

# INVESTIGATING LEARNER PREFERENCES FOR WRITTEN CORRECTIVE FEEDBACK IN A THAI HIGHER EDUCATION CONTEXT

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**Abstract:** The current study investigated EFL learners' preferences for written corrective feedback (WCF) and the rationale for their preferences. A mixed-methods approach, combining quantitative and qualitative data collection, was used to explore this phenomenon. The data were collected using an internet-based questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The questionnaire was utilized to gather quantitative information from 93 Thai EFL students at a Bangkok-based Rajabhat University, while the interview collected qualitative data from ten respondents who were willing to be interviewed. The findings indicated that Thai EFL undergraduate students, on the whole, appreciated receiving WCF in several forms. The most desired type of WCF was direct feedback, while feedback given to learners regarding global errors was not favourable. Additionally, the rationale for the students' WCF preferences included: 1) clarity of feedback in pointing out the grammatical errors and the proper forms; 2) feedback resulting in improvement of the written text in the amended version; and 3) feedback resulting in better writing scores. The outcomes of this study may encourage Thai EFL teachers, as well as teachers in similar EFL situations, to deliver more precise types of WCF on learners' faults in writing and utilise a chosen WCF method to involve students in learning to write.

**Keywords:** English as a foreign language, error correction, preference, rationale, written corrective feedback

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The provision of corrective feedback (CF) has emerged as a critical component of second language acquisition and pedagogy. As its name implies, CF refers to learners' feedback on the linguistic faults or undesirable forms they frequently make in their L2 oral or written production. WCF is typically offered by teachers, peers, or computers in the classroom; nevertheless, native

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speakers and non-native speakers may provide WCF in natural settings (Zhang et al., 2021). As one of the most extensive research lines in second language, WCF has produced a vast body of studies over the past thirty years. One piece of evidence supporting the popularity of WCF research is the review article by Li and Vuono (2019) that revealed findings on students' divergent WCF preferences.

For example, evidence from earlier research (Hillocks, 1986) indicates that learners had a more favourable attitude towards writing when they were not corrected. Similarly, Semke (1984) found that writing exercise alone improves student development. Corrections do not improve writing correctness, writing fluency, or linguistic competency, and they may have an adverse impact on student attitudes, particularly when students are required to make corrections independently. This entails abandoning error correction. Ur (2012), however, emphasizes students' preference for error correction. The overwhelming majority of primary and secondary pupils desire to be corrected and are more receptive to being informed explicitly of the error and the proper form. Similarly, a recent survey demonstrates that WCF was positively viewed (Chen et al., 2016), in which Chinese EFL students were likely to have a robust and enthusiastic attitude towards comments on the content and grammar of their written work. This conclusion is comparable to those in other reports (e.g., Qutob & Madini, 2020). In practice, as much CF as feasible should be offered for errors.

A plethora of published research has examined the relationship between students' CF preferences and backgrounds (Jolley, 2019; Morris & Chikwa, 2016; Moslemi & Dastgoshadeh, 2017; Nurie, 2018; Parkes & Fletcher, 2017; Tasdemir & Yalcin Arslan, 2018; Yang, 2016). For instance, Yang (2016) discovered that L2 learners with a Confucian cultural background considered explicit correction of pragmatic errors as effective, whereas learners from a non-Confucian background did not concur. In Iran, students with all three levels of proficiency (i.e., elementary, intermediate, and upper-intermediate and advanced) favoured direct, untargeted feedback, but they had divergent views regarding their satisfaction with their teachers' feedback methods, the need to improve their writing, the targeted structures, and their attitudes after receiving feedback (Nemati et al., 2017).

