns in the

data. These codes were then grouped into broader themes, including clarity, usefulness for revision, autonomy, emotional reassurance, and cultural expectations.

To enhance the trustworthiness of the analysis, the coding process was conducted by three independent raters. All raters analyzed the data using the same coding framework, and inter-rater reliability was calculated using percentage agreement, yielding a high level of agreement (88%). The raters then held a meeting to discuss and resolve discrepancies, and a final set of agreed-upon codes and themes was established through consensus.

Representative excerpts from students' responses were used to support the identified themes. The use of multiple raters, the establishment of inter-rater reliability, and consensus discussion strengthened the credibility and dependability of the qualitative findings.

Synthetic Research Results

The results of this study are organized and presented in accordance with the research objectives, as outlined below.

Finding 1: Preferences toward Different Types of Written Corrective Feedback

In order to address Research Objective 1, descriptive statistics were used to analyze students' preferences for different types of written corrective feedback. The results are shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Descriptive Statistics of Students’ Preferences for Different Types of Teacher Feedback

Types of Teacher Feedback	Frequency	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Indirect with study suggestion	57	1.00	5.00	3.0351	1.08504
Indirect	57	1.00	4.00	2.4035	.88357
Direct with metalinguistic comment	57	1.00	5.00	4.4035	.90356
Direct	57	1.00	5.00	3.7895	1.09767
Indirect with metalinguistic comment	57	1.00	5.00	3.1930	1.02537
No feedback	57	3.00	5.00	4.56	0.57
Content only	57	3.00	5.00	4.56	0.57

The highest mean scores were observed for No feedback and Content only (both $M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.57$), indicating a strong participant preference for feedback that prioritizes meaning-focused input.

However, among corrective feedback types, Direct with metalinguistic comment received the highest mean score ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.90$), suggesting that participants value corrections accompanied by explicit grammatical explanations. This pattern suggests a divergence between learners’ affective preferences and their perceived learning benefits. While meaning-focused or non-corrective feedback may be preferred at a surface level, more explicit forms of feedback appear to be valued for their perceived instructional effectiveness.

Finding 2: Types of Language Errors Considered Most Important for WCF

With reference to Research Objective 2, descriptive statistics were employed to examine students’ perceived importance of receiving written corrective feedback (WCF) on six different error types. This analysis aimed to identify which aspects of language use learners prioritize when seeking corrective input.

Table 4 Descriptive Statistics of Students’ Preferences for Teacher Feedback on Different Error Types

Types of Errors	Frequency	Min	Max	Mean	SD
Organization	57	2.00	5.00	4.21	0.84
Grammar	57	2.00	5.00	4.40	0.80
Content	57	1.00	5.00	4.18	0.97
Punctuation	57	1.00	5.00	3.63	1.17
Spelling	57	1.00	5.00	4.16	1.05
Vocabulary	57	3.00	5.00	4.56	0.57

As shown in Table 4, students rated vocabulary errors as the most important area for feedback ($M = 4.56$, $SD = 0.57$), followed by grammatical ($M = 4.40$, $SD = 0.80$) and organizational errors ($M = 4.21$, $SD = 0.84$). Content-related ($M = 4.18$, $SD = 0.97$) and spelling errors ($M = 4.16$, $SD = 1.05$) were also rated relatively highly, while punctuation received the lowest rating ($M = 3.63$, $SD = 1.17$). Overall, students prioritized feedback

on vocabulary and grammar, which may reflect a focus and clarity in written communication.

Finding 3: Relationship between English Proficiency and WCF Preferences

To address Research Objective 3, Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to determine the relationship between students' CEPT scores and their preferences for different types of written corrective feedback (WCF).

Table 5 Correlations between CEPT Scores and Preferences for Different Types of Feedback

Correlations	Correlation Coefficient (r)	Sig.(2-tailed)
CEPT – Type1 (Indirect with study suggestion)	-.087	.522
CEPT – Type2 (Indirect)	-.106	.431
CEPT – Type3 (Direct with metalinguistic comment)	.117	.387
CEPT – Type4 (Direct)	.116	.390
CEPT – Type5 (Indirect with metalinguistic comment)	-.181	.177
CEPT – Type6 (No feedback)	-.183	.173
CEPT – Type7 (Content only)	-.227	.089

As shown in Table 5, no statistically significant correlations were found between CEPT scores and preferences for any of the WCF types at the 0.05 significance level. These findings suggest that WCF preferences were not significantly associated with proficiency.

