

# The Influence of Written Corrective Feedback on Second Language Acquisition

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## Abstract:

In view of the limitations of empirical research, it is necessary to research the essence of written error corrective feedback and explore whether it can promote the development of second language for learners from the theory of second language acquisition. In this paper, we discuss the process of second language acquisition, the affectional factors of learners and the interaction between teachers and students, and find the theoretical basis for written error corrective feedback to promote the development of second language acquisition.

## Keywords:

Written Error Corrective Feedback, Second Language Acquisition, Affectional Factors

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## 1. Introduction

In recent years, “corrective feedback” has become an essential part of foreign language teaching. Literally, corrective feedback “is used to provide the correct information for the learner's discourse and to provide the correct form for their mistakes” [1]. In fact, different scholars hold different views on the concept of “corrective feedback”, and there is still no clear definition. In summary, this study uses the definition given by Sheen and Ellis (2011) that corrective feedback refers to a kind of feedback information provided by teachers to learners' mistakes through oral or written expression during the process of second-language learning, which is of great significance for improving the linguistic accuracy of second-language learners [2]. From the perspective of feedback, corrective feedback is generally divided into two types, verbal corrective feedback as well as written corrective feedback. Since this study focuses on written corrective feedback, it will be discussed intensively next.

Written Corrective Feedback (WCF) is written feedback given to learners of language errors in writing, and can also be called grammatical correction feedback. Written Corrective Feedback attracted lots of researchers who specialize in SLA and SLW teaching to discuss whether written error correction feedback was effective from their own disciplinary perspectives, and still did not reach a consensus conclusion [3]. Currently, there is a need for research on the effectiveness of Written

Corrective Feedback (FWCF), some describing one or two error types, and some explaining as many as 20 error types [4].

Language acquisition refers to the unconscious acquisition of language in the natural state, also known as implicit learning. WCF can promote the acquisition of second language, researchers often use empirical methods to test. If the learner is able to correctly correct the grammatical errors and accurately apply these linguistic forms in the new writing task, it indicates that WCF is valid. In view of the fact that there is less research on the analysis of WCF from a theoretical level [5]. Therefore, it is necessary to deeply analyze the nature of written error correction feedback and further explore its effectiveness from the perspective of the theory of second language acquisition. In recent years, many scholars studying English writing at home and abroad have shown great interest in written corrective feedback, and their reviews and empirical research have achieved remarkable results. Lalande (1982) was the first scholar to study written corrective feedback. Since then, more and more researchers have explored the problems related to teachers' written corrective feedback from both theoretical and empirical aspects [6].

## **2. The Role of WCF in the Process of Second Language Acquisition**

### ***2.1. WCF inputs explicit knowledge and indirectly promotes implicit knowledge acquisition***

Ellis (2004) made the definition that explicit knowledge can be expressed integrally, formally or normatively; however, implicit knowledge is deeply individualized, and hard to generalize and describe clearly in words, language and images [7]. Explicit knowledge of language is knowledge of language and the use of it. Implicit linguistic knowledge is knowledge that can be extracted and used automatically and unconsciously. Qiyi G (2005) have confirmed that the correspondence between implicit knowledge and explicit knowledge is very high, and most of the implicit knowledge is transformed from explicit knowledge when learning a second language in a foreign language environment. Bitchener (2016) gave the perspective that regardless of the formulation, it can be determined that there is a way of transformation between explicit and implicit knowledge, and explicit knowledge can promote the acquisition of second language [8].

WCF is explicit feedback, there's no doubt about that. In order to correct the error, the learner uses a dictionary or grammar book, which increases the correct language input and gives the learner the opportunity to compare the differences between the median language and the target language. It can be seen that WCF itself provides explicit knowledge, and indirectly acts on implicit knowledge systems, which can promote the acquisition of second languages.

### ***2.2. WCF contributes to the acquisition of second language***

In second language acquisition, attention is the process of encoding language input, making it active in short-term memory, and can be extracted from long-term memory [9]. Schmidt (1990) argues that consciousness is very important in the process of second language learning, and that unconscious learning is impossible. Consciousness can be divided into three levels: awareness, attention, and understanding; attention is the necessary and sufficient condition for converting input into absorption [10].