Previous research indicates that learners have a high preference for particular WCF types. A qualitative study by Roy (2019) described multilingual writers' preferences between audio and textual feedback. Results suggested that the writers expected directive and explicit feedback from their teachers. Their preferred methods of corrective feedback and their self-perceived English listening proficiency were discovered to have a positive correlation; those who were confident about their command preferred audio feedback over written input. Recent research (Orts & Salazar, 2016) suggests that students may have varying preferences regarding how their errors should be rectified. Lower-level learners prefer to be provided with the proper response explicitly, whereas B2-level students prefer to self-correct their errors. It can be said that the majority of them focused their attention on lecturers' WCF, which was partially reflected in Chen et al.'s (2016) results.

With regard to studies on learners' preferences, a significant portion of the current literature on corrective feedback focuses on EFL learners in countries where the learner-centred approach has long been a recurring motif in numerous national education policies. It is critical to mention that the adoption of this strategy has become a prominent issue in Thailand during the past two

decades. As Black and Nanni (2016) explain, Thailand's educational system has been in a perpetual state of reform, advocating for a shift away from a teacher-centred approach towards learner-centred one.

Many Thai students have been taught using traditional methods that emphasize memory and passive learning and are centred on the teacher (Fry & Bi, 2013). Students who have passively acquired knowledge for an extended period of time may desire their teachers to spoon-feed them corrections (Black & Nanni, 2016) or may differ from other nationality groups in actively participating in their education. While many existing studies indicate that learners prefer WCF strategies, WCF has elicited a range of reactions (Yunus, 2020), and past studies have been unable to ascertain the students' motivation for their preferences. As a result, it is necessary to analyze the types of WCF preferred by Thai EFL undergraduates and get an insight into the reasons for their preferences. Even though published studies on learner preferences for written corrective feedback are substantial, there is inadequacy in a study about preferences for specific forms of feedback, notably in Thailand. It remains unknown whether or how Thai L2 students are aware of the given WCF. The current study, which is an attempt in this direction, can help EFL teachers in selecting appropriate WCF types to better assist Thai students in improving their drafts or manuscripts. The purpose of this study is to explore learners' preferences for WCF and the rationale for their preferences. It thus addresses the following research questions:

1. What are Thai EFL students' preferences for WCF?
2. Why do Thai EFL students prefer certain types of WCF?

## METHOD

### Participants and Instructional Settings

The study included third-year undergraduates participating in a course titled *English for Thai Teachers II* at an anonymous Rajabhat university during the second semester of 2020. They were native Thai speakers who were taught English writing and received corrected feedback from the first author throughout the entire course. In line with Cohen et al. (2018), a volunteer sample was used in the research. The students attending the course were asked to voluntarily engage in the study and were required to sign a consent form if they agreed to participate. For those who did not reply to the volunteer call, it had no effect on their knowledge, skills, scores, and grades. Ninety-three students volunteered to take part in the study.

The *English for Thai Teachers II* course was designed to provide students with the English grammar understanding necessary to serve as secondary school teachers. It was taught in Thai (70%) and English (30%) and concentrated on the following grammatical features: nouns, determiners, and pronouns; verbs and tenses; subject-verb agreement; adjectives and adverbs; prepositions and connectors; clause structure; and sentence structure. As a result of the current COVID-19 pandemic, all in-person classes have been converted to an online format. Thus, electronic classroom distribution systems were classified as synchronous and asynchronous transmissions. There were fifteen weeks in all, with synchronous online instruction occurring during the first eleven and final weeks. Each week, the students were obliged to participate in a Webex virtual conference at a defined time and complete Microsoft Forms-based online English

examinations linked to the lectures. The remaining weeks consisted of asynchronous learning activities that allowed students to complete writing assignments at their own pace. All participants were then presented with several types of WCF via Google Classroom. Prior to drafting a new text, a revised version of each previously written text would be submitted.

There were 17 males and 76 females among the ninety-three students. The participants' mean age was 21 ( $SD = 0.51$ ), with a range of 20 to 23. They were all L1 Thai speakers who had previously studied English for more than twelve years, from elementary to university settings in a form-focused or, in other words, grammar-oriented context. They had never lived abroad or attended international or foreign language secondary schools.