Finding 4: Students' Reasons for Preferences toward Different Types of WCF

To achieve Research Objective 4, a thematic analysis was conducted on students' open-ended justifications for their preferences across seven types of written corrective feedback (WCF). A total of 399 written responses were analyzed (57 for each feedback type). The analysis followed a primarily deductive approach, drawing on themes informed by previous literature, i.e., clarity, usefulness for revision, autonomy, affective response, and confusion arising from insufficient support. All students provided justifications for each feedback type, allowing for the identification of recurring thematic patterns. Clarity and usefulness for revision were cited most frequently in responses to Type 3 (Direct with metalinguistic comment), which contrasts with the higher mean scores observed for non-corrective feedback types (No feedback and Content only) in the quantitative results. This discrepancy suggests that while students may report higher preference scores for less cognitively demanding feedback, their qualitative justifications reflect a stronger appreciation for feedback that supports learning and error correction. In contrast, confusion and lack of support were dominant themes in responses to Type 2 (Indirect) and Type 6 (No feedback). Overall, these

findings provide qualitative insights that complement the quantitative results and deepen understanding of learners' evaluative stances toward different types of WCF.

Type 1 – Indirect with Study Suggestion: Students valued this feedback type for promoting self-directed learning, particularly when suggestions encouraged them to revisit grammar rules. Nevertheless, a substantial number reported uncertainty when corrections were not explicit, with several stating that they “did not know what was wrong.” Overall, this method was perceived as useful for fostering autonomy with guidance, though its effectiveness may be constrained by students' limited confidence in interpreting vague comments.

Type 2 – Indirect: Feedback that merely indicated the presence of an error without explanation elicited mixed reactions. A small group of students appreciated the independence it afforded, yet the majority described it as “too vague” or “hard to revise from.” These responses highlight the cognitive burden created by insufficient guidance and emphasize the central role of clarity in feedback acceptance.

Type 3 – Direct with Metalinguistic Comment: This feedback type received the highest level of endorsement. Students emphasized that it not only corrected their errors but also provided conceptual understanding, which enhanced confidence and supported long-term learning. Commonly used terms included “understand,” “know why,” and “easy to correct.” The dominant themes associated with this type were

clarity, usefulness for revision, and the development of metalinguistic awareness.

Type 4 – Direct: Direct correction was valued for its immediacy and clarity, with many learners reporting greater confidence in revising accurately. However, some students noted that this method failed to explain why the error occurred, which may limit opportunities for deeper learning. Thus, while this feedback type fulfilled the need for certainty, it was regarded as less effective in promoting grammatical insight compared to Type 3.

Type 5 – Indirect with Metalinguistic Comment: This type was frequently described as a balanced approach, combining the benefits of learner autonomy with scaffolded support. Students valued the hints and grammar labels, which facilitated understanding while still encouraging critical thinking. The main themes were scaffolded autonomy and developmental learning.

Type 6 – No Feedback: This was the least preferred feedback type. Students generally regarded the absence of feedback as unhelpful, frequently reporting that they were “unable to improve” or “did not know what was wrong.” The dominant theme was frustration, often accompanied by concerns about missed learning opportunities and stagnation in language development.

Type 7 – Content-Only Feedback: Although a minority of students appreciated comments on ideas, the majority expressed dissatisfaction with this type. Learners expected corrections on grammar

and vocabulary in addition to content-focused remarks. Many explicitly stated that language accuracy should not be ignored, reflecting a strong preference for comprehensive feedback that integrates both form and content.