Chandler (2003) mentioned that learners will only make changes if they realize that their grammar system needs to be adjusted. This process is triggered by noticing that the language you have mastered is different from the target language [11]. WCF plays a role in guiding students to pay attention to the form of the language and the difference between the median language and the target language. WCF has two functions: “attention enhancement” and “error correction”, which can effectively improve learners' attention to language forms and promote the development of intermediary languages, and has a deeper and long-term driving force for the improvement of learners' language ability in cognitive function [12].

### ***2.3. The significance of WCF in the learner's emotional factor***

WCF refer that pointing out grammatical errors in learner writing is negative feedback. The process of second language acquisition is different from that of one language acquisition and can't be generalized [13]. Of the five hypotheses of Krashen's second language acquisition, the fifth is the emotion filter hypothesis and he mentioned that input is the most important factor in the acquisition of second language, and in the process of language input entering the language acquisition mechanism, emotional changes will play a role in hindering or advancing, and when the obstacle occurs, it is emotional filtering. Teacher attention is an encouragement in itself, and reducing mistakes can also improve learning motivation. From another point of view, the teacher's error correction feedback is in the form of pointing out the error, but there is no sense of accusation, but the teacher's concern for the student's academics is poured in. Knowing that it takes time and effort, it is still necessary to fulfill the responsibility of being a teacher because teachers are eager and confident to see the progress of students [14]. Using the Error Record Sheet in writing classes, where students write down the number of various grammatical errors and the number of words they write in each writing.

## **3. Teacher-Student Interaction: WCF under Sociocultural Theory**

Karim & Nassaji (2020) pointed out “the human mind is regulated by socio-cultural”, and we use cultural artifacts provided by socio-cultural backgrounds (such as language as symbolic tools, networks, etc.) to regulate our relationships with others and promote the development of thinking and language acquisition [15]. Unlike other psychological theories, this theory holds that cognitive development is from society to the individual, and cognition occurs first in social interaction between individuals, followed by the internalization of the individual itself.

Nicolás (2019) proved the validity of error correction feedback, the range of error correction was a grammatical error in writing, and the feedback was in the form of a one-on-one teacher-student conversation [16]. WCF is a kind of written non-synchronous communication between teachers and students, teachers will continue to adjust their feedback methods according to the students' modifications, or supplemented by interviews to help students understand the errors. It can be seen that WCF still contributes to the acquisition of second languages within the framework of sociocultural theory. Communication is two-way, only the teacher gives feedback, the student passively accepts, the WCF effect is bound to be limited; after the student makes the modification, there is no teacher's feedback again, nor is it a complete communication [17]. Re-feedback from the teacher after the student's revision is necessary.

## 4. Conclusions

In summary, WCF is explicit language input, which can improve the learner's attention to the language form essentially; motivate the learner emotionally; and is the interaction between teachers and students. Based on the theory of second language acquisition, it can be learned that WCF has a promoting effect on learners' second language acquisition, which is consistent with the results of empirical research in recent years. It can be seen that the existence of WCF is reasonable, and the research perspective should be placed on how to increase its effectiveness. In the process of sorting out the theory of second language acquisition, it is found that there are several problems in WCF empirical research. First, the learner's attitude determines how much error-correcting feedback can be absorbed. At present, researchers pay more attention to the form of feedback from teachers, and learners' attitudes, cognitive processes and absorption of feedback are still the less lacking parts of WCF research. Secondly, WCF is the revision and improvement of the learner's intermediary language system, the learner's errors have something in common and also they are different. Written error correction cannot guarantee that the feedback is in the learner's recent development area. Finally, the purpose of WCF is to improve learners' grammatical accuracy or to help learners develop the habit of self-supervision to make corrections without feedback from teacher corrections. Existing research is insufficient for WCF research to raise learners' awareness of self-grammatical supervision or writing skills.

## Conflicts of Interest

The author declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

## Author Contributions

Conceptualization: L.S.; Investigation: L.S.; Writing – original draft preparation: L.S.; Writing – review and editing: L.S.

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