## **Instruments and Data Collection**

### ***Questionnaire***

The questionnaire items were designed following a thorough examination of the pertinent literature and previous studies' instruments (Chen et al., 2016; Ur, 2012; Wiboolyasarin et al., 2020; Wiboolyasarin, 2021). Given that learners may have trouble understanding the technical terms used to describe the types of WCF, tasks similar to those utilized in prior studies were adopted (Yang, 2016; Zhang et al., 2021). Consequently, the questionnaire did not contain any technical phrases referring to WCF types; rather, it included instances of WCF types based on specific mistakes. All error examples were developed by analysis of samples generated during participants' writing activities.

The self-reported questionnaire began with a background part that included the previously mentioned demographic variables: gender, age, and year of English learning experience. The following section required participants to rate their level of agreement with 18 questions describing their WCF preferences. Responses were collected using conventional six-point Likert scales with the following anchors: worst = 1, bad = 2, slightly bad = 3, slightly good = 4, good = 5, best = 6. The majority of items related to WCF were affirmed. To determine the internal consistency and reliability of the internet-based questionnaire, 15 potential participants were randomly selected from the possible sample and removed from the study. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for this questionnaire survey as a whole was 0.844, which is considered to be a 'highly reliable' level (Cohen et al., 2018, p. 774). The readability of the text was determined for the intended participants, and ambiguities and difficulties in the language were eliminated.

Content validation was employed by the offline format. Three experts were handed a content validation document with clear instructions to score the items on a four-point scale of relevance: 1 for 'not relevant', 2 for 'somewhat relevant', 3 for 'quite relevant', and 4 for 'highly relevant' (Polit & Beck, 2006, p. 491). The professionals were able to provide thorough recommendations for improving the items for each statement. The mean of item-level content validity index (I-CVI) scores across all accounts was 1.00, which demonstrated excellent content validity (Shi et al., 2012) and was deemed acceptable by three assessors (Polit & Beck, 2006; Polit et al., 2007).

The online questionnaire was completely anonymous, meaning it did not capture the respondent's name or any other information that could be used to identify them. The students completed the survey, which was provided online using Microsoft Forms, at the end of the

semester to reflect on their WCF preferences. The respondents were asked to evaluate their performance in an earlier course, *English for Thai Teachers I*, which had passed since the first semester of 2020. The majority of participants earned grades B ( $n = 21$ , 22.58%) and C+ ( $n = 21$ , 22.58%), while others received grades C ( $n = 19$ , 20.43%), B+ ( $n = 14$ , 15.05%), with smaller numbers of students obtaining grades A ( $n = 8$ , 8.60%), D+ ( $n = 7$ , 7.53%), and D+ ( $n = 3$ , 3.23%). Participants who received the grades A, B+, and B were placed in the high group, while those who achieved the grades C+, C, D+, and D were placed in the low group.

### ***Semi-structured Interview***

The semi-structured interview was employed to have a more in-depth examination of the reported attitudes, emphasizing the students' rationale behind their WCF preferences. The one-to-one interview consisted of five open-ended questions which were developed following the WCF literature on student preferences. Each of the five questions was double-checked to ensure it was not abrupt, crowded with technical jargon, or contained phrases that would impair respondents' comprehension.

To focus on the specific issue, that is, WCF in learners' perceptions, purposive sampling is the best method for exploring the full range of issues (Cohen et al., 2018). Following Brinkmann and Kvale's (2018) argument, the number of samples in recent interview studies has tended to be between five and twenty-five, owing to the time and resources available for the investigation. In this regard, an initial sample size of no more than ten participants is recommended for an interview study based on Creswell and Creswell's (2018) and Dörnyei's (2007) experience. The sample size is also justified in light of previous studies (Al-Bakri, 2016; Shaik, 2016; Uzuntiryaki et al., 2010; Vásquez & Harvey, 2010), which used sample sizes ranging from five to ten interviewees. In order to examine the background of the findings in greater depth, a post-study interview was conducted with 10 percent ( $n = 10$ ) of the participants depending on their low and high grades received in previous English courses. The interview was conducted online and auto-recorded via Webex. Participants were allowed to speak either Thai or English during the interview to ensure their comfort and freedom of expression. The internet-based interviews were informal and lasted approximately 10-15 minutes. The following Table 1 summarizes the backgrounds of the EFL students who participated in the interview.