Discussion

This study examined Thai EFL learners' preferences and justifications for written corrective feedback (WCF), with reference to their English proficiency levels as measured by CEPT. The results highlight several key insights. First, learners reported the highest preference scores for non-corrective feedback types (No feedback and Content only). However, when considering corrective feedback strategies, direct feedback accompanied by metalinguistic explanation emerged as the most valued approach. This contrast suggests a divergence between learners' affective preferences and their perceived learning benefits. From a theoretical perspective, this pattern can be interpreted through Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis and Skill Acquisition Theory (DeKeyser, 2007), which suggest that explicit corrective feedback facilitates deeper processing and long-term language development. Thai learners' strong preference for explicit feedback with explanation can be understood in relation to their teacher-centered educational background (Srichanyachon, 2011). Unlike in Western contexts, where indirect feedback is seen as fostering autonomy (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010), Thai students often report confusion without explicit correction. This suggests that feedback preferences are shaped not only by linguistic proficiency but also by learners' prior educational experiences and learning expectations.

Additionally, learners prioritized vocabulary and grammatical errors as the most important areas for correction, highlighting their practical concern for communicative clarity and accuracy. Organization and content were also valued, though to a lesser extent, while punctuation received the lowest priority.

Furthermore, no statistically significant relationship was found between proficiency level and WCF preferences. This suggests that students' expectations may be shaped more by cultural and educational experiences than by their actual linguistic ability.

Finally, thematic analysis revealed that clarity, usefulness for revision, and emotional reassurance were central to learners' justifications. In contrast, vague or absent feedback was associated with confusion, frustration, and reduced motivation.

Overall, the findings reaffirm the importance of learner perceptions in shaping the effectiveness and reception of feedback in second language writing contexts.

1. Preference for Explicit Feedback with Explanation

The results revealed that Thai EFL participants exhibited equally strong preferences for no feedback and content-only feedback, as evidenced by identical mean scores. Among the corrective modalities, direct feedback paired with metalinguistic comment was preferred to direct-only correction. Conversely, indirect feedback emerged as the least preferred modality, suggesting a lower preference for strategies requiring independent error resolution. This pattern is consistent with Black and

Nanni (2016), who found that Thai university students placed high value on accuracy and favored explicit correction. Learners in this study consistently emphasized that feedback combining correction with explanation not only supported revision but also fosters deeper understanding of errors. Such preferences are also in line with the arguments of Ferris and Roberts (2001) and Sheen (2007), who contend that feedback combining correction with explanation enhances metalinguistic awareness and contributes to long-term accuracy gains.

It is also possible that these EFL students preferred direct feedback and explicit correction because they may be less confident in attempting self-correction. Engaging in self-revision may lead to inaccuracies, and learners may internalize inaccurate forms when corrections are not confirmed. Nonetheless, while the Thai participants' preference for direct over indirect feedback types aligns with the findings of Wondim, Bishaw, and Zeleke (2023), who identified direct correction as the most effective catalyst for writing improvement, a notable discrepancy remains. The participants' primary inclination toward no feedback and content-only feedback suggests that while explicit linguistic intervention may optimize writing outcomes, it may not align with the affective preferences or communicative priorities of Thai EFL learners.

Thai learners' strong preference for explicit feedback with explanation can be understood in relation to their teacher-centered educational background (Srichanyachon, 2011). Unlike in Western contexts, where indirect feedback is seen as fostering autonomy (Amrhein

& Nassaji, 2010), Thai students often report confusion without explicit correction. This suggests that feedback preferences are shaped not only by linguistic proficiency but also by learners' prior educational experiences and learning expectations.

By contrast, learners in this context demonstrated relatively limited preference for indirect feedback, particularly when it lacked metalinguistic clues. This differs from findings in Western or more learner-centered contexts (Hartshorn & Evans, 2012), where indirect feedback is often viewed as beneficial for promoting self-regulation. Thai learners frequently described indirect feedback as unclear or confusing, echoing Black and Nanni's (2016) observation that students may lack confidence in their ability to self-correct without explicit teacher support. These tendencies may be situated within Thailand's historically teacher-centered education system, where students have long been accustomed to explicit instruction and may experience discomfort when faced with ambiguity in corrective feedback (Kantamara, Hallinger, & Jatiket, 2006).