**Table 1. Interviewees' Backgrounds**

<b>Name<sup>†</sup></b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Grade obtained in <i>English for Thai Teachers I</i></b>	<b>Languages</b>	<b>Years of learning English</b>
Arthur	22	M	C	Thai, English	16
David	20	M	B	Thai, English	14
Elsa	20	F	A	Thai, English	15
Janis	21	F	A	Thai, English, Chinese	14
Karen	20	F	C+	Thai, English	15

<sup>†</sup> Interviewed participants are identified by pseudonyms.

Name <sup>†</sup>	Age	Gender	Grade obtained in <i>English for Thai Teachers I</i>	Languages	Years of learning English
Leo	21	M	D	Thai, English	14
Maria	20	F	B+	Thai, English	16
Olive	22	F	C	Thai, English	14
Rica	20	F	D+	Thai, English, Japanese	16
Sophia	20	F	A	Thai, English	15

### Procedures and Data Analysis

Following the methodology of previous studies (Irwin, 2018; Köksal et al., 2018; Lee, 2013; Yunus, 2020), a mixed-methods design was modified for the current study's procedure. The explanatory sequential mixed methods technique was employed. It included a two-part data collection process (Creswell & Creswell, 2018), with quantitative data from questionnaires utilized to organize the qualitative phase and the interview questions to be asked of the respondents. Prior to the study, the research proposal and instruments were approved by the Institutional Review Board of the second author's institution. The researchers had organized an orientation session on the day of data collection, outlining the study's objectives and the benefits for the students. Undergraduates were informed that they would be invited to participate in the study and would have the option of requesting additional information or opting out. Those who consented to participate in the research received a QR code with a shortened URL to the online questionnaire, which was administered using Microsoft Forms and remained accessible for one month. Learners were required to submit an online questionnaire and consent form prior to the subsequent session.

After the quantitative data was collected through the questionnaires, a descriptive statistical analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics 26. The means and standard deviations of the demographic characteristics of the subjects were described using descriptive statistics. Then, as shown in Table 2, the results were interpreted using the 6-point Likert scale's interval computation.

**Table 2. Interpretations of Each Average Range**

Mean range	Definition
1.00-1.83	Worst
1.84-2.67	Bad
2.68-3.50	Slightly bad
3.51-4.33	Slightly good
4.34-5.17	Good
5.18-6.00	Best

A mutually agreeable time for conducting fifteen-minute personal interviews was established between the interviewer and each of the ten participants. They were permitted to talk

in Thai or a combination of Thai and English during the interview so that they could feel at ease and freely express their opinions. While audiotaping and handwritten notes were used to record responses, questions were posed. Subsequently, the interview data was digitally captured; the recordings were then transcribed verbatim in Word documents. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the interview data as it is an effective tool for identifying, analysing, and reporting themes and patterns within the collected data (Tiranant et al., 2022). The pertinent statements for this study are marked and labelled. According to the study's prime goal, other sections of the transcripts are also tagged and grouped into themes.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Findings

#### *What are Thai EFL Students' Preferences for WCF?*

The findings from the survey on the students' preferences for WCF were shown in Table 3. The eighteen items in the survey (see details in Appendix) had scores ranging from 2.76 to 5.58, showing varying degrees of the students' preferences for WCF. Direct feedback received from teachers that rectified errors was rated as the most preferable type of WCF ( $M = 5.58$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ). Moreover, the students desired that their teachers correct errors with a red pen ( $M = 5.34$ ,  $SD = 0.69$ ) on separate papers ( $M = 5.31$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) rather than in the 'students' text ( $M = 5.00$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ). According to the participating students' responses, comments should include grammatical explanations ( $M = 5.25$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ), the teacher's handwriting ( $M = 5.12$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ), corrections with hyperlinks ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ), or an electronic file ( $M = 4.31$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). Based on the survey results, learners preferred that their EFL teacher correct some ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ) or all ( $M = 4.20$ ,  $SD = 1.11$ ) of their errors. There was a preference for reformulation ( $M = 4.70$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ), in which the teacher rewrites the incorrect text to make it more natural, and for AI-mediated feedback ( $M = 4.26$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ).

Nonetheless, respondents indicated a decreased desire for feedback focusing on the idea ( $M = 3.61$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ), the entire sentence structure ( $M = 3.46$ ,  $SD = 1.00$ ), feedback in blue pen ( $M = 3.34$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ), indirect feedback ( $M = 3.18$ ,  $SD = 1.30$ ), and specific parts of the sentence structure ( $M = 3.16$ ,  $SD = 1.07$ ). It was obvious that students did not want the teacher to supply feedback on the contents ( $M = 2.76$ ,  $SD = 0.94$ ).

**Table 3. Learner Preferences for WCF**

No	Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Interpretation
1	Direct feedback	5.58	1.52	1	Best
2	Indirect feedback	3.18	1.30	16	Slightly bad
3	Metalinguistic feedback	5.25	0.83	4	Best
4	All error corrections	4.20	1.11	12	Slightly good
5	Some error corrections	4.26	1.05	10	Slightly good
6	Reformulation	4.70	0.92	8	Good
7	Hyperlink feedback	5.03	1.02	6	Good

No	Items	Mean	SD	Rank	Interpretation
8	Feedback on contents	2.76	0.94	18	Slightly bad
9	Feedback on a single part of the sentence	3.16	1.07	17	Slightly bad
10	Feedback on an overall sentence structure	3.46	1.00	14	Slightly bad
11	Feedback on the idea	3.61	1.04	13	Slightly good
12	Correction in red pen	5.34	0.69	2	Best
13	Correction in blue pen	3.34	1.22	15	Slightly bad
14	Feedback provided in the teacher's handwriting	5.12	0.82	5	Good
15	Feedback provided in the form of an electronic file	4.31	1.08	9	Slightly good
16	AI-generated feedback	4.26	0.92	10	Slightly good
17	Feedback on a student's draft	5.00	0.92	7	Good
18	Feedback on separate sheets	5.31	0.92	3	Best

### ***Why Do Thai EFL Students Prefer Certain Types of WCF?***

#### ***Direct feedback allows students to know the errors and their correct forms***

Based on the interviews, direct or immediate feedback was preferred because it could assist learners in identifying inaccurate language use and finding answers to their language problems. For example, Rica and Arthur stated the following:

*I want professors to comment on students' errors so that students understand exactly why they went wrong. How am I going to fix it? This enables students to learn from their previous errors and apply them to new writing assignments. (Rica)*

*For me, if feasible, bring to light the errors that most, if not all, learners made in their writings. Unless the teacher's workload has grown, I would like him or her to offer feedback to each student individually. Indicate what is incorrect and how to correct it so that I may refer to the subsequent writing tasks. (Arthur)*

Also, a few respondents mentioned that when the teacher delivers immediate feedback, they may actually understand the problems if the grammatical functions were thoroughly described:

*In my viewpoint, the teacher should explain how the incorrect points came about. To remedy them, the teacher must provide techniques for correcting the faults. (David).*

*I would like it if the teacher corrected my errors and explained in Thai what was incorrect and what needed to be fixed. (Elsa)*