2. Error Type Importance Reflects Practical Concerns

Regarding the types of errors students valued most, vocabulary and grammar emerged as the highest priorities, followed by organization and content. This finding is consistent with Ferris (1995), who emphasized that learners tend to value feedback that improves the clarity and effectiveness of their written communication. Vocabulary, in particular, appeared especially salient, as inappropriate word choices may interfere with clarity and comprehensibility. Punctuation, by contrast, was rated

lowest, which may reflect learners' perceptions that mechanical errors are less disruptive to communication than lexical or grammatical problems, a tendency also discussed in previous feedback research by Hyland (1998). From a theoretical perspective, this pattern may be explained by Noticing Hypothesis proposed by Schmidt (1990), which suggests that learners are more likely to attend to linguistic features that are salient and meaning-related. In this context, lexical and grammatical errors may attract greater attention because of their direct influence on comprehension, whereas mechanical errors such as punctuation may receive comparatively less attention during processing.

3. No Significant Relationship Between CEPT Scores and Feedback Preferences

Interestingly, no statistically significant correlation was found between CEPT scores and students' preferences for feedback types. This suggests that the demand for clarity and explicitness in WCF is relatively stable across proficiency levels. This may indicate that preferences for clear and explicit WCF are shared across learners with different proficiency levels. While Kang and Han (2015) highlighted proficiency as a moderating factor in WCF effectiveness, the present findings suggest that learner-related factors such as beliefs and prior experiences may also contribute to shaping feedback preferences. This interpretation aligns with Schulz (2001), who argued that learners' attitudes toward error correction are often shaped by prior instructional contexts rather than linguistic ability alone. From a Skill Acquisition perspective (DeKeyser, 2007), may suggest

that learners across proficiency levels continue to value explicit input during the development of procedural knowledge, leading to relatively consistent feedback preferences across levels.

4. Thematic Insights into Learner Justifications

The thematic analysis provided further depth, revealing recurring rationales for preferences: clarity, usefulness for revision, emotional reassurance, and autonomy. Learners placed the greatest value on feedback that was clear, immediately actionable, and often accompanied by explanations. Conversely, vague or absent feedback was frequently described as unhelpful or demotivating.

These findings are consistent with Amrhein and Nassaji (2010), who showed that learners are more receptive to feedback when it aligns with their expectations and learning styles. From a theoretical perspective, the emphasis on clarity and explicitness can be interpreted through Schmidt's (1990) Noticing Hypothesis, as clear feedback increases the likelihood that learners will consciously attend to and process their errors. In addition, explicit explanations may support the transition from declarative to procedural knowledge, as proposed in Skill Acquisition Theory (DeKeyser, 2007).

The least valued forms—no correction and content-only comments—were sometimes perceived as insufficient for supporting linguistic development, which is broadly consistent with previous research reporting differences between teacher and learner expectations regarding corrective feedback (Schulz, 2001). This apparent contrast suggests that

learners' preferences may partly reflect affective considerations, whereas their qualitative justifications indicate a stronger orientation toward feedback perceived as helpful for linguistic improvement and error awareness.

One limitation of this study lies in the use of purposive sampling from a single university in northern Thailand, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other EFL contexts. In addition, the relatively small sample size ($n = 57$) may not fully represent the diversity of Thai EFL learners. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution. Future research involving larger and more diverse samples across multiple institutions would help enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Suggestion

The findings suggest that Thai learners benefit most from explicit correction supported with explanation. Teachers are therefore encouraged to combine direct correction with metalinguistic commentary and to provide training in feedback literacy to help students interpret and apply different types of feedback effectively. In addition, universities that train English teachers may consider incorporating feedback literacy and corrective feedback strategies into teacher education programs to better prepare future instructors for providing effective written feedback. While promoting learner autonomy remains important, it should be balanced with culturally appropriate guidance to maintain learners' confidence and

engagement. These suggestions highlight the importance of aligning feedback practices with learner expectations while gradually fostering greater learner autonomy.

In addition, future research may investigate how learners' preferences for WCF evolve over time through longitudinal designs, particularly by tracking students' writing development and their satisfaction with the feedback received. Further studies could also explore teachers' preferences for different types of Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) and compare them with student preferences to identify potential mismatches between instructional practices and learner expectations. Comparative research across Asian EFL contexts may help clarify the role of cultural traditions in shaping feedback preferences. Moreover, classroom-based interventions focusing on feedback literacy would provide practical insights into how learners can be supported in making more effective use of WCF.

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