Surprisingly, a red pen was listed as a preferred tool for editing students' written rough drafts as since childhood, Thai learners are familiar with using the red pen for editing. In addition, the red colour is highly noticeable on the white paper, in contrast to words written with a blue pen:

*an error was corrected in red and described to help students better comprehend the problem and apply it in the future. For me, because I generally write assignments using a blue pen, the red pen*



*let me spot the error more readily. If the instructor uses a red pen to correct the paper, I will see the faults more clearly' (Leo)*

*using a red pen to jot down and explain any errors committed by students is better than another colour. Since childhood, I have been accustomed to editing with a red pen. This let me realise that my teacher wanted me to correct this error. (Karen)*

### **Feedback improves not only learners' written text revision but also new pieces of writing**

The reasons given by interviewees as to why they favoured certain feedback strategies were revealed. The majority of learners stated that their amended or new written works would gradually be enhanced by direct feedback:

*When L2 learners recognize and examine their own errors, they will comprehend and improve the quality of their subsequent pieces of writing. (David)*

*The reason for my preference for WCF is that I recognize the existence of a mistake. I will remember this time and avoid making the same error in future tasks. (Karen)*

*Students must acquire the ability to write appropriately. Prior to submitting my previous piece of work, I was unaware of the errors. When you (the teacher) included WCF in the text and asked me to revise it, it aided me tremendously in not only improving the writing but also applying it to future written texts. (Maria)*

*I would like to acknowledge the problems that occurred during the writing process so that I can address them immediately and use these errors to improve my future work. (Olive)*

Thus, it can be deduced from the replies that Thai EFL students prefer direct feedback because it helps them improve their written work and contributes to the development of a more accurate English language. Sophia added, *'WCF helps me become a better writer; it's critical to recognize my errors and remedy them in future instances.'*

### **WCF can heavily influence higher English writing scores**

Thai EFL students place a high premium on classroom performance, which has a direct impact on their scores or grades and prompted them to study harder. They stated that they attentively followed the teacher's advice or the WCF to earn more points. Because students learned through repeating error correction until there were no or very few errors, they required more opportunities to rewrite their original texts in accordance with the WCF, if possible:

*I edit the errors as a WCF result because I believe what I have been told is incorrect. The flaws in my work could be the result of carelessness and ignorance. As a consequence, I choose to repair them in order to obtain a better score and gain motivation (from the higher score) to work harder the next time. (Janis)*

*The written products have been revised to adhere to the WCF guidelines. We must review the work and identify any inaccuracies discovered prior to the rectification phase. During the editing process, you may notice some minor points that result in the later written work having fewer or no errors. Eventually, your scores in the subsequent works were significantly higher than they were earlier. (Rica)*

*In accordance with the WCF outcomes, I read, examine, and promptly repair any errors or modifications. This will improve the essay's accuracy and may result in an increase in points. For instance, just fixing misspelt words would boost your score. (Olive)*

*In addition to concerns about the writing quality and efficacy of subsequent written assignments, the huge increase in scores also motivates us to fix all errors. One may argue that the more scores a piece of writing gets, the higher the grade we receive. (Leo)*

## **Discussion**

The following two sections discuss the study's findings in light of the relevant literature.

### ***Thai EFL Students' Preferences for WCF***

As indicated in Table 3, the students maintained a favourable attitude towards additional opportunities for error correction and commenting, with the exception of feedback provided on contents, which received a score of 2.76-5.58, ranging from slightly bad to best. It is critical to remember that L2 learners often enjoyed engaging with the WCF teachers offered and placed a value on linguistic precision.

According to the survey results, direct feedback was the most preferred type of WCF. A straightforward technique may certainly be communicated to L2 learners, assisting them in self-correcting their faults (Ellis, 2017). Numerous participants acknowledged several advantages of direct feedback, some of which were also expressed in other research on the impact of direct feedback, such as Heift and Hegelheimer's (2017), Kılıçkaya's (2022), and Reynolds and Kao's (2019) reviews of CF studies. The previous studies concluded that direct feedback was more useful for grammar activities, exercises, and compositions, as it resulted in higher grades on the assignments. Similarly, the participants in this study recognized and valued the significance of direct feedback as they desired better scores in order to obtain higher grades at the end of the course. In line with another study (German & Mahmud, 2021), the Thai EFL students preferred strategies that explicitly informed of the problematic issue. This indicated that if WCF was explicit, EFL students would most likely notice the correction and be able to self-edit their errors.

In addition, students expressed an interest in having various types of WCF. Participants also preferred the opportunity to obtain teacher feedback in the form of a brief grammatical description without providing the correct form, which contradicted the findings of Bitchener and Knoch (2010) regarding feedback type preference. Notably, metalinguistic feedback, as claimed by Ellis (2009), provides students with a hint by defining the nature of the error in the form of a brief description. It enables them to identify faults and fix language on their own while analysing example phrases, which is consistent with previous research conducted by Kılıçkaya (2022) and Saadat et al. (2016).

There is a plausible explanation for EFL students' willingness to accept all facets of a given WCF. It was a source of much anxiety that students would lose marks if their writing contained errors. Learners considered errors undesirable and needed instructors to assist them in eliminating them. Amrhein and Nassaji's (2010) study further demonstrated that WCF must be provided for "as many errors as possible" (p. 114) as L2 learners establish the WCF role's acceptance and usefulness in L2 learning. Consistent with other studies (e.g., Trabelsi, 2019),

feedback was regarded as necessary for the majority of pupils to learn how to write. This was because they could not correct these problems and improve their writing abilities unless they knew what and where the errors were. It also contributed to the results reached in the research that examined learner preferences for WCF (e.g., Hamouda, 2011), indicating that WCF was advantageous and benefited students in acquiring language competency.

### ***Thai EFL Learners' Rationale for Types of WCF***

Three themes emerged from the interviews to explain the students' rationale for their WCF preferences. First, the majority of the Thai EFL students reported a strong preference for receiving direct feedback on a draft of their written texts. Their claimed rationale for this was that they were made aware of the faults and their corrected versions concurrently. Moreover, student writers can incorporate input from direct feedback into subsequent written works. This evidence confirmed that L2 learners preferred their professors to correct and explain their errors, as Yunus (2020) argues that they could not comprehend the majority of errors without the corrections. Similarly, over half of Japanese EFL learners anticipated receiving direct feedback from their instructors because they lacked confidence in rectifying their errors (Irwin, 2018). These findings also corroborate previous research (Black & Nanni, 2016; Chen et al., 2016; Ellis, 2017). In this regard, a lack of effectiveness for self-corrected repairs could be a more compelling reason.

Furthermore, the findings revealed particular preferences for red pen, correlating with the quantitative findings and widely validating the work of international scholars (Elwood & Bode, 2014; Orts & Salazar, 2016). Their results indicated that L2 learners reported a clear preference for red-penned corrections in a similar vein. This finding, however, contradicts Semke (1984), who suggested that student writers may be frustrated by the high number of red marks on their papers, thus experiencing negative reinforcement.

As a result of the error correction provided by teachers, there has been a significant improvement in the revised texts and new pieces of writing in the interviewed students' beliefs. Not surprisingly, the majority of L2 learners expressed an overall favourable attitude towards – and rigorous adherence to – WCF. It corroborates Chen et al.'s (2016) EFL students' attitudes towards requiring teacher feedback in order to improve their grammar and initiative in the revision process of their work. It is a well-established truth that the greater the amount of feedback learners receive, the more useful they perceive it to be (Amrhein & Nassaji, 2010). These findings suggest that learners made significant gains in the grammatical quality of their papers when teachers employed feedback strategies and followed written work that had error-free texts. It is likely that L2 students derived the most significant advantage from WCF for their writing.

The Thai students placed a value on academic achievement; they expressed concern about low grades. Unless they corrected the inaccuracies in their original texts, the errors would affect the paper's grade, which in turn had an impact on their academic achievement at the end of the semester. They believed the use of WCF as a learning tool contributed to the improvement of the quality of the written assignments and influenced their preferences. This belief appears to support Tiranant et al. (2022), in which students expressed a desire to be precise in the sense of using standard forms and to have their errors addressed. It is also the teachers' responsibility to

ensure that students comprehend the feedback they receive so that they are aware of areas that need improvement (Huong, 2018). As previously stated, there is considerable evidence that students viewed WCF as an indication of robust written productivity, resulting in increased accuracy in new written assignments (Al-Ahmad & Al-Jarrah, 2015; Shintani & Ellis, 2013). It is positive to note that students considered WCF as a sign of healthy written output.

## CONCLUSIONS

Returning to the research questions posed at the outset of this study, it is now reasonable to infer that Thai EFL students at an anonymous Rajabhat university showed preferences towards WCF approaches, particularly direct feedback. Direct feedback has several significant advantages; it raises students' awareness of the problematic areas of their writing and encourages them to recognize and repair mistakes. It is clear that learners were willing to correct their errors according to the teachers' grammatical comments and considered that doing so would improve the production of revised tasks or new written assignments. Furthermore, they desired higher writing scores due to their efforts to study and revise their own writings according to WCF.

Although feedback is time-consuming and might be a burden, the findings of this study may motivate Thai EFL lecturers and teachers in similar L2 environments to provide more explicit kinds of WCF regarding students' writing faults. WCF, especially direct feedback, has excellent benefits in L2 courses. Therefore, EFL teachers should feel comfortable employing various WCF strategies to help students become aware of and correct their errors and improve their writing quality. In doing so, EFL teachers need to find out and consider students' preferences for WCF and the rationale for their preferences.

A few caveats must be considered when interpreting the conclusions of this study. The sample size was relatively small. Another constraint is the omission of teacher variables. Teachers' WCF practices should be evaluated because they have the potential to influence students' opinions of WCF's utility. Nevertheless, to implement WCF successfully, teachers must be aware of their students' preferences for the different types of WCF, as suggested by this study. Additionally, different WCF types should be selected for specific errors. It is recommended that future research continue to shed light on this research topic through the use of a bigger sample size and error resources pertaining to various variables.

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**APPENDIX****Questionnaire**

Statement: In your essay, what do you think if...?		Level of preference					
		1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Your teacher provides the correct form.						
2	Your teacher indicates that an error exists (by crossing, underlining, and/or circling), but no explanation or correction.						
3	Your teacher provides an explanation clue or error code (i.e., ?, ww, wo, sp) as the helpful point to correct the errors.						
4	Your teacher concerns to all of the error identified.						
5	Your teacher concerns to specific types of error only.						
6	Your teacher urges you to rework the content or meaning of the text.						
7	Your teacher indicates an error and provides a hyperlink to a concordance file that provides examples of correct usage.						
8	Your teacher provides no feedback on linguistic error, but only comments your contents.						
9	Your teacher focuses on errors in noun and verb inflection, articles, auxiliaries, or a single part of the sentence.						
10	Your teacher focuses on errors in wrong order, missing/wrong word, or an overall structure of a sentence.						
11	Your teacher focuses on the unity, coherence, development and clarity of the ideas.						
12	Your teacher gives the feedback in red pen.						
13	Your teacher gives the feedback in blue pen.						
14	Your teacher gives the feedback in his/her handwriting.						
15	Your teacher provides the feedback by using computer software to insert comments to your electronic file (i.e., docx or pdf file).						
16	Your teacher provides the feedback by AI-generated comments (e.g., Grammarly).						
17	Your teacher writes the feedback on your draft.						
18	Your teacher writes the feedback on separate sheets.						